

# March Madness!

## A Look at Evergreen Parenting Topics

**M**any topics in the world of gifted are evergreen. Whether it be 1964 or 2014, they're still relevant. In this issue, Parenting for High Potential takes a peek into the archives to look at topics that have run in various March issues of PHP through the years. No matter where you are on the gifted journey, there's something here for everyone!

### Early Childhood

#### Creativity

Has your child ever transformed yardsticks into skis or put socks on his ears, crawled on the floor, and then barked as an imaginary dog? Creative behavior in children provides new perspectives on the ordinary. We can

spot creativity in children by the way they look at a concrete object in a new way or how they construct things with blocks or LEGO® bricks. Creative children:

- display a keen sense of humor,
- focus deeply on playing,
- enjoy using objects to represent other things,
- enjoy playing alone,
- invent new games,
- display extreme curiosity,
- resist completing a chosen task, or
- exhibit unusual sensitivity.

Although not always joyful and sometimes exhausting, parents, caregivers, and teachers should try to be patient when curiosity leads to constant questioning. Children resisting closure on tasks may be viewed as stubborn or nonconforming, but really just need more time to think creatively.

It's important to provide a home environment that allows creative ideas to flow while teaching survival strategies for other settings perhaps not as friendly to creative ideas. Children should have the autonomy to pursue projects that interest them with-



out interference; parents should encourage them to gather their own materials and refrain from assisting, unless asked.

Finally, parents should ask questions that lead to a variety of responses, not just one single right answer. Open-ended questions facilitate creative responses and are just as useful when figuring out ways to arrange their toys or developing new twists in a story you are reading together. Freedom followed by encouragement fosters creativity and builds self-esteem.

Adapted from Meador, K. (2000, March). Creativity shows up early and in many ways. *Parenting for High Potential*, 7, 24–26.

## Other Resources

### Enrichment in the Early Years

McCluskey, K. W. (2000, March). The importance of being early. *Parenting for High Potential*, 8–13.

### Importance of Play

Strom, R. D. (2002, March). Too busy to play? *Parenting for High Potential*, 18–22.

