Challenges and Possibilities for Nurturing Gifted Students in Home and School

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Palo Alto, CA.
October 22, 2011
## Intellectual and Personality Characteristics

- Exceptional reasoning ability
- Intellectual curiosity
- Rapid learning rate
- Advanced cognitive development in one or more academic areas
- Complex thinking
- Lengthy attention span
- Divergent thinking
- Keen sense of justice
- Capacity for reflection
- Early language or reading development

- Insightfulness
- Developed sense of humor
- Need for intellectual stimulation
- Need for precision/logic
- Intensity
- Nonconformity
- Questioning of authority, system
- Tendency toward introversion
- Highly sensitive
- Highly self-critical
- Perfectionist

Characteristics and Matching Interventions in the Home

- Love of learning
- High verbal ability
- Excellent memory
- Good concentration

- Become a partner in the quest for knowledge—explore libraries, museums, labs
- Play word games, puzzles
- Provide exposure to new information, begin early to teach time management
- Allow uninterrupted time, give 10-minute warning when changing activities
Ranges of Gifted Behavior

- Knows the answers
- Answers the questions
- Top group
- Listens with ease
- 6-8 repetitions for mastery
- Enjoys peers
- Enjoys school
- Thinks thoroughly within discipline
- Absorbs information

- Asks the questions
- Discusses in detail
- Beyond the group
- Already knows
- 1-2 repetitions for mastery
- Prefers adults
- Enjoys learning
- Sees global connections
- Manipulates information
Perfectionism: Pitfalls and Promises

Attributes of healthy Perfectionists
- Need for order
- Self-acceptance of mistakes
- View of personal effort as important
- Use of positive coping strategies with perfectionistic tendencies

Attributes of Dysfunctional Perfectionists
- Anxiety about making errors
- Extremely high standards for self
- Questioning own judgments
- Need for constant approval
- Lack of effective coping strategies
In general, gifted children are as well adjusted as most other children. When they do have social/emotional issues, some of the causes are:

- Undetected learning problems
- Failure of the educational system to address uniqueness of learning needs
- Stress from self-criticalness, perfectionism, meeting other’s expectations, fear of failure, fear of success
Research on giftedness

- Characteristics and needs-basis for intervention
- Interventions—early and often, intensive and extensive
- Talent development process—internal and external
- Role of parents, peers, teachers, and mentors—challenge and support
A Systemic View of School-based Talent Development

**INPUT**
- Conceptions of Giftedness and Talent Development

**SCHOOL-BASED INTERVENTIONS**
- Grouping
- Acceleration
- Enrichment
- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Assessment
- Mentorships
- Internships

**OUTPUT**
- Productive/ Creative Behaviors & Products in relevant domains
Learner Characteristics and Corresponding Emphases in the Curriculum

**THE LEARNER**
- Precocity
- Intensity
- Complexity

**THE CURRICULUM**
- Advanced Content
- Process/product depth considerations
- Issues/concepts/themes/ideas across domains of learning
Good private schools for the gifted

- Provide challenge in all curriculum areas, calibrated to personal skill levels,
- Use various forms of acceleration,
- Offer strong counseling and guidance in psycho-social areas, course-taking, and career planning, and
- Personalize learning experiences.
Accelerated Options for Gifted Students

- Early entrance
- Skip the grade at transition points
- Private tutoring or mentoring
- Begin studying new subject matter earlier than typical (e.g., foreign language)
- Fast-paced classes in math, science, and verbal areas
- College courses while in high school
- College credit via Advanced Placement exams
- Attend college early with or without diploma
- Condense grades 708 into one year, condense grades 9-12 into three years
- Self-paced instruction in core areas
- Take Advanced Placement courses
- Enter academic competitions
- Attend summer and Saturday programs that stress advancement
Meeting Emotional Needs

- Provide role models of risk taking and coping with mistakes
- Provide realistic feedback on accomplishments; avoid overpraise
- Encourage empathy
- Foster discussions related to perfectionism, being different
- Listen for feeling and content in discussions
Meeting Social Needs

- Provide opportunity for interaction with like-ability peers
- Allow for individual differences
- Foster use of problem solving, decision-making, and prioritizing in academic and social arenas
- Model appropriate social interaction
- Stay alert to stressors (e.g. peer pressure, competing expectations..)
What Enhances Gifted Student Motivation?

- Challenging work (“Flow”)
- Emphasis on effort and ability
- Constructive use of leisure time
- Affective issues in balance
- Emphasis on process (vs. product)
- Matched skill level with interest
Parental Role in School Success

- Ask questions
- Monitor homework
- Encourage goal-setting
- Provide a system for time management
- Emphasize effort over ability in discussing school
- Be a consistent advocate but pick your battles
- Choose your language in parent/teacher conferences
- Be a partner not an adversary

Rogers, 2003
Six Issues Affecting Adolescent Gifted Students

- **Ownership** - gifted adolescents own and yet question the validity of the abilities they possess.
- **Dissonance** - gifted adolescents are perfectionists. They often set their standards higher than their abilities might allow.
- **Taking Risks** - gifted adolescents are less likely to take chances than more typical age peers.
Six Issues Affecting Adolescent Gifted Students (cont.)

- **Competing Expectations** - Often, others’ expectations compete with their own ideas.
- **Impatience** - Due to their accelerated thought processes, they become impatient with processes.
- **Premature Identity** - The pressure of multiple potentials results in premature career choices.
Challenges of working with the gifted

- Often are uneven in development
- Intensity may lead to hyperfocusing on one area of interest or have highly diffuse interests
- Lack a sense of how effort enhances ability over time (achievement)
- Lack of decision-making skills
Possibilities of gifted schools

- Engines for talent development
- Use of acceleration as a normal part of a gifted program
- Curriculum differentiated on gifted learner characteristics
- Electives targeted to gifted learners
- Climate of excellence
Possibilities cont.

- Motivation and incentives for learning
- Out of school options tailored to student needs (e.g., competitions, special classes)
- Personalized services as needed (counseling, tutorials, mentoring)
Books for Gifted Children About Being Gifted

- Gifted Kid’s Survival Guide by Delisle & Galbraith (1987)
- Giftedness: Living With It and Liking It by Perry (1987)
- Gifted Children Speak Out and Gifted Kids Speak Out by Delisle (1987)
- On Being Gifted by American Association for Gifted Children (1978)
Books for Parents

- *Some of My Best Friends Are Books*, J. W. Halsted
- *Smart Girls and Smart Boys*, B. Kerr
- *How to Parent So Children Will Learn*, S. Rimm
- *Re-forming Gifted Education*, K. Rogers
- *Counseling the Gifted & Talented*, L. Silverman
- *Social and emotional counseling of the gifted*, J. Vantassel-Baska, T. Cross, R. Olenchak, eds.
Organizations for Parents of the Gifted

- National Association for Gifted Children (www.nagc.org)
- Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (www.sengifted.org)
Some Useful Web Sites

- www.noblenet.org/booklists/biblio.htm -- list of books for bibliotherapy on various topics, from children’s librarians in MA
- www.hoagieskids.org/sil-gift.htm -- generic website developed by parent of gifted child for other parents
- www.gtworld.org/gtbook.htm -- list of books recommended by gifted children and their parents
- www.hbook.com -- *The Horn Book*, magazine devoted to children’s literature
- www.cfge.wm.edu -- Center for Gifted Education, College of William & Mary
- www. www.nrcgt.org--National Research Center for Gifted & Talented