

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN GIFTED STUDENTS



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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Introduction
 - Social Emotional Development
 - Myths of the SED of Gifted Children
- Characteristics of Gifted Children
 - Strengths
 - Unique Challenges of Gifted Children
- Parenting Strategies
 - Preventing problems
 - Managing problems
- Challenging the Gifted Mind
 - Home Strategies
 - School Strategies
- Psychological Well Being
 - Impact of giftedness on psychological well being
 - Signs & Symptoms For Professional Intervention
- Questions???



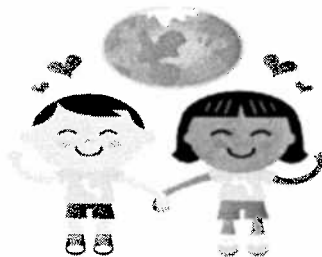
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Social-Emotional Development Defined:
 - Development of skills that help us interact socially with others and express and regulate emotions
- Social-Emotional Development & Gifted Students
- Myths
 - Gifted children should be equally mature academically, physically, socially, and emotionally
 - Gifted children will never be frustrated with school and learning



STRENGTHS OF GIFTED CHILDREN

- Intellectual/Cognitive Strengths
- Academic Strengths
- Language Strengths
- Social and Emotional Strengths
- Artistic/Creative Strengths



UNIQUE CHALLENGES OF GIFTED CHILDREN

- Social-Emotional Problems can arise from personal characteristics and environmental influences/characteristics working synergistically....(see handout)



- Asynchronous Development
- Advanced Verbal Reasoning
- Personal Characteristics
 - Perfectionism/Self-Criticism
 - Emotional Sensitivity
 - High levels of Energy and/or focus
- Difficulty Interacting with Peers
- Lack of challenge and stimulation
- Twice Exceptional Gifted Students

PARENTING STRATEGIES

Preventing Problems

- Understand and accept unique strengths and challenges
- Bolster self esteem*
- Portray reasonable expectations
- Reach out to other parents
- Use educational flexibility
- Allow moderate levels of stress
- Support risk taking
- Acknowledge your child's feelings
- Teach stress management skills
- Promote Healthy Social Interactions and Acquisition of Social skills

Managing Problems

- Emotional response scale*
- Help students cope with setbacks and failures
- Don't entangle in arguments with student*



CHALLENGING THE GIFTED MIND

Home Strategies

- Encourage relationships and activities that support emotional, social, and intellectual needs
- Learn your child's strengths and weaknesses



School Strategies

- Keep open communication with student's teacher and/or gifted program
- Advocate for your child
 - Explore the resources and programming available with your child
 - Join and collaborate with student's teacher and/or gifted program

CHALLENGING THE GIFTED MIND, CONT'D..

Accelerating Student Learning

- Differentiation in learning
- TAG programming
- Early admissions
- Grade skipping
- Honors Classes/Advanced Placement
- College Courses
- Special/Magnet Schools
- Online academic software

Broadening Student Learning

- Math League
- Science Fairs
- Spelling Bee's
- Summer Programs
- Odyssey of the Mind
- Advanced reading lists
- Extracurricular Learning Activities- e.g., museums, self-directed projects, piano, etc..



PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING

- Are high ability students as well adjusted as their same age peers?
 - Yes; although there are conflicting views (Neihart et al., 2002)
- No higher rates of depression
- No higher rates of suicide
 - Creatively gifted students (writers and artists) commit suicide at higher rates than general population
- No higher rates of delinquency
- No higher rates of anxiety
- Correlation between high IQ and eating disorders



PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING CONT'D

When To Worry

- Try to avoid too much pressure!
 - Encourage participation in age appropriate activities
 - Provide breaks from school content
- Symptoms that may warrant further intervention*
 - Depression Symptoms
 - Anxiety Symptoms
 - Burnout Symptoms

