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The Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented (TAGT) is a nonprofit organization of parents and professionals promoting appropriate education for gifted and talented students in the state of Texas.

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2. References should follow the APA style outlined in the fifth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.
3. Submit an electronic copy, typed, 12 pt. font, double-spaced manuscript. Use a 1½" margin on all sides.
4. In addition to the title page, a cover page must be attached that includes the author's name, title, school or program affiliation, home and work address, e-mail address, phone numbers, and fax number.
5. Place tables, figures, illustrations, and photographs on separate pages. Each should have a title.
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**Dr. Cindy Little,**
*TEMPO* Editor
cynthia_little@baylor.edu
I have a stomach ache mom.” I heard this almost every morning from my very shy, very driven, very bright 11-year-old daughter. This particular morning after I made sure she had some tummy ache medicine, her backpack, and lunch I shuffled her out the door and off to another day of school. In spring my daughter excelled on all of the measures and checklists used to identify students for gifted programming, with the exception of a single quantitative measure. She was five points shy of the cutoff. Thankfully, the school she attends is attentive to the learning needs of children who are “close” but “not quite” and they allowed her to take advanced coursework in language arts and reading. However, despite my continued follow ups, were not allowing her to take the advanced coursework in math. The school counselor said for the better part of the year, “Let’s wait and see how she does in regular math first.” This puzzled me as she was just as strong in math as in her other subjects. What was going on? Well, I found out when I spoke with her math teacher. The conversation went something like this:

Me: “Mrs. X, Megan is excelling in your math class. We would really like you to consider her for the gifted math program.”

Mrs. X: “Well, I’ve been watching her this year, and she does seem to grasp math concepts very quickly and is an excellent student.”

Me: “So, why haven’t you considered her for gifted math program? What reservations do you have?”

Mrs. X: “Oh, I have no reservations. It’s just that, well, she’s so shy. I can’t get a read on her as a student. I can’t tell if she is struggling, doing well, etc. during class time.”

I held my tongue on asking Mrs. X. about the evidence of my daughter’s class assignments, TAKS scores, progress report grades, etc. as I’ve spoken with past teachers about my daughter’s shy behavior as well. Unfortunately, being extremely quiet in class has hindered her learning opportunities. As a result, in many of her classes she isn’t challenged and is less and less motivated to go to school in the mornings (hence the tummy aches). However, she thrives in the classes where she is allowed to do the advanced coursework.

What does my story have to do with nature and needs? I think quite a bit. All of us who work and/or live with gifted kiddos need to be aware of the needs of the whole child. Being introverted for example is a very common characteristic among gifted children. And, like other social and emotional differences that come along with being gifted, should be recognized, understood, and if possible used to assist gifted children in becoming talented and thriving adults.

This issue is about nature and needs—something that our authors have addressed in very different and very relevant ways. I hope you enjoy the articles as much as I have.

Dr. Benny Hickerson takes on two topics that speak directly to the nature and needs of gifted children; underachievement and perfectionism. He encourages teachers to maintain high expectations for gifted learners and allow them to take risks and make mistakes. Dr. Hickerson argues that in doing this, children are afforded opportunities to build self confidence, resilience, and a sense of personal responsibility.

Dr. Dorothy Sisk focuses her article on identifying and meeting the needs of diverse gifted learners. Dr. Sisk argues that gifted children from culturally/linguistically diverse and/or economically disadvantaged backgrounds are underrepresented in gifted programming hence their needs aren’t being met. She goes on to state that underachievement in these populations contributes to a lack of identification and that schools should be places where these students’ academic and social needs can be met.

Dr. Susan Johnsen’s *What the Research Says* column in this issue focuses on the nature of gifted children. A few interesting conclusions highlighted in the studies are that gifted children have better self concepts, believe in their abilities, are more motivated, have better learning strategies, better social coping skills, better moral judgment, and fewer behavior problems than the general population.

Dr. Micheal Sayler is also back with yet another installment of his *Gifted and Thriving* series; this time focusing on the importance of friendships in the lives of gifted children. Dr. Sayler believes that building good friendships is essential for personal thriving in that they are the vehicle for promoting character development. He also states that gifted children who set aside friendships for achieving in their talent fields will have problems later on in life.

Finally, Karen Fitzgerald is back with her Product Reviews column that highlights books by Dr. Sylvia Rimm and Dr. Dorothy Sisk, and a problem based ecology unit by Mark Bohland. All good stuff—stuff worth picking up before gearing up for school in the fall!
THOUGHTS & MUSINGS

The Values of Membership...

After 25 years in association management, I have found one thing that many of these organizations have had in common: members often cannot verbalize the values of the organization. In getting acquainted with the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented for example, I have asked members of the office staff, several elected officers, a few parents, and selected member educators of gifted and talented children... “Why would anyone want to join TAGT? What do I get for the $49 fee?”

Answers generally reflect the very visible and obvious benefits such as our TEMPO journal which comes to their mailbox, and the significant financial discount given to members registering for our outstanding annual conference. These are important and significant tangible benefits of membership in TAGT, but I contend that the intangible values are just as important and often of greater value to professionals... if we could just put them into words.

So, that task has become one of my early goals with TAGT. If we are to grow as an association, we must be able to share the importance of our organization with parents, with administrators, and with our colleagues in gifted education. To that end, the staff and I are designing a new recruitment brochure to outline the value categories of TAGT membership. When completed, I will mail a copy to each of you so that you too can be a recruiter of new and loyal members of this association. A sneak preview of the brochure’s new look is shown here.

In the meantime, just for you I’ve dusted off a poem that I penned several years ago that shares a few thoughts about association membership value. Of course I have changed a few words to better relate to TAGT, but I think you will get the picture.

In coming weeks, many of you will be given the opportunity to renew your membership. At that time I hope that you will choose to be a loyal and continuing member... after all, it is your organization... serving your needs and interests.

TAGT needs YOU...
but we think that you need TAGT too!

Why Should I Join TAGT?

Why should I join TAGT?
A colleague asked me one day.
And while I pondered his question
He continued to chatter away.
To join they want forty-nine bucks.
Man, that’s too much to pay!
All that I get is a journal
And I don’t read it anyway.

They say it makes you “professional”
To have your name upon the list.
Lots of good stuff for the members?
Huh, can’t see a thing I’ve missed.

And all those meetings they have, who cares!
Just a big waste of time, you know?
I’m not gonna change the way I’ve done things
For twenty-nine years in a row.

So tell me ...why should I join it?
Just one good reason will do.
Partner, I said, you’re so darn right
TAGT is obviously not for you.

TAGT is for folks who are on the way up,
Who want to professionally grow.
Folks who are involved in shaping their fate
And willing to share what they know.

TAGT is for those with commitment,
Who’ll accept when leadership calls,
And then follow through with their duties and tasks
No matter how large or how small.

As they say, you receive in proportion
To the way that you give and serve.
So, if a forty-nine bucks is all you invest,
Well, a Journal may be all you deserve.

As a member, I hope you’ll be finding
Much greater reward than that man:
That professional involvement in TAGT, for you
Makes the difference we know that it can.

So, if someone should ask you, “Why TAGT?”
Its real value I hope you can share.
I hope they will know by your answer
It’s a sign we professionally CARE.

Quentin A. Christian
TAGT Executive Director
I f I had known then what I know now....

Elsa and Berta were gifted. They lived in financial poverty. They were Hispanic.

Elsa came to our school as a pre-teen who knew very little English. Since she was older than most of the students in her class and because her English was limited, Elsa spent most of the day with me and the other migrant students. Elsa learned quickly. Her math abilities were at an eighth-grade level when she arrived at our school. Only her language and English reading abilities required remediation. She learned to read and write English in just a few months and was not shy about trying to speak English when she was in the safe confines of my classroom. Well, obviously she was gifted.

Berta came to school at age seven. Neither she, nor her younger sister Maria had been to school, so they were both first graders. Berta learned very quickly. Between October and December, Berta was reading beyond many of her fellow first graders. She was speaking English almost in concert with reading it. Writing was a little slower because of her motor skills. Anything that we had to teach her, she soaked up, squeezed out and offered a different point of view, and soaked up more. Well, obviously she was gifted.

Elsa and Berta were my teachers in the early 1970s, and I was the student of children of migratory farm workers.

Were either Elsa or Berta identified for services? Of course not. The idea that they could be or should be identified was not considered. Even if they had been, I doubt they would have met the behavioral checklist criteria that accommodated middle class children.

If I had known then what I know now....

How often have we educators of a certain age lamented the refrain after gaining a new tool for our educational toolbox? Early on in my career, I learned about the nature and needs of the gifted, but came to understand that what I accepted and practiced applied only to a portion of the population of gifted learners.

As a migrant teacher for over fifteen years, I now realize that many of my migrant students were gifted, but not recognized because our knowledge of characteristics was so narrow. Often, my classroom was near or a part of the Title I Math and Reading classes or the classrooms for the learning disabled. I can think of several students with areas of academic weakness who were academically gifted in other areas.

Elsa and Berta are now adults contributing to our local economy and social structure. By the time Elsa and Berta’s children came to school, I had left the district, but I know the children, their strong academic abilities, and their sound belief systems that reflect their giftedness.

Elsa’s children have finished their formal education at renowned Texas universities. Elsa and her husband made sure that their children had access to educational opportunities they never had. Berta and her husband have done the same for their children. Your doctor, banker, or lawyer may be one of their children.

Recently Elsa and her husband won the Texas Lottery. They didn’t win the zillion dollar one, but one that gives them some financial breathing room. As I think about how Elsa sacrificed to ensure formal educational opportunities for her children, I think about how that money would have come in handy for them.

And then I think: my family won the lottery, too. We didn’t buy a ticket or choose how the winnings would be distributed. We won nevertheless. We were born white, English-speaking, and middle class. We knew the hidden rules of middle class. We knew how to access gifted services, summer camp opportunities, and college admissions. We supported our children in ways that first generation Texan Americans could not because they often didn’t know when the district was testing for gifted services. Or, what gifted services were. Our children lived in a world of academia with its hidden rules and privileges. Elsa and Berta’s children didn’t have that opportunity.

Our job, as educators of and for the gifted, is to make sure that all children, including Elsa’s and Berta’s, know our rules and the tenets that lead to services for the gifted from every background.

By making sure that teachers and parents recognize nature and needs of the gifted, including the social and emotional ones, we can ensure an equal opportunity, and appropriate education for all.

My family won the lottery many generations ago. It is time for us to share our winnings with those who are our new neighbors.
Making Great Kids Greater: Easing the Burden of Being Gifted

©2009
Dorothy A. Sisk, Ph.D.
Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA
$28.95

Dr. Dorothy Sisk’s newest book “is a treasure for gifted youngsters, as well as their parents, teachers, counselors, mentors, and friends.” The book begins with a discussion of the unique perception that gifted children possess. Dabrowski’s Theory of Emotional Development is at the center of the first chapter’s discussion. The five overexcitabilities and the Overexcitability Questionnaire are briefly discussed along with the five levels of Dabrowski’s theory.

Each chapter concludes with a Teacher Voice letter, a Read On recommendation, a Log On suggestion for Internet research, and a Reflect On section with probing questions to ponder further. The References at the end of each chapter are extensive.

The Second Chapter evaluates the socialization of the gifted as a concern in gifted education. Sisk urges gifted children to develop strong relationships with others and to acquire a deep concern for humanity.

Chapter Three includes extensive information on perfectionism and its influence on gifted children who like things perfect. Parents and teachers will find especially helpful the suggestions on how to help perfectionists cope with school and home. Educators will find the section on intrinsic motivation of importance in their classrooms. Learning to enjoy the journey is a special lesson we can teach gifted children who are perfectionists.

You won’t want to miss Sisk’s “Strategies to Build Moral Courage” outlined in Chapter Four. “The development of moral courage was examined and how the use of moral dilemmas can assist gifted students in exploring and developing their moral courage.” Sisk’s use of case studies in many chapters offers interest and information for both parents and teachers.

The remaining chapters outline Individuality, Sensitivity, Empathy, Reflective Thinking, and Developing Creativity in gifted students. Sisk concludes with advice on “Achieving Balance in Your Life and Finding Your
Purpose.” Her use of interweaving research studies with personal narrative is effective and interesting. This is a practical resource that parents and educators of the gifted should include in their libraries on gifted students.

