



The Home Front: Parent Resources for Supporting Gifted Pupils







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Did You Know? Probably So!

Parent Characteristics:

-  Parents of gifted pupils **tended to spend more time reading** with their children
-  Parents of gifted pupils tended to spend **free time in non-age specific activities** (museums, art galleries, etc)
-  Parents of gifted pupils tended to **praise and 'do something special'** for their children more frequently
-  **Intellectual abilities were viewed as strengths** among parents of gifted children
-  Parents of gifted pupils had **high(er) aspirations** for their children, especially in pursuing professional careers, especially science
-  Parents of gifted pupils **advocated for their independence and were found to be more highly involved in the schooling** of their children

Overview

- What you may see at home
- Supporting the gifted child at home
- Detrimental parenting styles
- Issues at home and at school:
underachievement and
hyperachievement/perfectionism
- Supporting pupils at home—focus:
mathematics and academic language
- Questions
- Conclusion

**THE GIFTED
CHILD AT HOME**



What You May See at Home

- Living with a gifted child may be exhausting for parents and family members
- Hyperachievement/overachievement/underachievement
- Poor room organization/time management skills
- Need for stress management, due in part to perfectionistic tendencies, perceived demands and sensitivity to adult problems:
 - Major change in attitude or temperament
 - Withdrawal, outbursts for no apparent reason
 - Hyperactive behaviors
 - “Convenient” illnesses to avoid certain tasks or environments
 - Insomnia
 - Headaches or stomach complaint
 - Increased allergic/asthma attacks

Source: NRC/GT, 1995

The Gifted Child at Home: Support Strategies

- Gifted children are frequently critical and evaluative; rigid in their ways; believe that they are always right; tend toward workaholism; and can be challenging to live with (**always “ON”**)
- Strike balance between solitary and interpersonal time/experiences
- Establish well-defined standards of discipline and conduct (clarity is very important—appeals also to the rationality of the gifted brain)
- Demonstrate trust that your child will do the right thing—and provide additional responsibilities as social emotional development/age permits
- Attend to family conflicts and get to the root of the ‘real’ problem (recognize alternatives and solutions; evaluate and implement plans of action)
- Demonstrate respect for your child’s ideas—a great way to show your love!

Source: NRC/GT, 1995

The Gifted Child at Home: Support Strategies

- Help show your child that the world is a predictable and orderly place (chaos and disorder are particularly daunting for many gifted pupils)
- **Let Them Act Their Age!** Because of their high level of cognitive development and advanced vocabulary, it is easy to forget that gifted children are children.
- Learn to limit and structure choices for pupils (do not assign choices, but do not encourage free reign)
- Make hard and fast rules few but enforced
- Model downtime; time management and organizational skills, appealing to the problem solving and rational nature of the gifted brain
- Praise both process and product, be specific—emphasize their pleasure with respect to both
- Display good work—and not just theirs—yours as well. Shows that adults can be proud of their work too!

Source: NRC/GT, 1995

Four Detrimental Parenting Styles Impacting the Gifted Student

- **Overly Critical** (unrealistic expectations that cannot be lived up to)
- **Overly Dominating** (decisions based parents' wants and needs—parents 'own' the giftedness)
- **Overly Conscientious** (fills the child's day with structured learning activities and no room for play)
- **Overly Directive/Permissive** (not good with discipline, do not want to inhibit creativity)

**AT HOME AND
SCHOOL:
ACHIEVEMENT
ISSUES**









Understanding Underachievement

- Contextually and situationally grounded
- No 'universal' underachievement (just as there is no 'universal' giftedness)
- May show developmental patterns
- Includes affective elements
- Can also include a variety of factors:
 - Linguistic ability
 - Socioeconomic, sociocultural
 - "Time stamped"
 - Value systems with respect to education
- Cannot be universally treated because of unique individual cognitive, affective and situational elements

Understanding Underachievement

Six Patterns of Underachievement:

-  **Avoidance** (fear based, forgetful)
-  **Anxiety** (chronic worrier, perfectionist)
-  **Search for Identity** (trying to 'find' him/herself, worried about fitting in)
-  **Conduct Disorder** (bullying)
-  **Opposition** (works to defy 'the system')
-  **Discrimination** (self doubt brought on by actual incidents of discrimination—loses sense that the world is just/fair)

Potential Causes of Underachievement

- Mismatch between student and school environment
- Students' attitudes and perceptions about themselves and schooling
- Lack of self regulation and study skills
- May be masking deeper cognitive, physical or emotional issues
- Questions about the utility of aspects of the curriculum
- Boredom
- Pressures to moderate abilities in front of peers
- Cultural Relativism
- Equality of educational opportunity

Understanding Perfectionism and 'Overachievement'

- Locus of satisfaction and control are external, yet perfectionists are their own worst enemies
- Seek perfection (nothing else will do), often deriving pleasure from hard work, but many are unable to obtain any sense of satisfaction
- Feedback averse
- “All or nothing”—becoming slaves of success
- Degree of obsessiveness, leading to low-self esteem and/or procrastination
- Unrealistic understanding of self (actually may see self as a failure, ‘slacker’)
- High degree of anxiety, mental and physical stress
- Interestingly, may lead to **underachievement**

More on Perfectionism

- **Parental expectations:** Perfectionists tend to *believe* their parents set very high goals for them.
- **Parental criticism:** Perfectionists *perceive* that their parents are (or were) overly critical.
- **Doubting actions:** Perfectionists doubt their ability to accomplish tasks.
- **Organization:** Perfectionists tend to emphasize order.
- Environment is **critical!**