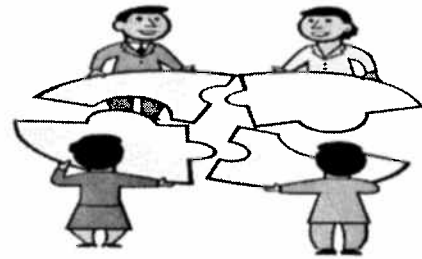


Resources Available

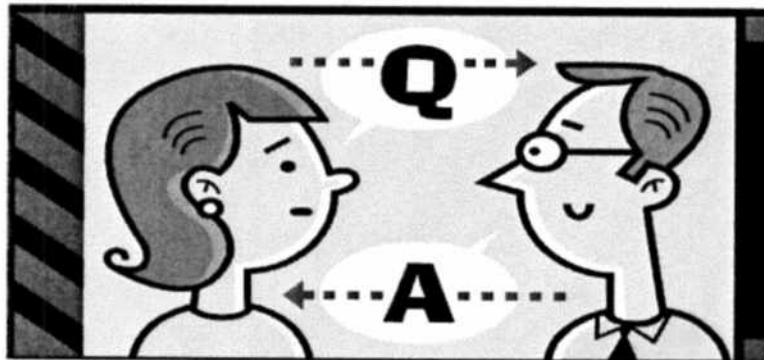
- School Counselor
- NCH Behavioral Health Intake Number
 - 614-355-8080

IN SUM...

- Gifted students have unique strengths and challenges that may impact their social-emotional development
- There are ways that parents can be supportive of students' social-emotional and gifted needs
- It is important to be aware of warning signs for potential mental health problems



QUESTIONS?! COMMENTS?! REVELATIONS?!



Resources for Parents of Talented and Gifted Kids

Websites

- www.nagc.org- National Association for Gifted Children*
- www.sengifted.org- Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted*
- www.hoagiesgifted.org – Gifted Website Page
- www.giftedkids.about.com- General gifted information*

Books

- **Title:** Parenting Gifted Kids: Tips for Raising Happy and Successful Children
Author: James R. Delisle, Ph.D.
- **Title:** The Survival Guide for Parents of Gifted Kids*
Author: Sally Yahnke Walker
- **Title:** Parenting Gifted Children: The Authoritative Guide From the National Association for Gifted Children
Editors: Jennifer Jolly, Ph.D., Donald Treffinger, Ph.D., Tracy Inman, and Joan Smutny, Ph.D.

Online Academic Software Programs

- www.ixl.com- Math Educational Program
- www.studyisland.com- Comprehensive Educational Programs
- www.lexile.com- Reading Lists by Reading Levels

Other References

- Neihart, M. (1999). The impact of giftedness on psychological well-being. Retrieved from <http://www.sengifted.org/archives/articles/the-impact-of-giftedness-on-psychological-well-being>*
- Reis, S. & Renzulli, J. (2004). Current research on the social and emotional development of gifted and talented students: Good news and future possibilities. *Psychology in the Schools*, 41, 119-130.*
- Webb, J. (1994). Nurturing social-emotional development of gifted children. Retrieved from http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content2/social_development_gifted.html*

*Referenced During Presentation

Common Characteristics of Gifted Children

Strengths	Possible Problems
Acquires/retains information quickly	<i>Impatient with others; dislikes basic routine</i>
Inquisitive; Searches for Significance	<i>Asks embarrassing questions; excessive in interests</i>
Intrinsic Motivation	<i>Strong-willed; Resists direction</i>
Enjoys problem-solving; able to conceptualize, abstract, synthesize	<i>Resists routine practice; questions teaching procedures</i>
Seeks cause-effect relations	<i>Dislikes unclear/illogical areas (e.g. traditions or feelings)</i>
Emphasizes truth, equity, and fair play	<i>Worries about humanitarian concerns</i>
Seeks to organize things and people	<i>Constructs complicated rules; often seen as bossy</i>
Large facile vocabulary; advanced, broad information	<i>May use words to manipulate; bored with school and age-peers</i>
High expectations of self and others	<i>Intolerant, perfectionistic; may become depressed</i>
Creative/inventive; likes new ways of doing things	<i>May be seen as disruptive and out of step</i>
Intense concentration; long attention span and persistence in areas of interest	<i>Neglects duties or people during periods of focus; resists interruption; stubbornness</i>
Sensitivity, empathy; desire to be accepted by others	<i>Sensitivity to criticism or peer rejection</i>
High Energy, alertness, eagerness	<i>Frustration with inactivity; may be seen as hyperactive</i>
Independent; prefers individualized work; reliant on self	<i>May reject parent or peer input; nonconformity</i>
Diverse interests and abilities; versatility	<i>May appear disorganized or scattered; frustrated over lack of time</i>
Strong sense of humor	<i>Peers may misunderstand humor; may become "class clown" for attention</i>
Adapted from Clark (1992) and Seagoe (1974) by Webb.	