Dr. Linda Silverman, the Director of the Gifted Development Center in Denver states in her Foreword to the book: “Gifted individuals can make a difference in the world. This book provides a road map of how to channel empathy and compassion into a life of service.”

For more information, contact Corwin Press at 805-499-0721 or www.corwinpress.com.

Mystery River A Problem-Based Ecology Unit ©2008
Mark A. Bohland Prufrock Press, Waco, TX
$17.95

Whether you teach students who are identified as gifted and talented or you are trying to meet the needs of high-ability students in a mixed-ability classroom, teacher often are confronted with the dilemma of choosing between content and process. This problem-based learning (PBL) unit is designed for student-centered learning of new and meaningful content in a way that forces students to grapple with a complex and changing problem.

This middle school science unit introduces students to a serious problem – the fictional town of Hopewell’s prized freshwater mussel population is dying out, and the town’s leading citizens cannot figure out why. Students will take charge of the situation as they join a task force dedicated to solving the problem.

Students will ask, “Is the river the mussels live in polluted? Has their habitat been disrupted by a new predator? Are local chemical plants to blame?” They will investigate the problem from every angle and try to develop their own reasonable, real-life solutions while learning valuable research skills, practicing critical thinking skills, and developing presentations to showcase their results.

You will see detailed guidelines for conducting the fifteen (15) session problem-based learning units in the classroom. Also included are memos, observation charts, newspapers, maps, and everything else the students will need in their investigations. Teaching science and critical thinking with this unit is easy and enjoyable!

For more information, contact Prufrock Press at 512-300-2220 or www.prufrock.com.

Sylvia B. Rimm, Ph.D. Great Potential Press, Scottsdale, AZ
$21.95

The third edition of Dr. Rimm’s award-winning book for parents provides practical, compassionate, no-nonsense advice for raising happy, secure, and productive children, from preschool to college. This survival manual is full of practical advice and pointers for parents, step-by-step examples, and sample dialogue.

Parents will enjoy browsing and reading through different parts of the book as their busy lives allow. Dr. Rimm begins each chapter with an advance summary that focuses on the learning objectives of the chapter. She includes illustrations which portray some familiar family settings. Each chapter also includes Parent Pointers, which parents can apply before finishing the book.

At the end of each chapter, Rimm provides a review of some common parenting questions, along with her responses. Each chapter offers basic strategies to help building confidence in parenting skills. By following her advice, it will permit parents to guide their children to achievement and learning.

Chapter 1 offers advice on empowering your child with love and praise. Parents will identify themselves within the case studies and will welcome Dr. Rimm’s sound and sensible advice on handling situations with children. From dealing with a perfectionist child to common mistakes in using time-out, the parent pointers are extensive and reasonable.

At the end of each chapter, Dr. Rimm discusses what parents will learn in the next chapter. In Chapter 2 she shows how parents must be united to end the power struggles that can arise when conflicts develop with our children. Her advice on relationships within the family, childcare providers, and teachers and schools is concrete solid. She even provides information for single parents and grandparents.

“Children with good habits automatically tend to achieve better in school and for the rest of their lives,” states Dr. Rimm in Chapter 3. Parents are given advice on homework, studying, test-taking skills, and test anxiety. Browse through this chapter for parent pointers on improving family communication and fun.

The final chapter discusses setting positive expectations for your children. Whether it is encouraging parents to become a good role model for achievement or teaching your children how to survive in competition, Dr. Rimm offers no-nonsense advice for all parents. She concludes the book with recommendations on modeling the love of learning within your lives.

This informative book concludes with additional reading for parents and an extensive references list.

For more information, contact Great Potential Press at 877-954-4200 or www.giftedbooks.com.
Increasing Participation of Diverse Students in Gifted Programs

by Dorothy Sisk, Ph.D.

A persistent critical issue in education is the underrepresentation of diverse students in gifted education. Yet, there is little disagreement in the field of gifted education on the need for broad representation of students in gifted programs. Educators struggle on a daily basis with this issue, and many underrepresented students are minority and low-income children and youth. The fact that minority children and youth are underrepresented in classes for the gifted is unacceptable (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). This disproportionate representation is dramatic, and includes children from culturally/linguistically diverse and/or economically disadvantaged families and gifted children with disabilities (Castellano, 2003).

In 1975, the director of the Office of Gifted and Talented convened a national conference in Washington D.C. with the theme of Economically Disadvantaged Gifted Students. Assistant Secretary of Education, Mary Barry, opened the conference reaffirming the need for economically disadvantaged students to be included in gifted programs. She was followed by Representative Shirley Chisholm from New York, a former classroom teacher who called gifted, economically disadvantaged students “diamonds in the rough,” and shared how students from low-income families in her classes found their “spark” and went on to make lasting contributions in their communities. The closing speaker was E. Paul Torrance who introduced his “creative positives” of disadvantaged students, gleaned from his work with Future Problem Solving. He proposed that gifted students be considered exceptional children and included under the umbrella of special education.

Working sessions were held with the conference participants discussing and drafting statements on the importance of broad representation and strategies to address the issue. The implicit hope was the participants would submit proposals addressing this issue. When the proposals were received in response to the Request for Proposals (RFP) they addressed the need for differentiated curriculum and creativity development, with little or no direct response to the needs of diverse students (Sisk, 2008).

Background on the Issue or Why Does this Happen?

Many districts are not addressing the “potential” aspect of gifted students. The Marland report of 1971 specifically used the concept of potential when it defined gifted as:

- children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the fol-
Many gifted students are underachievers and may not demonstrate high academic achievement (Sisk, 2008). With each criteria, the high potential student is “weed out,” and teachers seldom refer underachievers for consideration as candidates for gifted programs. In addition, many teachers have a deficit paradigm and focus on student weakness rather than strengths (Van Tassel-Baska, 2003). They see students as vessels that need to be filled up, rather than vessels brimming with strengths and talents to be developed.

**Underachievers**

Many gifted students are underachievers and may not demonstrate high academic achievement; yet, these students could be considered potentially gifted (Naglieri & Ford, 2006). Many gifted adolescents underachieve because they find school boring and unchallenging. Kanevsky & Keighley (2003) studied underachieving students who said learning was the opposite of school boredom. They recommended schools provide an environment in which learning activities are designed to meet the abilities of students, and then gifted adolescents would be more likely to be successful academically and socially.

**Multiple Criteria**

Another problem is the use of multiple criteria since these criteria often become “multiple hurdles” in which students must show task commitment, creativity, and above average intelligence (Renzulli, 1986), or high achievement, high ability on standardized achievement tests, creativity, and teacher recommendation which represent criteria in most states.

**Alternative Identification**

States have attempted to provide alternative identification procedures, and Florida is an example of this effort in the use of Plan B programs. Hillsborough County in Tampa, Florida crafted a program with differentiated identification procedures for minority and economically disadvantaged students. Underrepresented students could be identified as gifted with an ability score of 120. Unfortunately, the district faced a lawsuit because an Anglo child who was not economically disadvantaged, was not recommended for the gifted program with a similar ability score, and they won their case. Plan B programs were quickly reaccessed. Incidents like this result in districts and states becoming “gun shy” in providing alternative identification for underrepresented students. Even when high-potential gifted, underrepresented students are placed in existing gifted programs, they may soon fal behind, and be exited from the program. However, there have been exceptions to this practice.

**Project Step-Up: Javits Project (1990-94)**

This collaborative project among the Universities of Arkansas, Arizona and Lamar had a major goal of establish-
ing a system for identifying underrepresented students with gifted potential, and providing a transitional curriculum to meet their educational needs. The project had two primary assumptions: 1) Giftedness exists in all racial and ethnic groups, and 2) Realization of intellectual potential begins with recognition of high potential.

In teacher training, four barriers to identification of gifted underrepresented students were addressed: 1) attitude, 2) access, 3) accommodation, and 4) adaptation. Negative attitudes often exist toward the concept of giftedness in minority groups, and to help dispel this attitude, the project staff discussed the value of the program with school administrators, parents, and community members, stressing the importance of using a Checklist of Positive Characteristics of the four ethnic groups participating in Project Step-up: African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American. To provide access to the program, children demonstrating a majority of the characteristics depicted in Figure 1 & 2 were placed in a school talent pool.

The teachers then prepared a student portfolio of schoolwork and compiled available achievement and ability test scores. These traditional scores were supplemented by alternative tests including the Raven Progressive Matrices (1962), the Structure of Intellect (SOI) battery (Meeker, 1992), and test items that June Maker (2001) developed based on the Multiple Intelligences Model later called DISCOVER to accommodate the children's culture.

Teachers were provided training on the use of the Structure of Intellect (SOI) test (Meeker and Meeker, 1975) and the SOI was administered to the talent pool of students. The SOI was selected because it does not represent a traditional intelligence test, and involves students in a broad spectrum of testing experiences. Using SOI test results, teacher recommendations, non-traditional assessment, and portfolios, nine groups of 2nd grade students were selected from Arkansas, Florida, and Texas to participate in the project in the fall of 1990. In Arizona, June Maker used her assessment model, as well as the SOI, and the Raven Progressive Matrices to identify four groups of children in Arizona. After the first year, an additional satellite site was established in Houston, bringing the total number of project sites to 14 for the project (1990-94). El Paso was added in 1995.

Project Step-Up had six outcomes:
1. Alternative methods and criteria for identifying underrepresented gifted students.
2. New and appropriate transitional curriculum.
3. New approaches to teacher training and professional development.
4. Identifying and involving community members.
5. Methods to actively involve parents in their children’s education.
6. Educationally appropriate and effective programs to positively influence the educational school climate of the participating schools.

**Curriculum Adaptation: Emphasis on Content and Process**

Project Success: Integrating Language Arts and Arts developed by Carolyn Bronson (1995) was a resource in Language Arts, and Decision-Making Math developed by Carolyn Hubachek Aho, Laura Dunn, and Kristine Shuff (1995) was used to focus on problem-solving with a four step process: understand, plan, answer, and check. Communication skills and the use of rhetoric were emphasized, with the students memorizing poems from their cultures and sharing poetry with classmates, parents, and community groups. The bilingual students were encouraged to develop fluency in both languages, and to write daily assignments in Spanish, Navajo, and English. To further adapt and differentiate the curriculum, there was direct teaching of thinking skills for 20 minutes daily. The emphasis was on understanding...
knowledge, retaining knowledge, and most important, using knowledge.

**New Approaches in Teacher Training**

The project staff became active participants in the classroom, working side-by-side with the teachers and students using four teacher training skills: focusing, empowering, facilitating, and transforming. Focusing established an atmosphere of order with the teacher serving as a guide, modeling the active behavior of a learner. Empowering involved teachers in decentralizing the classroom and encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning. Facilitating was demonstrated by teachers as they worked with the children in self-paced instruction. Transforming was realized as teachers moved from teacher-directed to student-directed learning, acting as coaches.

**Results**

The project hypothesized that 60% of the children would be identified as gifted and talented using traditional district and state criteria for giftedness. This hypothesis was realized as an overall percentage; however, as Figure 3 indicates some sites were more successful than others. The Step-Up formative and summative evaluation data identified seven program variables that proved essential for program success. These included: 1) direct instruction of thinking skills; 2) language arts and arts focus in the curriculum; 3) emphasis on content and process; 4) visual reinforcement; 5) positive classroom climate and use of positive language; 6) teacher flexibility and creativity; and 7) parent involvement. Figure 3 depicts the students identified as gifted in the Project.

In examining the low performance of one Arkansas project site with 1 child out of a class of 19 being identified, there was little administrative commitment or belief that the children could be identified as gifted, and no evidence of teacher flexibility/creativity, or teaching thinking skills, using reinforcement, or involving parents.

**Project Scientists-in-Schools: Identifying Underrepresented Students (2002-2008)**

In a second Javits funded project Scientists-in-Schools, a collaborative between Beaumont Independent School District and Lamar University, the project goal was to identify high potential underrepresented students in Science at the 8th grade level and follow them through graduation from high school. Project outcomes included increasing: 1) the number of Science courses the students take in high school; 2) the achievement of the students in Science; 3) the number of high potential students graduating from high school; and 4) the number seeking higher education and selecting Science as a major.