Source: Hara Marano, 2009

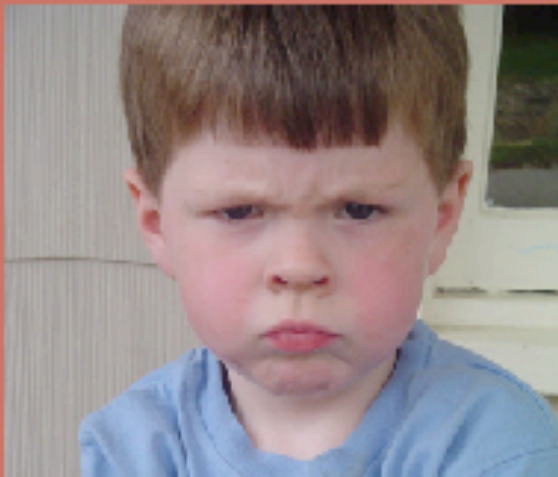
Drawing Conclusions

- Support strategies must involve the entirety of the brain, focusing on complex/logical/patterning problems (remember from session on the brain)
- Support strategies must engage the emotional part of the brain and include practical elements (connected to daily experiences and interests)
- Support strategies must be take place in a stress-free, less competitive environment, especially for perfectionists
- Support strategies must be a **continuation** of work in school—reinforcement (not just isolated activities for the sake of doing them)!

Drawing Conclusions (Pt 2)

Underachievement and Perfectionism frequently can be traced back to the same sources:

- **Fear/Anxiety** (will not attempt)
- **Boredom** (doesn't want to do it)
- **Previous failures** (past experience dictates future actions)
- **Inflated ideas** about external expectations (if I don't get an A...)



When will I ever use this again?

Connecting curriculum in the classroom with life happenings outside of the classroom makes learning meaningful (Voltz, 2003). When students take ownership of their learning, they become involved, interactive, and take control by using their individual learning styles to access information, interpret material, and demonstrate what they have learned. (LDA Action Committee, 2008)

Supporting Pupils at Home: General Tips

- **Finding the Partners:** Collaborating with teachers to create advanced holistic and engaging opportunities; finding external partners (museums, worksites, internships, etc)
- **Moving from the Concrete to Application to the Abstract—Formats:** Are there opportunities for guided independent work that incorporates **interests** (contract learning; participation in external experiences)
- **Setting the Stage: Creating a Low Threat/High Challenge environment at home**—encouraging risk taking and providing anxious pupils with a realistic interpretation of what grades mean, modeling downtime, etc.

Supporting Pupils at Home: General Tips

- **Use Your Own Creativity.** Good support may require a bit of digging and connection making on your part.
- **Be Sensitive.** If you suspect underachievement may be at hand, investigate a bit. Remember, underachievement is usually context and time-sensitive.
- **Use it Daily.** Games like Battleship, Chess, and baseball all involve mathematics, academic language and problem solving
- **Use TV for Good!** There are many television shows that are engaging for viewers (exciting) that highlight mathematics and academic vocabulary:
 - **Numbers:** using mathematics to defeat crime
 - **Crime Scene Investigation (CSI):** using mathematics and science to solve crimes
 - **Heroes:** a little of both, but more importantly highlights the fact that being different can be a great thing!

Supporting at Home: Math

- **Building a skateboard ramp** (involves variables; kinesthetics; materials; a variety of calculations; sketching; estimating, etc.), complex; possible; practical and collaborative; long term
- **Going to the Movies** (short-term)—how long does it take to get there, factoring in traffic; how much will it cost; etc
- **Playing sports (also watching sporting events)** Estimating angles; force needed; points; ratios; etc
- **Saving Up**—Picking out something special to buy, figuring out how long it will take to save for it based on different savings plans, interest, etc.
- **The Music Mogul**—How to make money at a record label; the mathematics of music, etc

Supporting at Home: Math

- **Make it safe.** Help students by having them explain the process to you (I never understood it, how does it work)?
Non-threatening environment
- **Web-Based Algebra Adventures:** Please see handout for a list of web resources for algebra strategies
- **"I'll never use this again!"**—site visit to careers that use Algebra every day (which is just about every job one could think of)
- **Just Some of the Careers that use Algebra:**
 - Automotive designers/Race car drivers
 - Pilots/Astronauts
 - Musicians/Producers/Film Stars
 - Athletes/Agents
 - Visual and Performing Artists/Dancers
 - Doctors/Trainers/Nurses
 - Law Enforcement/Military

Supporting Academic Language at Home

- **Always work with teachers** to gain insight into what is going on in class!
- Make sure that students are aware of the reasons for using **academic language (explicit, more formal) versus conversational language**—and that every discipline (and career) has its own specific terms
- For parents of English Learners, it is **beneficial to converse with students in primary language**. Academic concepts learned in the primary language are transferable to English once understood, and promote English proficiency.
- **Encourage reading for pleasure**—especially in students' areas of interest; provide a wide variety of materials that can be read.
- **Provide Examples.** Newscasts; magazines; speeches; etc. Model academic language use where possible.
- **The Big Proposal.** If there is a big-ticket item that your child would like to buy, request a proposal using comparisons and justification for the purchase.

Web Resources

- Hoagies Gifted Page:
<http://hoagiesgifted.org/>
- The World of Math Online:
<http://www.math.com/>
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics: www.nctm.org
- COSMOS:
<http://www.ucop.edu/cosmos/>

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