Signs/Symptoms That May Warrant Intervention

- Student experiences declining grades and underachievement.
- Student displays increase in irritability, tearfulness/crying, sad/depressed mood.
- Student endorses suicidal ideation or high interest in death/dying.
- Student has change in appetite.
- Student has impaired concentration (mind slowing down, difficulty paying attention.)
- Student has feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness.
- Student displays increased guilt and self-blame.
- Student loses peer group.
- Student frequently worries about performance and doing well.
- Student displays loss of interest in previously preferred activities.
- Student is no longer happy or pleasantly excited about school activities, but, rather, is negative or cynical toward work, teachers, classmates, parents, and the whole school- and achievement-centered experience.
- Student approaches most school assignments with resignation or resentment.
- Student suffers from sleeplessness, problems in falling asleep, or periodic waking.
- Student overreacts to normal concerns or events.
- Student experiences fatigue, extreme tiredness, low energy level.
- Student exhibits unhappiness with self and accomplishments.
- Student has nervous habits such as eye blinking, head shaking, or stuttering.
- Student has physical ailments such as weekly or daily stomachaches or headaches.
- Student is frequently ill.
- Student exhibits dependency through increased clinging or needing and demanding constant support and reassurance.
- Student engages in attention-getting behaviors such as aggressive or acting-out behaviors.
- Student has a sense of being trapped or a feeling of being out of control.
- Student is unable to make decisions.
- Student has lost perspective and sense of humor.
- Student experiences increased feelings of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion in work and activities that used to give pleasure.

Tips for Maintaining Control – or How to Keep from Arguing with Your Gifted Child

1. **Make rules clear.** Anticipate your child will find loopholes to rules.
2. **Make the consequences for breaking rules clear.** With gifted children, issues of fairness are not matters of debate. They often have a deeper sense of justice.
3. **Avoid negotiating consequences after a rule is broken.** Negotiating after the rule is broken is almost as bad as eliminating the consequence altogether. If a child has questions about a rule or its consequences or didn't agree with either of them, he/she should have asked at the time the rule was laid out.
4. **Don't argue back.** Gifted children are often able to reason things out and present a good, logical argument. Don't get pulled into a debate.
5. **Increase the consequence if your child continues to argue.** Give your child a chance to stop the arguing by giving a warning first. Gifted kids are bright enough to know they need to stop arguing.
6. **Be consistent and follow through with consequences.** It does not good to take away privileges as a consequence if it is done in word only. Gifted kids will see that weakness and exploit it.
7. **Make consequences reasonable and enforceable.** If you make the consequences too drastic (i.e., taking away a privilege for two weeks), gifted children can find something else to do to replace whatever privilege you have taken away so its loss becomes meaningless.