**Teacher Training**

Thirty teachers were identified by the BISD Science Supervisor and three middle school principals of Title I schools. The teachers were introduced to a modified checklist of high-science potential. The list included: including interest in science, curiosity about how things work, a love of collecting, willingness to work on a science project for extended periods of time, unusual ability to verbalize about scientific concepts, and ability to perceive relationships among various elements in a scientific problem (Fleigler, 1961). Teachers identified 60 eighth grade students who attended six Saturday seminars at Lamar University taught by Lamar professors. The students and their teachers participated in two courses (1½ hrs) each in Biology, Geology, Chemistry, and Physics. Teachers of the students attended a three week summer institute focusing on advanced content in science and inquiry-based strategies. They developed standards-based science curriculum working with Lamar scientists. Eight courses of study were developed: Environmental Systems, Aquatic Science, Ornithology, Treasure Hunters: Searching for Liquid Gold, Oceans of the World, Air Quality: Models in Buildings, and Body Composition: An Inquiry-based Study.

**Residential Summer Program**

A three week residential program was provided for 60 twelfth grade students each year in which the students participated in two Science courses in Marine Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science, and Ornithology. They also selected...
one elective in Pre-Calculus, Applied Geometry, Drama, Musical Production, Dance, Debate, Simulation and Gaming, and Graphic Design. Classes were taught by Lamar professors and public and private school teachers with experience in working with gifted students.

Assessment and Results

Students were administered pre-post tests on the Stanford Achievement Test in Science, and their grades were secured. Teachers were administered pre-post tests in Science content and a Teacher Methodology Utilization Scale. Results of the pre-post test in Content for the teachers indicated an increase in scores at the .01 level of significance. On the Teacher Methodology Utilization Scale, 90% of the teachers improved in the use of appropriate methodology. Over the period of the grant (2002-2008) 100% of the 12th grade students participating since 8th grade graduated and applied to higher education, with 58% planning to major in science. Figure 4 depicts their achievement as measured by the Stanford Achievement Test in comparison to a control group of students. In addition, 243 students were recommended to the BISD program for the gifted with A/B grades, and teacher recommendation. The Scientists-in-Schools project demonstrated that:

1. teachers can identify high potential students in Science.
2. teachers can benefit from professional development with the same type of dynamic, engaging activities advocated for gifted students.
3. advanced Science content and increased inquiry skills result in the ability and willingness of teachers to work with university scientists to develop curriculum.
4. high potential students can demonstrate achievement in Science, and be nominated for their gifted programs in their schools using traditional tests and standards.

Importance of Identifying High Potential Students and a Transitional Curriculum.

Both Javits projects worked with diverse students with the objective of identifying high potential students and providing transitional academic content, study skills, organization and time-management skills, and most important ways to strengthen belief in self as a future contributor. Growth in belief in self was particularly noted in the residential program, as students experienced a “taste of college” working with professors with passion for their disciplines.

The professors were role models and mentors to the students, and this positive effect is reflected in a student response to a follow-up survey:

Being in the Biology class with Dr. Terry made me know how much I want to major in Science—he made the classes “fly” for me. He loves what he does and that is what I want to do (Male age 16).

This student enrolled at Lamar University and is working in the Biology department as a lab assistant, with a career goal of being a research scientist in Biology. In the words of Representative Shirley Chisholm, he is a “diamond in the rough,” and well on the way to becoming a contributor to his community.

References


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Stanford Science Achievement Test Scores (2002-2007)

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Figure 4
The Value and Purpose of Friends for the Gifted

by Micheal Sayler, Ph.D.

“True happiness consists not in the multitude of friends, but in their worth and choice.”
—Samuel Johnston

Friendship is something deeply desired by everyone, including the gifted. Unfortunately, some gifted children, youth, and adults have not found good friendships. It is more common to understand the importance of being in a rigorous school or gifted option, of attending a challenging college, or of finding a satisfying career than to comprehend the essential contribution of good friendships to the thriving of the gifted. Friendships provide the mechanism for the development of character and integrity.

Finding a friend, being a true friend, and maintaining good friendships is not taught in most schools, and maybe that is appropriate. Education's primary concern is talent development. Schools may not address character development and friendships directly. The actions and structures of schools should encourage, not impede the development of good character and strong friendships for the gifted. Along with the development of talents, the development of character is an essential goal for the personal happiness and flourishing of the gifted (Sayler, 2009, 2009b). People need strong friendships to flourish (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008) and if a gifted individual does not have or ignores and sets aside friendships as they strive to accelerate in their talent fields, they will have problems now, and in the future.

Our society has minimized the need to address friendship in its planning and actions. People are so busy doing their required tasks that if they think about friendship at all, it is perceived as a secondary gloss to their other goals. For many preceding centuries, friendship was a central theme of philosophers and writers who tried to explain what it takes to be happy (Pakaluk, 2005). Yet, during the last 200 years, friendship has all but disappeared as a topic in philosophy and science. Recently, it is making a comeback in the work of positive psychologists and some modern philosophers and writers.

Kinds of friendships

What are the different kinds of friendships a gifted person will have in their lifetime? What features are present in good and healthy friendships? How do the gifted find, deepen, and maintain good friendships and avoid, change, or end unhealthy ones?

A gifted child may want to be with someone because they are fun or they share some interest (dinosaurs, electronics, drawing, chess, sports, games...). Good friendships can form for these reasons. These friendships are limited if fun and interests is all they share. It is great to have a friend with whom we can play and have fun or who also likes chess or soccer, but if that play buddy or soccer friend has strong positive personal qualities in addition to the shared interest, the friendship has the potential to go much deeper and last much longer... perhaps lasting a life time.

A gifted child may seek useful friendships of peers who may or may not be gifted themselves. These are peers who are in their classes, who help each other with schoolwork, or who are involved in activities which the gifted youth would like to become involved. A gifted child may form a relationship with another child for mutual support on the bus or in the lunchroom. If that person who became a friend because of useful
common ground has good positive personal qualities in addition to the initial factors that drew them together, these friendships may also grow much deeper and last much longer.

Having friendships that revolve around shared activities, interests, and mutual usefulness is healthy and desirable for the gifted. Happy people continue to cultivate these kinds of friendships across their life-span. On the other hand, if the gifted individual’s friendships are exclusively of these types, the gifted will feel dissatisfaction and ultimately be less likely to find deep flourishing or happiness.

Friendships are a fundamental path to personal flourishing of the gifted. Just as training promotes talent development, friendship promotes character development. Neither an exclusive focus on talent nor an exclusive focus on friendships is healthy for the gifted. Both foci are needed. The combination of talent and character development adds breadth and width to the gifted person’s life, leading to personal flourishing today and in the future. Parents have the primary responsibility, both initially and long-term, of developing both the talents and the character of their children. This responsibility is carried out in the opportunities and choices leading to the development of their child’s talents. Parents’ friendships with their children set the stage and the expectations for all the other friendships in their child’s life. By creating good friendships early and by fostering good friendships with others as our children grow, parents foster the development of good habits, virtue, character, and integrity.

The third kind of friendship according to Aristotle was the best of all. These are friendships that form between people of good character. The gifted and their friends who have good character will share interests, provide useful mutual help, and share in activities. Much of this kind of friendship is built on talking and spending time together enjoying each other’s company and interests. These friends come to love and admire each other because of their good habits and sustained character. These friends are not perfect in all their thoughts and actions, but will help each other become better and better. Friends of this type have fun together and find each other both relaxing and energizing. They are good people who are thoughtful and honest with a sense of humor. Parents, siblings, extended family, age peers, intellectual peers, adults, etc. can all be this kind of friend. The gifted often have good friends who are older than they are and they often give this kind of friendship to younger children who in turn begin to emulate the older gifted child’s good habits. Aristotle (circa 350 BC/2004) noted that good friends become ‘another self.’ Living this kind of friendship requires good judgment, generosity, and detachment from self.

Friendships are one of the three mechanisms for the development of the gifted and thriving (Sayler, 2009). They are the basis of all positive relationships including parent-child, child-child, teacher-child, coach-athlete, mentor-mentee, adult-adult, romantic, or professional relationships. A friend wants us to be good. A friend gives constructive criticism and guidance, telling us the truth about ourselves even when it is hard for them to say or do this. A friend bases their advice and guidance on objective moral standards, not transitory feeling or perceptions. They help us to learn and then to keep those standards. A friend will oppose us when we stray from them.

There is a kind of pseudo-friend or weak friendship where the person wants mostly to ingratiate themselves with us. They find ways for us to feel good in the immediate situation and get along without any conflicts regardless of the underlying goodness of the actions we are doing or not doing. Plutarch (circa 100 AD/1992) called this kind of person a flatterer. They are friendly, but not a real friend. They are inconsistent in their advice or their leadership especially when regarding issues of how to behave. A flatterer may copy our bad habits indiscriminately or seek to separate us from our true friends by speaking ill of them.

Flatterers take on four forms (Pakaluk, 2005). A flatterer may be a chameleon who does not stand for much of anything, but deals with appearances and opinions. A chameleon flatterer will do anything it takes to make or keep a friendship. This pseudo friendship may make an underlying anger with the person with whom they want to be friends because of qualities or talents they possess. They may also be a tolerater. A tolerater flatterer will not speak up when their friend is acting badly or making bad choices. They want their friend to feel good and are not really concerned with their being good. A flatterer may also be a validator. A validator flatterer reassures us that our choices or actions are right, not because they are right, but because we like to hear we are correct. Finally, some flatterers are surface skaters; they do not want to have the friendship go very deep, but stay at the level of surface appearances and perceptions.

Peer flatterers who are chameleon-like become and say whatever is needed to fit it. Care must be taken to distinguish the healthy and adaptive chameleon-like behavior of the highly gifted from that of the flatterer. Highly gifted children often adopt camouflage language and some actions appropriate to the group they find themselves (Gross, 1999). Amongst adults these gifted use their adult language and ideas, but among age peers they use a simpler, less technical language. This behavior often grows out of an altruistic understanding of how their advanced language and interests confuses age peers and makes their age peers uncomfortable. The chameleon-like behavior of a flatterer on the other hand is unhealthy, often passive-aggressive. They may espouse the same ideas or interests as the gifted, but under the surface they are hostile and likely to betray or undercut their gifted friend at some point. The peer flatterer may be a validator encouraging a gifted child not to pay atten-
A bad friend tries to get us not to think about the rightness or wrongness of an idea or action. They often do this by encouraging an emotional reaction to a related, but peripheral issue. These kinds of relationships drain and undercut the flourishing of the gifted person. Bad friends are dangerous and take away from the person's current and life-long well being (Hartup & Stevens, 1997).

It is possible for a parent to be a bad friend with their gifted child. These parents love their child, but are not careful about how they live that love. These parents are often too busy with their work or their personal avocations. They do not spend much time with, guide, discipline, or get to know their child as a person and friend. These parents often substitute things that seem to make the child happy now: money, food, TV, games, unstructured access to electronic media, etc. for the attention and guidance their gifted child really needs. Time is an essential component of friendships. Spending a significant quantity of time with your children is essential before there can be any quality of time, despite what our culture tries to tell us.

**Friendships across the life span**

Friendships will occur across the entire life of a gifted person. The first friendships of gifted children are ideally with their parents, siblings, and immediate family members. Functional families naturally seek the good of each other. Shared beliefs, mutual guidance, and modeling of the family's values (Seligman, et al., 1984) help all members stay aligned. These families facilitate habits and actions that lead to personal thriving for everyone. The family is the perfect natural community for the formation of good habits. Parents who are good friends with their children will seek what is best for them even when doing so is hard or stressful for the parent. Successful parents realize their primary task is not raising talented children; their real goal is to raise flourishing young adults who have developed their talents in ways that make them happy, serve others, and form and support their own families.

The friendship between parents and their gifted child is centered on their mutual love and concern for each other. The true friendship of a parent is shown as they guide their child towards a mature, talented, hardworking, and generous adult life. This kind of guidance and future vision also will guide parents in helping their gifted child flourish today.

The friendships of parents and children evolve over time as the gifted child becomes more independent and responsible. A wise parent knows their child and gives them the appropriate amount of freedom, knowing their current cognitive and character development. The friendships built when children are young remain, but the time together often decreases as children grow through adolescence and into young adulthood.

