

Spotlight on Social and Emotional Dimensions: Parenting Gifted Children

Presentation for Parents Elgin U#46

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What is Giftedness?

State of Illinois Definition: Gifted and talented children

For purposes of this Article, "gifted and talented children" means children and youth with outstanding talent who perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with other children and youth of their age, experience, and environment. A child shall be considered gifted and talented in any area of aptitude, and, specifically, in language arts and mathematics, by scoring in the top 5% locally in that area of aptitude.

Public Act 094-0410
From IAGC Website



What is Giftedness?

“Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching and counseling in order for them to develop optimally.”

(The Columbus Group, 1991)



Isn't Every Child Gifted?

- All children are unique, special, and have distinctive qualities that make them individuals.
- However, not all children have abilities that are advanced compared to typically developing age peers.



Characteristics of Gifted Children

- Think about gifted people who you know.....
- What are some of the characteristics of these gifted individuals?



Gifted Characteristics

INTELLECTUAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Exceptional reasoning ability
- Capacity for reflection
- Intellectual curiosity
- Rapid learning rate
- Facility with abstraction
- Complex thought processes
- Vivid imagination
- Early moral concern
- Passion for learning
- Powers of concentration
- Analytical thinking
- Divergent thinking/creativity
- Keen sense of justice

PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS

- Insightfulness
- Need to understand
- Need for mental stimulation
- Perfectionism
- Need for precision/logic
- Excellent sense of humor
- Sensitivity/empathy
- Intensity
- Perseverance
- Acute self-awareness
- Nonconformity
- Questioning of rules/authority
- Tendency toward introversion

Source: Silverman, L. K. (1993). A developmental model for counseling the gifted. In L.K. Silverman (Ed.), *Counseling the Gifted and Talented* (pp. 51-78). Denver, CO: Love Publishing Co.



Differentiating Characteristics-Giftedness

- Unusual emotional depth and intensity
 - need to have philosophical discussions; guidance
- Idealism and sense of justice, which appear at an early age
 - need to transcend negative reactions by finding values to which he/she can be committed
- Advance level of moral judgment
 - need to receive validation for nonaverage morality
- Strongly motivated by self-actualization needs
 - Need to be given opportunities to follow divergent paths and pursue strong interests

(Clark, 2008)



Characteristics of Gifted Children

“Perfectionism, sensitivity and intensity are three personality traits associated with giftedness. They are derived from the complexity of the child's cognitive and emotional development. According to Dabrowski's theory, these traits—related to overexcitabilities—are indicative of potential for high moral values in adult life. The brighter the child, the earlier and more profound is his or her concern with moral issues. But this potential usually does not develop in a vacuum. It requires nurturing in a supportive environment.”

Source: http://www.gifteddevelopment.com/What_is_Gifted/learned.htm



Identification of Gifted Students

Quantitative Measures/Traditional

Quantitative Measures/Non-Traditional

Qualitative Measures

*Recognize that under-served populations still
require gifted services*



My Child Had Been Identified Gifted: Now What?

- Become more educated about the field of gifted education
- Probe those who know; GT Coordinators, IAGC, websites, other parents
- Join a parent support group
- Work with school personnel in a collaborative manner
- Help your child to understand what it means to be gifted



Reduce Stress and Focus Attention

Stress:

A term coined by endocrinologist Hans Selye;
his definition:

“The non-specific response of the body to any demand placed upon it.”

He also described stress in two ways:

- Distress (caused by negative situations)
- Eustress (caused by positive situations)



Living with Intensity: Helping Gifted Kids Cope

Stress

- Environmental or self as source
- Each Self experiences pressure differently
- Stress can be positive-be impetus for growth
- Many pressures are related to giftedness (complex thinking, expectations of others, inability of adults to face global issues)
- Pressure to be perfect (competing needs from self and others)



Sources of Stress for Gifted People

 SITUATIONAL

 SELF-IMPOSED

 EXISTENTIAL



Situational

- conflict between our values and the values of others
- interpersonal disharmony
- lack of intellectual stimulation or challenge
- challenges beyond our capability to respond
- threats to emotional or physical well-being
- lack of resources to accomplish a task
- time constraints

Self-imposed

- setting excessively high standards for ourselves
- fear of failure
- fear of success
- negative self-talk
- emotionally loaded/highly evaluative beliefs about ourselves and our environment
- believing that everyone should love, respect, and praise us
- buying into others' negative evaluations of us
- catastrophizing
- worrying



Existential

- global concerns (e.g., nuclear disaster, war, poverty, world hunger, apartheid, the environment, etc.)
- idealism
- anger at fate
- Isolation
- need for meaning and purpose



SUGGESTIONS FOR ADULTS/CAREGIVERS

- Help children recognize personal stress patterns and develop coping skills to match
- Recognize the essential role of emotional growth and do not separate from intellectual growth
- Ensure that personal needs are not imposed on children
- Demonstrate genuine empathy when the child is struggling emotionally; provide support and not solutions
- Listen closely to the stories children tell—they provide clues to the support they desire
- Validate and mirror appropriate emotional responses



Top Ten Affective Strategies

- Respect the child's inner agenda
- Use conflict resolution and decision-making as occasions for growth
- Use praise sparingly; encouragement fosters achievement
- Learn more about temperament and effect on classroom/family dynamics
- Provide opportunities for struggle, even failure (build resilience)

(Kane, 2008)



Top Ten Affective Strategies

- Allow the feelings (you can never be “overly sensitive”)
- Teach child self-soothing techniques (meditation, visualization, deep breathing)
- Teach the difference between excellence and perfectionism
- Provide opportunities for passions to flourish
- Develop service learning projects at the earliest ages

(Kane, 2008)



Eight Great Gripes of Gifted Kids

- No one explains what being gifted is all about – it's kept a big secret.
- School is too easy and too boring.
- Parents, teachers, and friends expect us to be perfect all the time.
- Friends who really understand us are few and far between.
- Kids often tease us about being smart.
- We feel overwhelmed by the number of things we can do in life.
- We feel different and alienated.
- We worry about world problems and feel helpless to do anything about them.

(Delisle, & Galbraith, 2002)



Gifted Children's Bill of Rights

You have a right...

- ...to know about your giftedness.
- ...to learn something new everyday.
- ...to be passionate about your talent area without apologies.
- ...to have an identity beyond your talent area.
- ...to feel good about your accomplishments.
- ...to make mistakes.
- ...to seek guidance in the development of your talent.
- ...to have multiple peer groups and a variety of friends.
- ...to choose which of your talent areas you wish to pursue.
- ...not to be gifted at everything.

—Del Siegle 2007-2009 NAGC President

Copies of the Gifted Children's Bill of Rights are available in English and Spanish online at www.nagc.org .



TOP TEN WEBSITES

Associations:

■ Illinois Association for Gifted Children

Website Address: <http://www.iagcgifted.org>

■ National Association for Gifted Children

Website Address: <http://www.nagc.org>

Centers:

■ Northwestern University Center for Talent Development

Website address: <http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu>

■ Gifted Development Center

Website Address: <http://www.gifteddevelopment.com/>

■ Neag. Center for Gifted Education & Talent Development

Website Address: <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/>

■ The Davidson Institute for Talent Development

Website Address: <http://www.ditd.org>

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TOP TEN WEBSITES

General:

■ Hoagies' Gifted Education Page

Website Address:

<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/>

■ Uniquely Gifted (twice-exceptional)

Website address: <http://www.uniquelygifted.org>

■ Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted

Website Address: <http://www.sengifted.org>

■ Families of the Talented & Gifted

Website Address: <http://www.tagfam.org/>

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