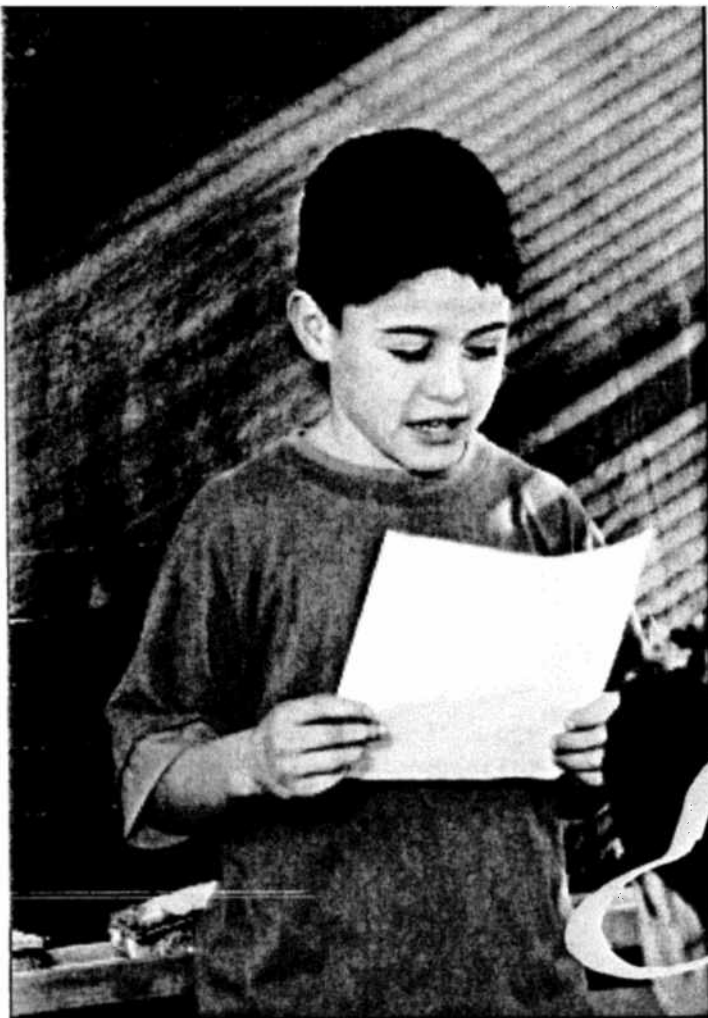
10 Things Parents Can Do To Promote Their Child's Self-Esteem

1. Teach children skills in life to help them be more successful.
2. Give positive feedback. Aim for a 2:1 ratio of positive thoughts/statements to negative ones.
3. Be involved in your children's lives. Use time spent together as a reinforcer.
4. Maintain healthy family interactions. Good communication and problem solving within the family will promote your child's self-esteem.
5. Listen. Do not always feel the need to judge or give advice.
6. Accept your children for who they are. We all have our quirks.
7. Help your child handle mistakes and failures. Focus on effort rather than outcomes.
8. Help your child handle success. Encourage them to take responsibility for the good things they do.
9. Promote your child's talents.
10. Do not attribute good behavior to medication.

Taken from:

Skills Training for Children With Behavior Disorders: A
Parent & Therapist Guidebook

Author: Michael L. Bloomquist



COMMUNICATING

Effectively

WITH YOUR GIFTED CHILD'S SCHOOL

by Dr. Joan Franklin Smutny

When gifted children struggle in school, they often have no other advocate than their parents. Parents attending workshops often ask, "What do I do if my child is unhappy in school?" The answer may seem obvious to some, but to most parents discussing their child's difficulties in school can be intimidating. We often hear stories of parents trying to convince a school of their child's unmet needs, of frustrated attempts to get someone—anyone—to respond to repeated requests for help.

Some of the difficulties parents have communicating with the school can be avoided with the right preparation and planning. I know a mother from Ecuador whose sixth-grade daughter,

Marisol, has an exceptional ability in mathematics and science. But the school never identified her for the gifted program because her verbal scores were less exceptional. During the summer, I helped her mother get organized for the new school year. She arranged to have her daughter tested by a professional who could administer standardized tests more suitable for bilingual students. In addition, she researched the philosophy of gifted education programs available in the district, created a portfolio of her daughter's projects and work at home and in courses offered at community centers.

Because this parent did some preliminary research and took time to organize her thoughts, she felt ready to

present a strong case for Marisol's need for more advanced instruction in math and science. She told me, "At some point along the way, it became less important that my child get into their gifted program. All I wanted was for her to have the education she needs, however that could be arranged." As it turned out, the school claimed that the gifted program did not focus enough on math and science. But the teachers and principal were willing to arrange for her to attend seventh-grade math and science classes, with an option of moving into the eighth grade if needed. Had this mother not prepared herself beforehand, she might have given up after receiving her daughter's test scores in English.

arranging for Harry to attend high school in his best subjects— math and language arts.”