In successful parenting, spouses generously dedicate their lives to their children and their gifted child learns he or she can in turn give their lives to others; first with their friends, teachers, coaches, etc. and eventually with their colleagues, friends, and their own spouse and children. Focus on talent development of children alone is not a good way for parents to facilitate their gifted children’s flourishing. Friendship by its very nature involves others. Talent development is essentially about the person themself. Together, the development of both friendships and talent are essential for personal thriving of the gifted person (Sayler, 2009).

This investment by parents who were good friends with their children and who made decisions and plans that supported and guided their talent and character development pays off. First, these gifted children are more likely to grow up to be flourishing adults who will carry on the lessons learned from their parents by the way
they treat others, especially their own families. Additionally, they'll maintain a long-term friendship with their parents. As they have children and make sacrifices for them, these adults will thank their own parents for the many sacrifices made for them when they were young.

After parents and family, the gifted seek friendships with others who share their interests and are who are also excited about learning and doing things (intellectual, artistic, hands-on, athletic, etc.). The gifted may feel lonely or out-of-place if they do not find peers who share their passions and interests. An interesting phenomena of the gifted is that they may not find friends among those who are their age peers (this is the group from whom most teachers and parents initially expect the gifted to find friends) but among older or intellectual peers who share interests or can engage in discussion or activity related to their interests (these acquaintances and friends of the gifted are sometimes surprising to parents and teachers). The gifted often make friends with younger children; extending the caring friendships they first learned themselves in their families to others.

Great friendships can exist between the gifted and their teachers, coaches, and other adults who guide them in talent and character development. Such people have the gifted person’s best interests at heart. They know what talent performance looks like and what it takes to be talented. They will make rigorous but appropriate demands on the gifted child or youth. These adult friends understand the importance of good habits and character and will ensure that the gifted person develops their talents, character, and integrity. If there is ever a time when talent development and virtue development are in conflict, these adult friends weigh in on the side of character.

Their vision of good, adult friends for the gifted is not simply to teach or coach for success today. They see the limitations of an overly exclusive focus on success in the talent area, praise and recognition, getting into good schools or onto good teams, becoming famous and making lots of money, or in merely feeling good. The actions and words of these adult friends are such that they help the gifted person become more deeply talented while refining their good character.

Finally, as our gifted children grow into adults they will seek spouses and life-long friends at work and outside of work. These strong adult friendships are beneficial not only to the gifted individual, but they are associated with greater success in the organizations, businesses, or groups where they work or act (Wrzesniewski, et al., 1997).

The benefits of developing the gifted child’s talents are many (Sayler, 2009b). Flourishing is facilitated by K-12 classes where the gifted are challenged academically, encouraged in their creativity, and guided toward appropriate understandings and dispositions about hard work, effort, and self-control. Talent development alone though is not enough for thriving; the development of character is equally as important. Talented individuals without character and integrity ultimately cause problems or harm themselves and others around them. Character is taught through the friendships of parents and family, others in school, and the adults the gifted encounter. Not all friendships are useful for character development. Bad friends and flatterers act like negative catalysts in the development of character. Good friends are attracted to the integrity of the other person and have their long-term good at heart. A gifted child who receives appropriately challenging education and training, and who has true friends who are willing to guide him or her in their character development will flourish today and into the future.

References


Professor Micheal Sayler is the Associate Dean for College of Education at the University of North Texas. Following 10 years of experience both as a primary and secondary school teacher and as a specialist teacher of gifted and talented students, Micheal gained MA and PhD degrees in Educational Psychology from Purdue University, specializing in gifted education. He is co-author, with John Feldhusen and Steve Hoover, of Identification and Education of Gifted Students at the Secondary Level and also with these two colleagues he developed the Purdue Academic and Vocational Rating Scales. His areas of special expertise in gifted education are identification, grouping, academic acceleration and social-emotional development. Recently his research has extended to a study of educational, personal, career, and spiritual factors in the lives, success and happiness of adults who can be called “gifted and thriving.”
The study of the nature of gifted individuals (i.e., the individual’s innate qualities) can be traced back to Galton (1865) who examined the general laws of distribution and essentially initiated the study of human differences using psychometric techniques. Following in his footsteps were Binet, Spearman, and Terman among others. Over a period spanning 1926-1959, Terman (1925) studied the characteristics of students who performed at superior to very superior levels on the Stanford-Binet intelligence test. Terman concluded that gifted students were (a) qualitatively different in school, (b) slightly better physically and emotionally in comparison to normal students, (c) superior in academic subjects in comparison to the average students, (d) emotionally stable, (e) most successful when education and family values were held in high regard by the family, and (f) infinitely variable in combination with the number of traits exhibited by those in the study.

Galton’s emphasis on heredity as the sole source of an individual’s cognitive development has changed over time because researchers continue to learn more about the complex interaction of the environment with nature. Psychologists and professionals in the field of gifted education, however, do continue to study individual differences in social, emotional, personal, and cognitive areas. This article will concentrate on this research.

To narrow the search and to focus primarily on gifted students’ characteristics, I included mostly descriptive studies and eliminated any articles that were others’ perceptions of these characteristics, examined the effects of a program or intervention on the characteristics, examined
domain-specific skills, did not include PK-12 students in their sample, were not within the United States, and were not empirical (e.g., had a method of study). These criteria yielded 48 articles from Gifted Child Quarterly, Journal for Gifted Education and Roeper Review over the past 10 years (1999-2009).

The samples in the studies included participants in university summer programs (n=15, 31%), in a university residential program for gifted students (n=5, 0.8%), from national databases (n=2, 4%), in a clinic or hospitals (n=2, 4%), and public or private school settings (n=24, 50%). The majority (n=33, 68.7%) of the samples were comprised of secondary students. Four (8%) included both elementary and secondary students, seven (14.5%), elementary only, and one preschool (2%). Three (6%) studies included all ages since they were longitudinal in nature. Only 9 (19%) of the 48 studies examined the characteristics of diverse groups (e.g., African American, Asian, Hispanic, autism, ADHD). The majority of participants in most samples were White (81%).

While four studies asked the students to fill out questionnaires, most administered multiple instruments that measured the specific individual characteristics of interest to the researchers. The vast majority of the studies used quantitative approaches with only five using qualitative. Comparisons of gifted students were made with other groups such as normal students (n=12, 25%), college students (n=1, 2%), and high achievers (n=1, 2%). Differences within the group of gifted students were also noted: male vs. female (n=14, 29%), special populations (n=2, 4%), ethnicities (n=2, 4%), underachieving vs. achieving (n=2, 4%), older vs. younger (n=1, 2%), sport participants vs. nonparticipants (n=1, 2%), highly gifted vs. gifted (n=1, 2%), and academically gifted vs. creatively talented (n=1, 2%). Two studies examined the intellectual and motivational characteristics of a gifted group and a cohort comparison group of children from age one through age 24 (Gottfried, Cook, Gottfried, & Morris, 2005; Gottfried, Gottfried, & Guerin, 2006). A variety of characteristics were identified and explored.

In their longitudinal study, Gottfried, Gottfried, and Guerin (2006) compared a gifted group with a cohort comparison group at age one, at every six months interval from infancy through preschool, annually from ages 5 through 17, and at age 24. They reported that the gifted group was 1.5 and/or 2 years developmentally ahead, more advanced in their language development, excelled across an array of measures, performed at a higher level across diverse subject areas, exhibited greater goal directedness, object orientation, attention span, had more positive perceptions of their academic competence, came from intellectually and culturally advantageous home atmospheres, and were more likely to benefit from their environment.

On self-concept and self-perception measures, gifted students tended to score higher than the general population (Bain & Bell, 2004; McCoach & Siegle, 2003; Reis & Park, 2001; Rinn & Wininger, 2007). However, when comparing gifted males and females, females tended to have a more positive view on the Behavior and the Intellectual and School Status subscales (Lewis & Knight, 2000). Subject area also tended to influence self concept. For example, girls felt more positive about their verbal facility (McQueen, Clark, & Rumsey, 2008; Rinn & Wininger, 2007). Hong and Aqui (2004) also noticed that students who were either academically gifted or creatively talented in mathematics perceived that they were more self-efficacious in general. Participation in sports also influenced the self-concept of gifted students with those participating having higher perceived rates of emotional well being, same-sex peer relations, and beliefs about self in general (Rinn & Wininger, 2007). These studies seem to indicate that success in a subject area or in certain activities influences the self-concept.

Gifted students from diverse backgrounds who achieve in school also have strong beliefs about themselves and their scholarship (Hébert, 2000; Hébert & Beardsly, 2001) although differences were found between White students and other ethnicities (Worrell, 2002; Worrell, 2007). Only White students’ physical self-concept was a substantive contributor to their global self-concept. White students also had a significantly higher scholastic and job self-concepts than Asian American students did (Worrell, 2002). While ethnic identity was not a strong predictor of self-esteem for White students, it was important for Hispanic students. For African American gifted students, other group orientation was a stronger predictor of self-esteem (Worrell, 2007).

Adolescents with gifted motivation were more likely to have higher self concepts and higher achievement in school than a similar cohort of their peers (Gottfried, Cook, Gottfried, & Morris, 2005). Gifted girls who participated in gifted education programs also exhibited greater self perceptions of instrumentality and achievement motivation than their cohorts who did not participate (Mendez, 2000). Overall, gifted girls expressed more positive attitudes toward school than gifted boys (Swiatek & Lupkowski-Shoplik, 2000).

Achieving and underachieving gifted students differed in their motivation and belief in self (McCoach & Siegle, 2003; Reis, Colbert, & Hébert, 2005; Reis & Park, 2001). Underachieving students desired to “fit in” rather than excel and had a fear of failure and high expectations (Schultz, 2002). Since self concept and motivation are protective factors in developing resilience, these gifted students may be at risk of continued underachievement (Reis, Colbert, & Hébert, 2005).

The majority of gifted students did have a learning orientation where they believed that “working hard” and “doing it the right way” was why they succeeded in school (Ablard, 2002; Assouline, Colangelo, Ihrig, &
Forstadt, 2006; Bain & Bell, 2004). More gifted girls had an orientation toward “working hard” than males (Reis & Park, 2001) except in language arts (Assouline, Colangelo, Ihrig, & Forstadt, 2006). Twenty-five percent of the gifted students attributed their success to their ability, which made them more vulnerable to failure and underachievement (Ablard, 2002). Gifted students did learn quickly, favored higher-level strategies, and used information learned through strategic behavior more than an average group (Steiner, 2006).

Gifted children reported using more problem-solving strategies to cope with academic and peer stressors (Preuss & Dubow, 2004). The social coping strategy of minimizing one’s focus on popularity was used most among young students (Swiatek, 2002). Females were more likely than males to report denying giftedness as a social coping strategy and males were more likely than females to report using humor. Girls also avoided competition because they wished to avoid conflict and hurting their peers’ feelings (Rizza & Reis, 2001). Overall, gifted girls engaged in more social interactions than gifted boys (Swiatek, 2002) with boys being more introverted than girls (Swiatek & Cross, 2007).

While gifted students were more vulnerable to being bullied, the majority was not distressed (Peterson & Ray, 2006b). Some gifted students, however, were highly distressed by nonphysical kinds of bullying because they assumed responsibility for resolving it themselves. Moreover, gifted students were worried about violence in the school (Peterson & Ray, 2006a).

Verbal self-concept subscales were the most correlated with overexcitabilities (OE) (Gross). Gifted adolescent females reported higher sensual, emotional, and imaginative overexcitabilities than their male peers, which suggested that females have different ways of knowing than males (Gross, Rinn, & Jamieson, 2007; Tieso, 2007). Tieso (2007) suggested that High Emotional and Intellectual OE scores may make gifted students more insightful and volatile in their relationships with peers and others. High Psychomotor and Emotional OEs in gifted students may lead to diagnoses of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and other behavior disorders (Tieso, 2007).

ADHD was more likely to create peer relational problems and greater emotional difficulties as compared to giftedness. High intelligence did not serve as a protective factor on social relationships in young children and may cause “more emotional distress than is typical for gifted children (Moon, Zentall, Grskovic, Hall, & Stormont, 2001). Gifted students with Autism Spectrum Disorder were found to be distinctly different from highly gifted students (Assouline, Nicpon, & Doobay, 2009).

Gifted students were more morally sensitive and advanced in moral reasoning than the general population (Lee & Olszewski-Kubilius, 2006). In fact, Derryberry and Barger (2008) reported that gifted students used more postconvention schema that college students.

Using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to discover psychological types among the gifted, Cross, Speirs Neumeister, and Cassady (2007) reported that gifted girls and boys indicated stronger preferences for intuition and perceiving than the normal population. Males tended to orient toward thinking and females toward feeling although females had a greater tendency toward introversion and thinking when compared to a normal sample (Cross, Cassady, & Miller, 2006; Cross, Speirs Neumeister, & Cassady, 2007).

Students identified as gifted also displayed a stronger preference for imaginative styles, while nongifted children displayed a stronger preference for practical styles (Oakland, Joyce, Horton, & Glutting, 2000). Even young children’s self-direction private speech and overall private speech were related to fluency and originality (Daugherty & White, 2008). Dunn, Corn, and Morelock (2004) also found that the higher the
IQ, the higher the fantasy-prone characteristics, with creative writers the most fantasy-prone. These studies indicate that imagination and creativity are indicators of gifted children.

For the most part, gifted students and nongifted students are similar in exhibiting few behavioral problems (Gallucci, Middleton, & Kline, 1999a). There was no evidence that highly gifted youth (as measured by aptitude scores) exhibited more emotional and behavioral problems than moderately gifted or non-gifted youth (Gallucci, Middleton, & Kline, 1999a; Garland & Zigler, 1999). Moreover, gifted students were found to experience significantly fewer depressive symptoms than their nongifted peers (Mueller, 2009).

On the other hand, gifted students may be more perfectionistic than the general population, but not in maladaptive ways (LoCicero & Ashby, 2000). Students whose perfectionism is maladaptive or pervasive do have more obsessive-compulsive tendencies, a poorer self-image, a lower sense of personal security, and patterns of dysfunctional coping (Dixon, Lapsley, & Hanchon, 2004). Perfectionistic gifted middle school students expressed more concern for organization than males, and males reported higher parental expectations than females (Siegle & Schuler, 2000).

For the most part, this research suggests that gifted students have better self concepts, believe in their abilities, are more motivated, have better learning strategies, better social coping skills, better moral judgment, and fewer behavioral problems than the general population. Some gifted students, however, do exhibit maladaptive perfectionism, are underachievers, and are more vulnerable to bullying. Moreover, differences exist between males and females, which may indicate differentiated counseling. Given that most of these studies were conducted with white, middle class students, more studies are needed with diverse populations to describe the full array of gifted characteristics.

References:


In this study, 425 students who were involved in the talent search at the Center for Talented Youth at Johns Hopkins University completed a questionnaire pertaining to achievement goals and implicit theories of intelligence. Of the study participants, 62% were male. Achievement goals were assessed using the Task-Orientation and Ability-Orientation scales of the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey. These academically talented students ranged widely in their learning and performance goals for achievement, providing a variety of reasons for achieving. Results indicated that these students want to learn, even when their performance was poor, increasing their likelihood of more effort after failure. However, one fourth of the students embraced strong performance goals (e.g., overt accomplishments), making them more vulnerable to underachievement. As learning goals became stronger, so did beliefs that intelligence can increase via efforts.


The researchers examined the relationship between extreme giftedness and social difficulties by studying the psychometric characteristics of two profoundly gifted girls, one with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (160 IQ) and the other without ASD (153 IQ), using a case study methodology. Along with ASD assessments, other psychoeducational assessments included intellectual, achievement, neuropsychological, adaptive, psychosocial, and social functioning. In terms of academic and cognitive functioning, the girls were almost indistinguishable and demonstrated superb academic functioning. The main differences between the girls’ profiles lies in how they scored on measures
supported residential academy for the Education of the Gifted, and those to measure adaptive functioning. For example, on the neuropsychological assessment, the girl with ASD had an impaired ability to recognize affect and facial emotional expression. The authors conclude that only through a comprehensive cognitive assessment can professionals determine which girl had ASD.


The purpose of this study was to investigate socially related self-concepts, attributions for social success and failure, and peer relationships of 93 fourth through sixth graders identified as gifted and a comparison group of students who are high achievers, but not identified as gifted. Two questionnaires, the Self-Description Questionnaire and the Student Social Attribution Scale were administered to the two groups. The group identified as gifted scored significantly higher on the self concept scales on both questionnaires and attributed their success to ability and effort rather than luck or task difficulty. The gifted group also scored higher on three of four socially related self-concept areas: physical ability, physical appearance, and peer relations. The authors concluded that children identified as gifted are no more vulnerable to socially related self-concept problems than the general population.


The psychological characteristics of students attending a state-supported residential academy for academically gifted adolescents (N = 139) were examined in this study. The adolescents completed the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory for Adolescents upon entrance and completed a post administration of the MMPI-A at the end of their 2nd year at the school. Results indicated that the gifted students were quite similar to the normative group of adolescents on the MMPI-A.


This study examined the personality and psychological characteristics of 567 eleventh and twelfth grade students who were attending a public residential high school for academically gifted students. All were administered the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory—Adolescent test. Results indicated that boys and girls score similarly on the MMPI-A and no differences were found between the gifted adolescents and the general sample. The authors conclude that gifted adolescents do not experience heightened rates of neuroticism or personality difficulties when compared to a normal group.


This study examined the relationships between psychological personality types and suicide ideation. Participants were 152 juniors (average age = 16.09, female = 84, male = 68) who were enrolled in a public residential high school for academically gifted students. They were administered the Suicide Ideation Questionnaire and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator that contrasted four dimensions of personality—extraversion (E)/introversion (I), sensing (S)/intuition (N), thinking (T)/feeling (F), and judging (J)/perceiving (P). The most common types of psychological types reported by this sample were INTJ, INTP, INFP, ENFP, ENTP. Compared to the normal population, gifted girls and boys in the present study indicated stronger preferences for N and P. Gender differences for the gifted sample were found on E/I, with males orienting toward I and females orienting toward E. Gifted females had a greater tendency toward I and T, and gifted males had a greater tendency for I than norming samples. The authors suggest that N and P psychological types prefer instructional methods that emphasize independence, self-paced learning, and higher level discussions.

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between private speech and creativity in head start and low-socioeconomic status preschool children. Gifted Child Quarterly, 52, 30-39.

The present study examined the relationship between private speech and creativity in head start and low-socioeconomic status preschool children. Gifted Child Quarterly, 52, 30-39.

Do contributors to intellect explain the moral judgment abilities of gifted youth? Gifted Child Quarterly, 52, 340-352

This study examined the contributions of reaction time and attributional complexity to advanced moral judgment of 30 gifted youth and 30 college students. Gifted youth were in grades 7 through 10 with 26 of them African American and 6 Caucasian. The private speech was collected in an open play setting and a structured task situation. Results indicated that originality and fluency were related to self-direction private speech (e.g., describes task or gives self direction) and grand total private speech (e.g., quantity of private speech). The authors suggest that private speech may offer a method for assessing early creative thinking from various cultural and economic backgrounds.


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The purpose of this study was to investigate the incidence of fantasy-proneness in groups of individuals with talents in particular domains. Subjects were recruited from participants in a summer program for Talented Youth at Vanderbilt University. Of the 45 participants, ages 13-16, 39 were White, 2 were Asian, and 4 were African American. There were 30 male and 15 female. All were from middle to upper class backgrounds. All the participants were administered the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test (K-BIT) and the Inventory of Childhood Memories and Imaginings: Children’s Form (ICMIC). The mean ICMIC score of the creative writing group was found to be statistically significantly higher than that of any of the other three groups (e.g., computer science, chemistry, and math classes). Across all groups, those ranking highest in fantasy-prone characteristics also scored highest in measured IQ.


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from Connecticut public schools. The comparison group consisted of students ages 12-15, with 76.5% Caucasian, 2.9% Hispanic, 11.8% African American, and 8.8% Asian American students in this group. All gifted students combined had scores greater than 130 (n = 78) as determined by intelligence quotients on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children—Third Edition (WISC-III; Wechsler, 1991). Children with average IQs (n = 62) comprised the other group. The non-gifted group (n = 62) ages 12-16 was recruited from regular education classes in Connecticut schools and included 33 boys and 29 girls. Parents of all students completed the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL, Achenbach, 1991). ANOVA analyses showed no differences between the Louisiana and Connecticut gifted groups and these two groups were combined for the CBCL ratings. The authors found that the CBCL ratings of gifted children in Louisiana and Connecticut and the ratings for non-gifted students in Connecticut were shown to be consistent with national norms. It was also found that both gifted and non-gifted groups demonstrated fewer behavioral problems.


This study examined the question of whether gifted students are more likely to have higher levels of creativity and behavioral problems. The sample (n = 78) contained 26 boys and 18 girls ages 12-16 from a gifted summer program in Louisiana along with a comparison group of 18 boys and 16 girls in Connecticut public schools. Student IQ scores on the WISC-III were greater than 130. The Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT; Torrance 1990a) was used to measure creative potential and the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach, 1991) was used to measure behavior problems. Using chi square analyses, the authors found no significant difference between groups with the gifted sample subjects showing an absence of behavior problems.


This study explored the relationship between giftedness and psychosocial problems. In the sample were 191 students, ages 13-15, attending a summer program for intellectually gifted youth based on exceptional Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) scores. The ethnic distribution consisted of 81% Anglo, 10% Asian American, 4% Hispanic, 3% African American, and 2% other, with 68% boys and 32% girls. The Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL, Achenbach, 1991) was mailed to the parents of the youth to be used as a measure of behavioral difficulties. The CBCL scores of the sample were compared to norms for youth from a similar age bracket. The authors found that these extremely intellectually gifted youth exhibited advanced coping skills and judgment. The sample was also split into two groups using the median SAT score to create a gifted and highly gifted group to compare behavior problem scores. There was no evidence that highly gifted youth (as measured by aptitude scores) exhibited more emotional and behavioral problems than moderately gifted or non-gifted youth.


The researchers examined gifted adolescents’ motivation in a long-term, longitudinal investigation. The study assessed a gifted group and a cohort comparison group of children at age one, at every six months interval from infancy through preschool, annually from ages 5 through 17, and at age 24. The sample consisted of 130 infants, 52% male and 48% female, from hospitals around California State—Fullerton. All families spoke English with 90% being European American. The group was from predominantly middle-class families. Eighty percent of these children remained in the study throughout the 24 years. Adolescents with extremely high academic intrinsic motivation (i.e., gifted motivation) were compared to their cohort peer comparison on a variety of educationally relevant measures from elementary school through the early adulthood years. Academic intrinsic motivation was measured with the children's Academic Intrinsic Motivation inventory (CAIMI). Adolescents with gifted motivation are significantly more likely to have higher achievement, classroom functioning, intellectual performance, self-concept, and post-secondary educational progress than their peers with lower motivation. The authors conclude that gifted motivation is distinct from gifted intelligence and suggest that the construct of gifted motivation should be considered in its own right. These findings have implications for identifying students with gifted motivation for entry into programs for the gifted.


This longitudinal study examined the intellectual and motivational characteristics of a gifted group and a cohort comparison group of children at age one, at every six months interval from infancy through preschool, annually from ages 5 through 17, and at age 24. The sample consisted of 130 infants, 52% male and 48% female, from hospitals around California State—Fullerton. All families spoke English with 90% being European American. The group was...
from predominantly middle-class families. Eighty percent of these children remained in the study throughout the 24 years. Over 20 different instruments were used to collect data in the areas of intellect, motivation, achievement, self-concept, temperament, behavioral and social functioning, and home and family environment. The standard cutoff score of 130 IQ was used to identify the gifted group of 20 children at the age of eight years. In comparison to the cohort group, results indicated that the gifted group was 1.5 and/or 2 years developmentally ahead, more advanced in their language development, excelled across an array of measures, performed at a higher level across diverse subject areas, exhibited greater goal directedness, object orientation, attention span, had more positive perceptions of their academic competence, came from intellectually and culturally advantageous home atmospheres, and were more likely to benefit from their environment.


This study examined the relationship between 248 gifted adolescents’ overexcitabilities and self-concept. The participants, ages 11 to 16, were attending summer programs at a two universities. Approximately 85% of the sample was White. They were administered the Overexcitabilities Questionnaire-Two (OEQII) and the Self Description Questionnaire II (SDQ II). Verbal self-concept subscales are the most correlated with the overexcitabilities with imaginative overexcitability the least correlated. The emotional stability subscale scores were negatively correlated with intellectual, imaginative, and emotional overexcitabilities. Gifted adolescent females reported higher sensual, emotional, and imaginative overexcitabilities than their male peers. Gifted eighth- and ninth-grade students had higher intellectual overexcitability scores than gifted sixth-grade students.