This parent accomplished more than would have been possible in a debate with the teacher about whether or not his son was “gifted,” whether or not the school should offer programming for gifted students. Keep the discussion focused on the specifics of your children’s characteristics and needs rather than on some hypothetical or philosophical debate about gifted education. Examples of tangible goals might include: “My goal for this first meeting is to gain permission for my child to spend more time in the science lab.” Or: “My objective is to arrange for my child to be evaluated by the school psychologist.” Without goals like these, even positive discussions about your child will not necessarily bring tangible change.

Be diplomatic, but firm. The value of planning ahead is that you have a better chance of finding a balanced and fair approach to the teacher. Your aim should be to avoid communicating in a way that makes the teacher feel criticized or misunderstood. Teachers face extraordinary demands on their time and seldom appreciate it when parents tell them they’re not doing enough.

At the same time, your child has legitimate needs that the school should address and it’s your job as a parent advocate to take action when this isn’t happening. There’s a way of doing this without negating what the teacher is already doing in the classroom. Here are some useful pointers for getting the most out of your teacher conference:

- Expect the teacher to be reasonable and understanding, no matter what you’ve heard from other parents or your child. Even unsympathetic teachers respond better to parents who approach them positively than to those who seem already on the defensive.
- Start out by thanking the teacher for giving you this time. Express in your tone and manner that you are a reasonable parent who recognizes the

USEFUL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS OF GIFTED CHILDREN

Books

Clark, B. (2002). *Growing Up Gifted: Developing the Potential of Children at Home and at School*. Sixth edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Knopper, D. (1997). *Parent Education: Parents as Partners*. Boulder, CO: Open Space Communications. Also available in Spanish.

Rimm, S. (1994). *Keys to Parenting the Gifted Child*. Hauppauge, NY: Baron’s Educational Series.

Smutny, J.F. (2001). *Stand Up for Your Gifted Child: How to Make the Most of Kids’ Strengths at School and at Home*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, Inc.

Smutny, J.F. (Ed.). (2002). *Underserved Gifted Populations*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Walker, S.Y. (2002). *The Survival Guide for Parents of Gifted Kids*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, Inc.

daily demands on a teacher and that you appreciate this opportunity to confer with him.

- Get straight to the point. State the reason why you felt it necessary to meet with the teacher and say it in a diplomatic way. For example, instead of saying, “My son is really bored in your math class” try this: “My son already knows this material in math and since he really loves this subject, I wondered if we could discuss other options for him in math.”
- Listen carefully to what the teacher says. His objections to certain requests aren’t necessarily rejections. Keep pressing for other options. If he says, for example, “I have no time to create a separate set of activities for your child,” offer to work as a partner. If he argues that your child has been inattentive, sloppy in her work, or misbehaving, don’t automatically interpret

Websites

ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education
(www.ericsec.org)

An excellent resource for parents, offering hundreds of digests on a wide variety of topics related to gifted children.

Gifted Children Monthly
(www.gifted-children.com)
A newsletter for parents of gifted children.

GT World (www.gtworld.org)
An online support network for parents of gifted and talented children.

Hoagies’ Gifted Education Page
(www.hoagiesgifted.org)
An extensive online resource for parents and teachers on a range of subjects related to giftedness.

TAG Family Network
(www.telport.com/~rkaltwas/tag)
An organization run by and for parents of gifted children.

this as a criticism. Say something like, “I’m sorry if she’s not been following rules and I’m happy to work with her on that. But could you also allow her to spend more time doing some independent projects when she’s finished her work?”

- Work for a consensus. Since your goal is to find a solution for your child, try to find some common ground. Be flexible in areas where you can be flexible, but firm on the points that really matter. If your child is working at a third of his capacity, it is unjust for him to sit in his seat day after day learning almost nothing. But you might be able to be flexible in negotiating how changes are made. For example, the teacher may not be able or willing to offer an alternative curriculum, but may be able to talk to the principal and other teachers about letting your child attend a higher grade in some subjects.