Using a qualitative approach, this study examined six intelligent young men who were in the 11th and 12th grades in an urban high school. Three were Hispanic, two were White, and one was African American. The design integrated features of case study and ethnographic research. Major findings for the high-ability achieving males were a strong belief in self, aspirations, heightened sensitivity, and a multicultural awareness and appreciation. Factors that influenced the strong belief in self included relationships with supportive adults, involvement in extracurricular activities, sports, special programs, summer school experiences, and family support.


A classroom teacher and a university researcher collaborated in examining the life of a gifted Black child living in rural poverty. Hébert reviewed a portfolio and entry into the community, spent three weeks in participant observation, spent one-year corresponding with the child and his teacher, and made a final visit to the community, conducting in-depth interview with the child. Jermaine found support from his uncles, his teacher, the school’s lunchroom chef, and the football coach. Along with his quiet surroundings, watching television and reading appeared to help his creative writing. “Jermaine saw himself as a combination of the following: scholar, creative thinker, athlete, and ethical young man” (p. 99). The author concludes that gifted and talented children are present in every segment of society and need to be nurtured.


This study compared the cognitive and motivational characteristics of 90 tenth or eleventh graders (42 males, 47 females, 1 unspecified) who were academically gifted in math (n = 25), creatively talented in math (n = 21), and nongifted (n = 23). All students were tested using the Self-Assessment Questionnaire, which measured the participants’ perceptions about domain-general and domain-specific cognitive and motivational constructs, and the Activities and Accomplishment Inventory. Results indicated that students’ beliefs regarding ability were similar across gender and the groups. Most of the other characteristics examined in the study distinguished the three groups. Academically gifted female students reported expending more effort than did academic male gifted students. Creatively talented males put forth more effort than academically gifted males, and the creatively talented in general used more cognitive strategies than the academically gifted. Overall, students who were either academically gifted or creatively talented in mathematics perceived that they were self-efficacious in general, used cognitive strategies, perceived their math ability and math self-efficacy to be high, and valued learning math more so than their nongifted age peers.


This study examined the level of emotional intelligence, moral judgment, and leadership of 234 gifted students in grades 10-12 who par-
participated in an accelerative academic program or an enrichment leadership program through a university-based gifted institute. Of the sample, 52.8% were White, 26.4% were Asian, 7.4% were Black, and 3.1% Latino/Hispanic with 50.9% male and 49.1% female. Three psychometric scales were administered: BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version, Short Form; Bar-On, the Defining Issues Test-2; and the Roets Rating Scale for Leadership. The vast majority of students (82.5%) were from the Midwest. When compared to a normal sample, gifted males were similar whereas gifted females lagged behind. Gifted students had higher scores on adaptability but lower scores on stress management and impulse control ability. On moral judgment, gifted students were comparable to the level of individuals with masters or professional degrees, and they showed an above-average level of leadership compared to the normative sample. These results support the “belief that academically gifted students are more morally sensitive and advanced in moral reasoning and possess greater leadership potential than heterogeneous groups of youngsters” (p. 56).


The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of gender and school level on the self-concept of 368 intellectually gifted students who were in grades 4-12 from a single rural school district in a southern state. More girls (206) than boys (162) participated in this study. The subjects were 89% White, 8% African American, and 2% other. All were administered the Piers-Harris Children’s Self Concept Scale. Results indicated that there were significant differences between the responses of males and females on the anxiety, behavior, and intellectual and school status subscales. Males achieved the higher mean on the Anxiety subscale. Females held a more positive view of themselves than did males on both the Behavior and the Intellectual and School Status subscales.


The purpose of this study was to examine levels of multidimensional perfectionism in a group of gifted students and a group of peers from the general cohort. A multidimensional measure of perfectionism was used which included maladaptive and adaptive components. The gifted sample included 83 gifted middle school students, as identified by the school district, and the comparison group included 112 middle school students that did not meet the gifted criteria. Participants were given the Almost Perfect Scale-Revised. The gifted students scored higher on the adaptive measure of perfectionism and lower on the maladaptive measure. The results suggested that gifted students may be more perfectionistic than the general cohort students, but not in maladaptive ways.


This study investigated the difference in the factor structure of academic self-perceptions of 210 gifted students in grades 9-12 from 28 school districts when compared to a sample of 160 ninth grade students drawn from a general school population. The majority (78%) of the participants in the gifted sample identified themselves as White. Those in the general population consisted of 30% African American, 22% Latino American, 42% White, and 6% Asian American. All were administered the academic self-perceptions (ASP) subscale of the School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised. The gifted sample demonstrated higher academic self-perceptions than the general school sample and higher self-reported GPAs.


This study explored, through quantitative methods, the extent to which gifted achievers and gifted underachievers differ. The sample consisted of 178 gifted students in grades 9 through 12. The students were administered the School Attitude Assessment Survey-R, which measures these factors: academic self-perceptions, attitudes toward school, attitudes toward teachers and classes, motivation and self-regulation, and goal valuation. Results indicated that significant differences in attitude existed between the two groups on every factor except academic self-perceptions. The greatest mean difference between the two groups was the motivation/self-regulation factor. A limitation of this study was that it focused heavily on personal characteristics associated with underachievement.


Researchers examined the gender differences of 181 gifted adolescents who were from 12 to 16 years old of their math/verbal self-concept and math/verbal ability. Assessments included SAT/ACT scores and the Mathematics and Verbal subscales of the Self Description Questionnaire II. Significant differences between males and females were found in their verbal achievement scores, no differences in their math achievement
scores, significant differences in their verbal self-concept scores and no differences in math self-concept scores. Achievement in one area appears to influence one's self-concept in the same area.


The purpose of this study was to compare gender-role stereotyping constructs between girls in gifted and general educational programs. The participants in this study were 209 girls in grades 6-8 (mean age 12.75 years). All attended two public schools within a suburban school district outside of a large southwestern city. There were 132 girls in gifted programs and 77 girls in general education classes. The sample was comprised of 87% Caucasian students, five percent Asian students, four percent Hispanic students, two percent African American students, and two percent Other. The measures included a parent questionnaire, the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ), the World and Family Orientation Questionnaire (WOFQ), the Revised Occupational Checklist (OCL), and the Attitudes Toward Women Scale for Adolescents (AWSA). The measures were administered to fourteen 6th grade, eight 7th grade, and six 8th grade classes during one class period to students with parental permission. The results indicated that early-adolescent girls in gifted programs exhibit (a) greater self-perceptions of instrumentality, (b) greater levels of achievement motivation, (c) career goals that are nontraditional, prestigious, and require higher levels of education, and (d) significantly more liberal attitudes towards rights and roles of women, as compared to their counterparts in general educational programs.


This multiple case study examined the emotional and social characteristics of gifted boys with ADHD as compared to non-gifted boys with ADHD. Three students with both ADHD and giftedness were compared to two other groups: three students with giftedness only, and three students with ADHD only. All subjects were from the same Midwest school district and were 8-10 years old. Their identification as ADHD or giftedness was determined by the district and their need for medication. A variety of methods was used, including collecting data with multiple methods from multiple sources, conducting analyses at three different levels (individual case, within-group, and cross-group), and using researchers with different theoretical perspectives. The authors found that ADHD is more likely to create peer relational problems and greater emotional difficulties as compared to giftedness. High intelligence did not serve as a protective factor on social relationships in young children. Being gifted and ADHD “seemed to increase emotional intensity and internal dysynchrony” and may cause “more emotional distress than is typical for gifted children” (p. 237).


This study compared depression in 762 gifted and 762 nongifted adolescents (mean age was 15.7). Participants were selected from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). The gifted sample was predominately White (75.6%) with 10.8% Black, 8% Hispanic, 4.9% Asian Pacific Islander, and .7% other. There were more males (52.6%) than females (47.4%). The nongifted sample was matched on age, gender, family income level and ethnicity. The main outcome measure was adolescent self-report of depressive symptoms, which was measured by the Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale. Independent variables included demographics, self-concept, parent-family connectedness, and school belonging. Results indicated that gifted students were found to experience significantly fewer depressive symptoms than their nongifted peers. No other significant differences were found.


Learning style preferences of 1,554 students identified as gifted and nongifted, ages 8 to 17, were measured using the Student Styles Questionnaire (SSQ). Students identified as gifted and nongifted students did not differ significantly on extraverted-introverted, organized-flexible, and thinking-feeling styles. Students identified as gifted displayed a stronger preference for imaginative styles, while nongifted children displayed a stronger preference for practical styles. Compared with boys identified as gifted, girls identified as gifted were more likely to prefer imaginative styles. Nongifted boys expressed a stronger preference for thinking than did boys identified as gifted. Overall, boys displayed a stronger preference for flexible and thinking styles while girls displayed a stronger preference for organized and feeling styles.


As part of the national study on bullying among gifted children and
early adolescents (N=432), structured interviews were conducted with 57 of the participants. The authors identified five major themes from the interviews: giftedness is associated with unique vulnerability to bullying; gifted victims perceive that external factors cause bullying, but assume responsibility for resolving it themselves; gifted children can be highly distressed by nonphysical kinds of bullying; coping strategies improve with age and emotional repair can occur over time; and gifted bullies can change their behavior. The authors concluded that teachers need to help students make social connections and adjustments, particularly during the early middle school years so that they will feel safe at school.


The purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of bullying among gifted children and early adolescents, giving attention to both victims and perpetrators. Participants were 432 gifted eighth graders in 16 school districts in 11 states. A non-standardized survey instrument was used to collect data. The prevalence of being bullied was 67 percent with peak years being in middle school. Name-calling was the most prevalent (35%), followed by teasing about appearance (24%), teasing about intelligence and grades (19%), pushing/shoving (13%), beating up (12%), knocking books (11%), and hitting/punching (9%). Of all the participants, 28 percent had bullied someone at some time during the first nine years of school, with 16 percent of the gifted participants acting as bullies in grade eight. While bullying bothered some victims (10-12%), the majority was not distressed at all. More surprising was that 41 percent of the gifted eighth graders in this study worried about violence in school daily. The author concluded that counselors and teachers need to be trained to conduct proactive, prevention-oriented classroom lessons on topics such as problem solving, friendship skills, making good choices, expressing feelings, organization, and career development.


This article investigated the coping responses of gifted and typical children to childhood stressors. The sample included 52 gifted and 55 typical children in fifth and sixth grades from semi-rural elementary schools. Fifty percent of the typical participants and 45 percent of the gifted participants were female. Ninety-six percent of the sample was Caucasian. Data were collected from the administration of the Self-Report Coping Scale for school and peer stressors, a demographic questionnaire, and from teacher ratings of social adjustment, academic adjustment, and academic potential. The gifted children reported using more problem-solving strategies to cope with academic and peer stressors. The gifted boys endorsed fewer coping strategies as compared with the typical girls, typical boys, and gifted girls groups. Teacher ratings showed better academic and social adjustment for the gifted students.


This three-year longitudinal study explored, through comparative case study and ethnographic methods, the lives of 35 economically disadvantaged, ethnically diverse, and academically gifted students who either achieved (N=18) or underachieved (N=17) in their school setting. Data were collected through observations, interviews (students, teachers, administrators, school counselors, coaches, parents, siblings, and community members), and school documents. It was determined that achievers and underachievers differed on issues including motivation to achieve and belief in self, protective factors contributing to the development of resilience, risk factors experienced, and other factors that may have affected the development of resilience. Recommendations for the application of resilience research to underachieving gifted students and proactive counseling services were made.


This research article examined gender differences between high achieving students in math and science. Dependent variables included grade point average, achievement, self-concept, locus of control, number of math and science courses taken, and the important people who contributed to their decisions to enroll in advanced high school courses (teachers and parents). The 8th grade samples were drawn from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 and scored in the top 10 percent on the standardized math or science tests. The math group included 707 boys and 621 girls. The science group included 809 boys and 519 girls. In the math group, the high-achieving girls were more influenced by their teachers. In the science group, high-achieving girls were more influenced by their parents. In both the math and science groups, it was found that high-achieving boys had higher self-concept and higher standardized test scores than high-achieving girls. Also, in both groups, the girls were more likely than the boys to regard “hard work” as more important than “chance or luck.” Test scores for male students were significantly higher than for female students in both the science and math groups. Implications for educators and parents included
realizing that that gender differences in math and science still exist, girls may need individual encouragement and high expectations to pursue these areas, and that personal acknowledgement and promotion of math and science talent despite lower test scores will be important.


This study examined the self-concepts of 264 gifted adolescents (mean age = 13.6) who participated in sports (n=172) with those who did not participate in sports (n=92). Of these 136 were male and 128 were female. Approximately 84% of the participants were White. Multiple facets of self-concept were measured using the Self Description Questionnaire II. No significant differences were found between the groups in these areas of self concept: general school, parent relations, and honesty-trustworthiness. However, gifted students who participated in sports felt better about their appearance, had higher perceived rates of emotional well being, higher perceived same-sex peer relations and higher beliefs about the self in general. Females had higher self-concepts of their verbal facility.


This qualitative study investigated how a group of 11 successful high school female students described the impact of competition on their academic and social lives. According to the participants, competition involved the direct interaction with other students over social position, grades, or honors. Since participants viewed competition as a negative behavior, comparing was a preferred word to describe their competitive actions. Participants avoided competition because they wished to avoid conflict and hurting their peers’ feelings. Relationships meant being a positive person and a trustworthy friend. Participants also believed that everyone had the opportunity to do well and that success was determined by the amount of effort exerted. The authors concluded that educators should encourage students to direct their competitive energies in positive ways—increasing efforts to do well, increasing a climate of mastery.


This study used a phenomenological approach to gain insight about underachievement among gifted students. The focus is on two 10th grade students, one boy and one girl. A case study design was used. Data sources included classroom observations, interviews, and archival documents. Kate had an extensive network of friends at school that contributed to her self-esteem and was more interested in staying in a comfort zone and fitting in with her peers rather than excelling academically. Shawn “prided himself on having the correct answers” and would not be likely to participate in a situation where he felt he was not in control, such as a class discussion or an oral quiz (p. 209). The fear of failure and high expectations for his performance sometimes caused anxiety. Shawn did feel under-challenged in his classes and thought that it was acceptable to slack off if one could keep good grades. Another interesting insight from this student was that he knew how to work the system: sit all day in school, not learn anything, but still get good grades.


This study compares behavioral, cognitive, attentional, and family history dimensions among four groups of boys categorized by intelligence and/or learning disability (LD). In the sample were 87 boys in grades 4-7. The four groups included 18 highly gifted boys (IQ 140-154) (20.7%), 17 low gifted boys (IQ 124-139)(19.5%), 26 boys with LD (29.9%), and a normal control group of 26 boys who were not identified as gifted or having a learning disability (29.9%). Each boy was administered the WISC-R and the Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery, Part II--Reading, Math, and Written Language. The teachers completed the Abbreviated Conners Teacher Rating Scale, and the students’ parents completed the Yale Children’s Inventory. Using a MANOVA, the authors reported that both highly gifted and low gifted groups did not differ significantly when compared to the normal group in either behavioral or cognitive domains. Highly gifted boys did show levels of behavior problems similar to the learning disabled.


This study looked at grade level, birth order, and gender differences and their relationships to perfectionism in gifted middle school students. Schuler’s Goals and Work Habits Survey, which was adapted from the Multidimensional Perfection Scale, was given to 391 middle school students. Five dependent variables were analyzed including concern over mistakes, organization, personal standards, parental criticism, and parental expectations. The results indicated that females expressed more concern for organization than males, and males reported higher parental expectations than females. When looking at
birth order, this study suggested that first born adolescents received more parental criticism and had higher parental expectations than younger children.


This study examined the strategy patterns developed by gifted and average-ability children as they played a computer game designed to elicit strategic thinking in a novel situation. Participants were 50 second-grade students selected from a public, suburban elementary school in Georgia. The gifted group (n=22) included 11 girls and 11 boys and the average group (n=27) included 14 boys and 13 girls. Ninety-six percent of the students were of Caucasian descent with 4% Asian. Students in the two groups were matched by race and gender. Children played three versions of the computer game, Space Race, and were administered the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-III, Form A as a measure of intellectual ability. Strategies were classified into four levels: no apparent strategy, use of preexisting personal theories to make selections, testing one or two attributes at a time, holding one or two attributes constant to determine the effect of the attributes. Results indicated that both groups showed tremendous variability in strategy choices, reverting back to lower level strategies after using higher-level strategies in previous games. However, the gifted group quickly began to favor higher-level strategies more than the average group. Ninety-one percent of the gifted group and only 78% of the average group used the Level 4 strategy at least once. The gifted group also showed a better use of information they had learned through their strategic behavior.


Social coping strategies of 311 gifted third through seventh graders (201 boys and 110 girls) who enrolled in a summer academic program were examined in the author's first study. The majority of the students were Caucasian. Instruments included demographic information, level of math and science studied in school, methods used to teach those subjects, student essays, EXPLORE test, and a revised Social Coping Questionnaire. Students in the top quartile were less likely than those in the bottom quartile to minimize the importance of popularity, but more likely to conform. No gender differences were found. In her second study, 434 summer program students participated (152 girls, 271 boys and 11 who didn’t report gender). Again, the majority was Caucasian (79.8%). The results were similar to the first study. The social coping strategy of minimizing one's focus on popularity was used most among young students. Girls do engage in more social interactions than boys.


This study examined the social coping of 339 gifted adolescents upon entrance into a residential academy for gifted students. Of these high school juniors, 151 were male and 182 were female. The adolescents completed the Social Coping Questionnaire (SCQ) and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). On the SCQ, the students were most likely to report social interaction and least likely to focus on popularity and conformity. On the MBTI, the students were more likely to fall into the following types: ENTP (11.2%), ENFP (10.6%), INTP (10.3%), INTJ (7.7%), INFP (7.4%), and INFJ (5.3%). Scores greater than 100, a neutral score, indicated Introversion (I), Intuitive (N), Feeling (F), and Perceiving (P). Types including Intuitive and Intuitive-perceiving were particularly common in the sample. Females were more likely than males to report denying giftedness and males were more likely than females to report using humor. Males were also more introverted than females.

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This article explored the age at which academic attitude differences emerge between boys and girls. The sample included 1116 boys and 973 girls from grades 3 to 6 who were first-time registrants for the Carnegie Mellon Institute for Talent Elementary Students in 1997 or 1998. There were 50 girls in 3rd grade, 510 girls in 4th grade, 346 girls in 5th grade, and 67 girls in 6th grade. There were 67 boys in 3rd grade, 568 boys in 4th grade, 395 boys in 5th grade, and 86 boys in 6th grade. All students answered 11 Likert-scale questions regarding attitudes toward various academic subjects. Small and medium effect sizes indicated that girls expressed more positive attitudes towards school in general, English/language arts, writing, foreign languages, art/music, and reading as compared with the boys. The authors found that gender differences in academic attitudes are detectable even among elementary-aged students and may indicate the beginning of a trend that continues as the students become older.


The purpose of this study was to examine the underlying construct of overexcitabilities (OE) and to identify individual- and family-level factors that may explain gifted students’ patterns of OEs. A convenience sample of 143 identified gifted students, ranging in age from 5 to 15, who were in a university summer enrichment program and their parents (N = 161) participated. The participants were reflective of an affluent university community. The Overexcitabilities Questionnaire (adapted version) (OEQII) was administered. The following results were reported. The identified gifted students had the highest mean OE score on the Psychomotor OE, which suggests a heightened level of motion and energy. Females scored higher than males on Sensual and Emotional OEs whereas males scored higher on Intellectual OE, which suggests that females have different ways of knowing than males. High Emotional and Intellectual OE scores may make gifted students more insightful and volatile in their relationships with peers and others. High Psychomotor and Emotional OEs in gifted students may lead to diagnoses of ADHD and other behavior disorders.


This study examined differences in self-concept among ethnic groups and the contributions of domain-specific self-concepts to global self-concepts. The 233 participants from a summer enrichment program completed these questionnaires: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and Harter’s Self Perception Profile for Adolescents. Seventy-one percent of the participants were Asian American, and 29 percent were White. White students had significantly higher scholastic and job self-concepts than Asian American students did. Physical self-concept was a substantive contributor to global self-concept for White students only.


This study examined the ethnic identity and other group orientation attitudes and their ability to predict global self esteem and academic achievement among African, Asian, Hispanic, and White Americans. The convenience sample of 319 students (57.7% female) attended a summer program for academically talented students at a university in a western state. Participants were from four different ethnic groups: 28 (8.8%) were African American, 28 (8.8%) were Hispanic, 171 (53.6%) were Asian American, and 92 (28.8%) were White. They were administered two questionnaires: the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Results indicated that White students had lower ethnic identity scores than students in the three minority groups. Other group orientation scores were substantial predictors of self-esteem for African American students and ethnic identity scores were substantial predictors for Hispanic students. Ethnic identity and other group orientation were substantial predictors of school GPA for African American students with ethnic identity’s contributions being negative and other group orientation’s positive. The author concludes that “social identity variables do play an important role in student achievement” (p. 34).
**Underachievement and Perfectionism**

*(Is There a Vaccine?)*

Consider the pinot noir grape. A team of French and Italian researchers has mapped the genome of the pinot noir grape and found that it has about 30,000 genes in its DNA. That’s more than the human genome, which has only about 20,000 to 25,000 genes. The research has confirmed that the pinot noir grape has an unusually large number of genes whose job is to provide flavor. The pinot noir grape is a gifted grape. But flavor does not depend on DNA alone. External factors such as weather, microclimate, soil, crop size, age of vines, and the winemaker’s art all contribute to the final result. The excellent wines from the pinot noir grape depend both on heredity (DNA) and environment. So it is with our gifted children. What they’re born with is significant; what we do with them at home as parents and in the classroom as teachers is also crucial to the ultimate development and realization of all that potential.

Nothing is more frustrating than underachievement in a gifted child. We know the child has the ability to accomplish anything she wants to do, to learn or perform at extraordinary levels, but for some reason or reasons, that’s not happening. Sometimes, underachievement is a result of an unsuspected learning disability (Seeley, 1993), but when that’s not the case, when the child has no specific learning disability and has all possible environmental and learning opportunities, and still does not perform or succeed, or worse, seems to choose deliberately to fail, it makes no sense at all!

Why is “gifted underachiever” not an oxymoron, but, far too often, a reality?

The question is complex. There are different kinds of underachievement, different causes that underlie performance that is far enough below potential ability to be considered classic underachievement. The good news is this: Underachievement is learned behavior. No one is born an underachiever; a child is taught to underachieve (Davis & Rimm, 2004; Delisle & Galbraith, 2002). We teach our kids to be underachievers, both at home and in school. We don’t deliberately set out to do this, of course, but we do it nonetheless. We put them in learning environments which offer little or no challenge (Marland, 1972; Kanevsky & Keighley, 2003). We allow them to receive top grades for minimal effort by requiring too little of them, and teach them that they should always get an A+ because anything less is completely unacceptable. We foster dependence rather than independence as we try to protect them from every possible mistake or negative consequence. We foster distrust and hostility toward authority figures at home and elsewhere by shifting responsibility away from our children and finding someone else to blame when something is difficult or negative consequences do occur, and we
prevent the development of positive self-concept and feelings of self-reliance and self-efficacy by not allowing them to struggle, work hard at something difficult, and learn the relationship between effort and success (Reis & McCoach, 2000; Clark, 1997). In short, we teach underachievement.

One of my former students, “Sandy,” had parents who adored her and tried to satisfy her every demand. By the time she was six, she had a lot of demands. She was very bright, but also very short-tempered and self-centered. She was also reluctant to try anything without someone to help her or, preferably, to do it for her. One afternoon, as the first-grade students were going home, Sandy demanded that her teacher put her sweater on for her, button it, and tie her shoes. The other students were already out the door, so her teacher told her to put on her sweater herself, and, when they got to the front of the building, she’d help her button it and tie her shoes if she couldn’t do it herself. As soon as she saw her dad, Sandy stomped over to him. He immediately stooped to button her sweater and tie her shoes. Sandy’s father was angry because the teacher had let her walk around the building without her sweater on and with her shoes untied, so they went to the principal. The principal suggested that first-graders were capable of putting on their own sweaters without having an adult do it for them, and that most students learned to tie their own shoes in kindergarten and didn’t expect adults to do that for them either. She gently suggested that Sandy’s parents might allow her to become a little more self-reliant.