- the programs offered are not offered for your child's grade
- the school holds other priorities for its student population's immediate needs.

If this is the case, you will still need to create some kind of adjustment for your child. If the teacher proves unwilling to work with you, move up the ladder of the school administration. The next person to address may be the gifted coordinator, the curriculum director, the assistant principal, or the principal. If none of these prove receptive, then go to the superintendent.

Explore as many possibilities as you can think of that will help meet your child's immediate need. Can your child be placed in a higher grade for certain subjects where she has special abilities? Could she spend a morning or day at home once a week to work on projects that interest her? If the teacher is unwilling to provide more advanced content, could something be worked out where the child is paired with a mentor who would work with her after she had completed or tested out of subject matter she already knows?

Find out if there are any parent groups in your area. Contact your state gifted association for this information. Start talking to other parents and find out if others feel as you do. Parent groups can provide valuable information about local schools and their response to gifted students as well as moral support for you and your family.

Look into gifted programs outside the school. These may be sponsored by a local university or institute. State gifted associations often have information on programs and other services for high-ability children.

In addition to whatever other support services you can find, try to supplement your child's education at home. Spend time with him exploring subjects he loves; seek out materials that will challenge his imagination and critical thinking. Consider locating a mentor for your child in an area of her particular interest at universities, visual and performing arts studios, and

personal contacts. Think of new and different ways you can enrich your child's life. Here are two examples from parents whose children do not attend gifted programs in their schools.

- A mother who is an architect decided to teach her son some preliminary lessons in architectural design. "His questions and eagerness to learn made me think about what I was doing in a different way," she said later. "I never realized how much fun it could be to share my passion for architecture with my son. And it obviously gave him the challenge he lacks in school— plus a chance to use his abilities in art and mathematics, two of his favorite subjects."
- The parents of an eleven-year-old girl with an exceptional ability in computer science found an opportunity for their daughter to work with a local environment organization on setting up their web pages. The organization was impressed with her skill and talent, and, in return for her service, allowed her to take free classes at the nature center (ecology was another favorite subject).

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

If I could give parents only one piece of advice, it would be this: never underestimate your power. Determined parents have made gifted education what it is today. You can bring substantive changes to your children's education, even if they seem like small, incremental ones at first. Also, the process of advocating for your children will teach them the value of determination and creative problem solving— skills all children need to negotiate the obstacles to their continued progress and achievement.

Dr. Joan Franklin Smutny is Director of the Center for Gifted at National-Louis University, in Evanston, Illinois. She is the author and editor of numerous books on gifted education.

NEWS

president's
column

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I remember Lindsay telling me a lesson from her mom that is all too rare these days. Lindsay opted to enroll in a very demanding history class when a less rigorous one was available to her. In the latter, she'd have been guaranteed a good grade and would have saved herself considerable effort in the deal. Most of her friends opted for the safer course, despite its well-founded reputation as being fluffy and soft. Explaining her decision, she said, "My mom has always taught me that learning is more powerful than grades. Stretching my mind will help me become who I want to be. A grade is just ink on paper and may not have much to do with real learning." It is no surprise to know that Lindsay continues to take intellectual risks in her life. She is a teacher now and does whatever it takes to engage and extend her students. There are no pedagogical formulas for her in her classroom— any easy ways out. I hope she teaches for a long, long time.

ENJOY THE ROLE OF TEACHER

As a new school year begins, it's important for parents to renew their commitment to teaching. A couple of decades down the pike, there will be a very few memorable reels of profound moments from history or art or math or literature playing in the minds of today's children who have become tomorrow's young adults. What a gift to ensure that there will be memorable reels of moms and dads teaching about life.

Professor Dumbledore is on to something powerful when he says to Harry Potter, "It is our choices, Harry, that show what we are, far more than our abilities." Teaching young people to make grounded choices may be the greatest opportunity parents have. Have a great school year with your kids this year. Be a memorable teacher for them in all the right ways!