As she grew, Sandy continued to order her parents around with increasing rudeness and hostility, just as they continued to respond to all her commands. In high school, she lacked self-confidence, wasn’t well-liked by her peers, and continued to appear helpless and distrustful in new situations. A gifted learner, she generally made good grades, but she refused to take courses that required greater challenge and independence. She was an underachiever academically, as well as socially and emotionally.

When we are the helicopter parents, hovering constantly over our children, ready to swoop in like Harrison Ford to rescue them in every possible situation, we fail to give them opportunities for developing self-confidence and responsibility (Rimm, 2008; Karnes & Riley, 2005). And then, when our children encounter problems that require them to have some self-reliance, and some resilience, they have nothing. At the same time, they may resent these feelings of inadequacy and develop hostility toward authority figures, including their parents and teachers. They may lack self-confidence, believing they can’t make it on their own, not on the playground, not at school, not in college, not on the job. They may underachieve, drop out, feel dependent, helpless and useless, and never leave the nest. Whatever gifts or talents they possess may remain unrealized, or realized only minimally (Rimm, 2008).

Sometimes we do need to step in to intervene if it’s a case of bullying, drugs or lack of appropriate educational challenge being offered to our child (and they don’t always have to know about these interventions). But for many issues, we need to recognize when it’s actually their job, not ours, to deal with the situation, even if they don’t manage it quite perfectly.

A high school counselor in one of my graduate courses in Gifted/Talented education once observed, “Gifted kids today seem to have a sense of entitlement. They seem to feel that everything should come easily for them, that they should always just get what they want without having to work hard for it, that they should always get A’s, be at the top of their class, and get into any college they want, regardless of the lack of effort they exert to get there.”

**How do we help them develop the tools that will take them over the wall when they encounter real challenge instead of just giving up?**

Indeed, some gifted students do seem to express this sense of entitlement. After all, it’s likely been their experience in school and in other settings that things do come easily, and they experience relative success without much effort because the expectations are too low to offer much real challenge or need for real effort or struggle to excel (Rimm, 2008). Then, if in some situation things don’t just “happen” for them, well… it’s not their fault. The work is too hard; the teacher is too demanding. Someone was unfair; someone didn’t like them; someone else is to blame.

How do we “vaccinate” our children against this sense of entitlement, this false expectation? How do we expose our gifted learners to the joys of learning, the personal satisfaction of real achievement, accomplishment and responsibility? How do we help them develop the tools that will take them over the wall when they encounter real challenge instead of just giving up? Where’s the vaccine against underachievement?

In one recent study, gifted children in two separate groups were given logic problems to solve (Dweck, 2007). The logic problems were not
too difficult; gifted learners in both groups were experiencing success in solving the problems and enjoying doing so. In one group, the children were praised for their success in this way: “Oh, you are so smart! You are so gifted!” The other group was praised with comments like this: “You are really working hard! You are really making a good effort.” Students in the first group were being recognized and praised for something over which they had no control: their giftedness. It was something they were, not something they did. Children in the second group were praised for something over which they did have some control: how much effort they put forth in working toward solutions.

Here’s the really interesting and important part: When the children in both groups were offered more problems to solve, 90% of the children in the first group chose easier problems and shied away from more difficult problems. The children in the second group willingly and eagerly tackled more difficult problems. Why? Those children who had received all their praise for being gifted now felt they had to protect their previous success. If they were unsuccessful in attempting more difficult problems, perhaps that meant they weren’t really so gifted after all. They couldn’t risk failure. Those children who had been praised for their effort were more willing to take on harder tasks and see what they could accomplish. They had been offered a correlation between effort and results and were encouraged to continue to see what results greater effort could bring them (Dweck, 2007).

What does this suggest about how we praise our gifted kids? We need to let our children know that success is earned through hard work. That’s the key message our children need to internalize to avoid underachievement: effort produces results. This understanding gives them some control, and links outcomes to something they can actually do something about rather than simply relying on something beyond their control--their innate ability, the limits of which they may not know and may be afraid to discover. Instead, it suggests that it lies within their ability to do anything they are motivated and interested enough to take on. This leads to self-efficacy, one of the cornerstones of intrinsic motivation, which is essential for success.

Underachievement is often an unwillingness to take a risk, a fear of failure. Here’s where perfectionism enters the picture. There are two different kinds of perfectionism. What is sometimes called “healthy perfectionism” (if that’s not an oxymoron) is really a pursuit of excellence (Davis and Rimm, 2004; Delisle & Galbraith, 2002). This is common among the gifted who achieve; it’s what drives achievement. It’s not really perfectionism, because the person who understands the difference between excellence and perfectionism is able to set high standards and goals and work hard to achieve them without expecting or demanding absolute perfection in performance or results. That person understands that perfection is an abstraction that doesn’t exist; nothing is, or ever will be, quite perfect. Most often, the healthy pursuit of excellence is related to a particular passion, a driving interest that propels the effort toward excellence, so we might call healthy perfectionism the passionate pursuit of excellence in areas of meaning and interest.

Look at the Olympic athletes we all followed in the summer of 2008. Perfection seemed to be their goal: a perfect gymnastic routine, a new world record time for swimming, running, or jumping. Years of effort, training, practice, and many, many mistakes along the way led to those ultimate accomplishments, and fear of failure was not part of that. In an interview during the games, gold-medal gymnast Shawn Johnson said, “If you are afraid of falling, you’ll never get on the balance beam. You have to be willing to fall off the beam again and again if you want to go to the Olympics.”

The unhealthy form of perfectionism, on the other hand, does not enable gifted learners to pursue accomplishments. Rather, it prevents it. This neurotic form of perfectionism is rooted in the idea that unless the result is absolutely perfect, it is a complete failure (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002). There is no in-between: perfection, which is unattainable, or failure, which, since perfection is unattainable, is a foregone conclusion. And not only will the effort result in a less than perfect outcome, and therefore be a failure, the person herself or himself is also a failure—a nothing. So, instead of taking a risk and accepting the challenge and the possibility of failing, the neurotic perfectionist has to do whatever is necessary to avoid the problem. The thinking goes, “Since nothing I can think of is going to be perfect, I won’t do anything at all. If I try and fail, no one will admire me, or think I’m special, or love me.”

We have to be careful of the words we choose with our gifted children to avoid creating this unhealthy perfectionism. When we hold our gifted child up to the world as a badge of our own status or value, we tell them, “You are perfect. And that’s what we expect from you: perfection. Anything less is unworthy of you—and of us as your parents. You must not let us down” (Rimm, 2008).

There are other kinds of underachievers, whose underachievement is situational. For these underachievers, the choice not to succeed is deliberate, based on the particular circumstance. It’s a mismatch of the learner and the situation in some way (Davis & Rimm, 2004; Delisle & Galbraith, 2002; Seeley, 1993). Perhaps it is a teacher-student conflict, or a parent-child conflict, or a control struggle, or perhaps the child just finds the task to be dismally boring! In this kind of situation, the motivation that drives the effort to succeed is not inspired by the task presented, or by the person presenting the task, or by the ultimate rewards of success, and the learner makes the choice not to achieve, pure and simple.
These students may be very successful in environments in which they are stimulated by the task or challenge, or the learning ambience and synergy of gifted peers and teachers. At the same time, they may be underachievers in less-stimulating learning environments in which the challenge is not sufficient to their learning needs, in which the emphasis is on rote learning or repetition rather than on finding and solving problems, pursuing authentic and meaningful investigations, generating new ideas and solutions, and communicating real results to authentic and appropriate audiences.

Delisle has coined the term “Selective Consumers” (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002) to describe these students. They “selectively” determine when and how to succeed and when not to do so. The best approach with these kids may be to allow them more independence to find their own path, to follow their passion and find ways to relate those interests to whatever content is being studied or to the skills and concepts being taught. These kids are often quite happy with their choices; their self-esteem and self-efficacy are strong. When the situation changes to challenge or interests them sufficiently, they can suddenly change and be successful.

A gifted student I’ll call “David” is a case in point. He simply refused to do his algebra homework assignments and didn’t bother to pay attention in class, and yet he could ace every test with a perfect score. That really annoyed his teacher, so she confronted me about him: “He thinks he’s so smart he could teach the class.” To me, the issues were less about David than about her expectations for him. If he could already pass the tests, then why was she expecting him to do all the homework assignments intended to help him learn and practice these skills and concepts? Why not let him demonstrate his mastery on the tests and move on?

If he thought he could teach the class, why not let him demonstrate what he knew — or thought he knew? On the one hand, other students would probably pay attention and learn from him (he was funny); plus, he’d have a chance to explain his understanding in ways that might provide insight into his thinking about algebra, exactly what she said she was trying to get from his homework problems. And if there were errors in his thinking or if his ways of solving problems were less efficient or elegant than the ways she would have taught, that would present a perfect opportunity for her to offer her own explanations. Even more important, she might recognize that the level or pace of the class was too slow for David and give him math instruction and content more commensurate with his abilities. Her response was, “Well, that’s not fair to the other students. Why should I reward him for not doing his work? After all, in the real world, we all have to do things sometimes that we think are boring.”

Is that the world for which we are preparing our gifted students? Why not reward a student for making a decision about his own learning needs when he obviously knows them better than the teacher, who is, in fact, punishing him for being smart and for having already mastered this material? Shouldn’t we reward gifted learners who know their abilities and demand challenges that will allow them to learn something new? Isn’t that the purpose of school, to educate children, to present opportunities for everyone to learn something new every day? Is it “fair” to demand boredom as a penalty for giftedness?

Boredom does not result in learning; it results in negative attitudes toward the material, the teacher, and the class. It also results in learned underachievement. If the pace is too slow or the content too low-level — if learning isn’t happening — the brain just tunes out and finds something else more engaging (Kanevsky & Keighly, 2003). When gifted learners are taught year after year that they don’t have to pay attention in class to do well, that’s what they learn: not to pay attention and to expect good grades as a result. Or else, they just become disinterested and become discipline problems for the teacher. They are taught to underachieve and to find their own entertainment for their very active brains.

Even when they are model students on the outside, always turning in perfect papers and getting good grades, if the challenge isn’t appropriate, gifted students learn they don’t have to work very hard for these good grades and the praise that follows. They learn that they are entitled to success without effort. They are not learning how to learn, how to study, how to struggle with challenging content, problems, and issues for which there are no easy “right” answers, and how to overcome difficulties and succeed. We are not preparing these students for competitive situations like advanced study or graduate school where they will compete with other gifted, hard-working learners; we’re preparing them to drop out when the going gets tough.

As teachers and educators, it’s our job to offer learning opportunities to all of our students — including the gifted ones — every day. It’s not our job to train our gifted learners to cope with boredom, but to facilitate their learning and excitement in their accomplishments. We have to know their learning needs, including the appropriate pace of learning and the levels of depth and complexity that are appropriate for optimal learning. We also have to know our content well enough that we can make it relevant and interesting to the learner to engage their passions. And we have to make it rigorous enough that students who want to make A+ will have to work hard to achieve it, not just as a matter of entitlement because they’re gifted, but because they’ve truly excelled and earned that mark. This may require us to be able to explain to parents and administrators as well as to students that high grades are not a given with giftedness; you have to learn to tie your own shoes and put on your own sweater if you want to have your shoes tied and be warm.
As parents, it's our job to provide an environment of increasing independence for our children, to enable our fledglings to be successful when they attempt to leave the nest and fly on their own. Just like that bossy mother wren who sits in the honeysuckle and whistles encouragement, we protect them, warn them, provide for them, and encourage them every step of the way, but, ultimately, they have to fly on their own, take risks, fall sometimes, and get up and keep trying.

We walk a delicate balance, as parents and teachers, in bringing up children, and weaning them, and helping them grow. It's not easy. It takes knowledge, love, and hard work on our part to teach responsibility, reduce neurotic perfectionism, and encourage passionate pursuit of excellence. It takes a healthy sense of who we are to reduce our children's dependence on us and to allow them to make their own mistakes, to let them get up on that balance beam again and again, even when they fall.

Now, let's all go have a glass of pinot noir. We've earned it!

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Increasing Participation of Diverse Students in Gifted Programs, continued from p. 14


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