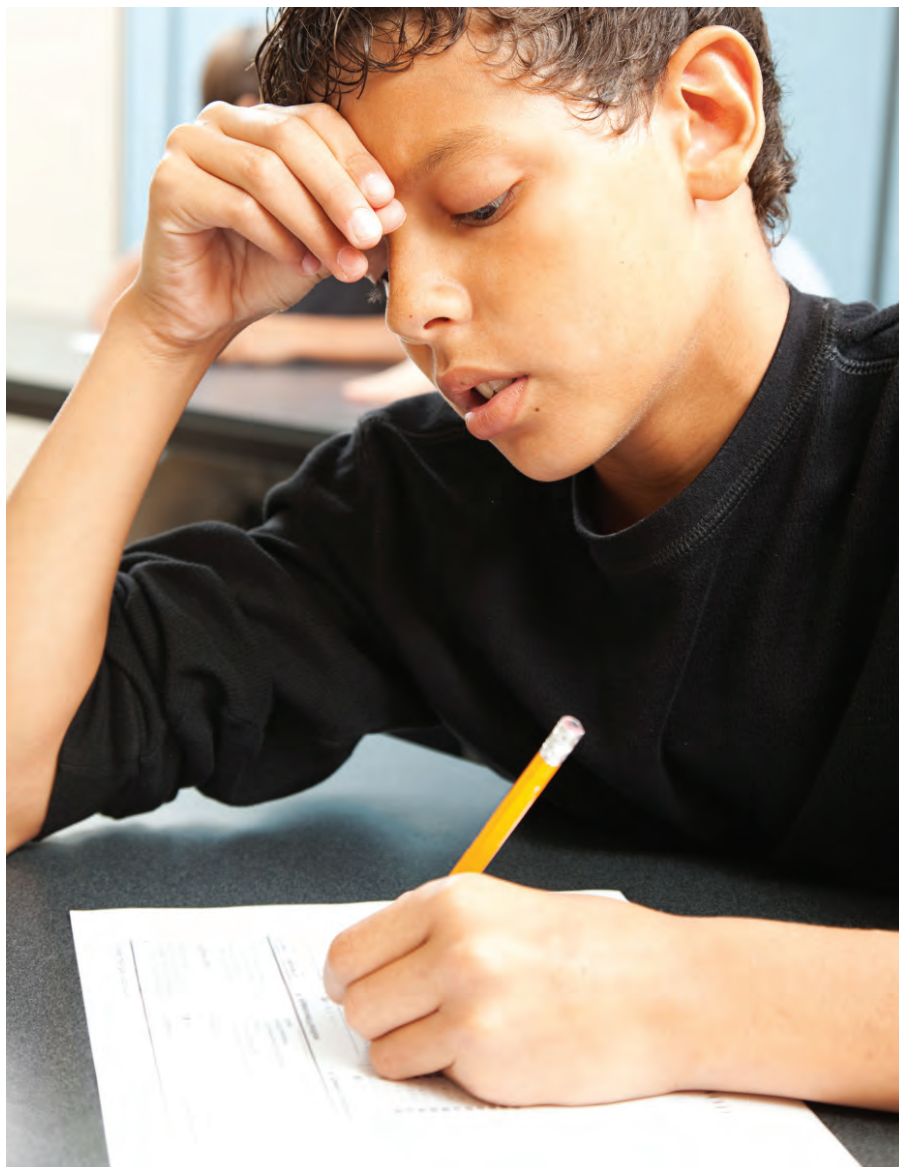
## School Years

### Why Gifted Children May Not Test Well

If children are gifted, it's likely assumed they will do well on tests. Sometimes, however, what makes children who they are is also what makes it more difficult for them to succeed on tests. Underlying patterns for poor test performance may include lack of motivation, overthinking, perfectionism, overconfidence and sloppiness, excessive test stress, and administration of the wrong test.

Some strategies for overcoming these barriers include:

- **Motivation.** If a child truly doesn't care, begging, pleading, and throwing resources at her won't help. Find out what motivates the child and what she cares about—in school it might be a particular subject or the desire



to go to college and experience a different environment. Rewards and punishments need to be carefully administered, and be reasonable, proportionate, and applied consistently. If the child is achieving only to get an external reward, the moment of failure will be merely postponed.

- **Overthinking.** Gifted students come up with possibilities that others don't see. Particularly on multiple-choice

tests, coming up with only one answer can be difficult. Overthinkers should note when they are following the straightforward path or going fishing. By assessing personal test-taking patterns, overthinkers can develop a sense of when they are going too far.

- **Perfectionism.** On timed tests, perfectionists may become obsessed with certain questions and devote too much time to answering them.

Often they do well on the questions they answer, but don't answer enough questions to score well. Students first need to recognize that searching for perfectionism on certain tests may be doing them harm. Then, practicing in nontest situations—such as solving math problems or writing an essay within a specific timeframe—helps take the sting out of every mistake. Sports or card games, like Bridge, help the perfectionist find a better balance.

- **Sloppiness.** This may be difficult to analyze, as a sloppy test score looks the same as one from a student with lower ability. Sometimes this is the most obvious and overlooked issue. If a student can handle tough abstract algebra concepts but blows a question with a careless mistake, then sloppiness may be the cause. Slowing down and double-checking helps; students need to recognize the types of mistakes they are likely to make. Look for patterns by examining recent test scores. How many errors were caused by calculation mistakes or not answering the question asked?

- **Stress.** Test stress has both physical and mental ramifications. Physically, the stressed out student may experience an increased heart rate, excessive perspiration, and shaking. Mentally, he may experience panic, a sense of doom, and a cycle of negativity. First, the student must recognize its cause: Test stress may be an overreaction to lack of preparedness or fear of a low score. Preparation and practice and becoming familiar with the test can help.

If your child has gifts that aren't measured by an exam, consider seeking a context where his or her gifts can be expressed. The most important thing to understand is that not testing well is solvable and not a life sentence.

Adapted from Paris, B. (2009, March). Why gifted children may not test well. *Parenting for High Potential*, 19–24.

**Other Resources**

**Boredom, Organization, and Underachievement**

Rimm, S. (1997, March). Parenting Q & A. *Parenting for High Potential*, 13–14.

**College and Life Skills**

**Teaching Kids to Think**

Intelligence is not the same as thinking, and high-ability children need skills for real-life success. Parents and teachers can help create a “thinking toolbox” for children to help with problem solving or decision-making with these techniques:

- **PMI (Plus, Minus, Interesting).** In 3 minutes, direct your attention to all the plus points of an idea, then the minus



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points, then the interesting ones. Then, evaluate. This is a simple tool to use with children and young adults.

- **FIP (First Important Priorities).** This tool helps minimize procrastination by prioritizing the list of factors that must be considered in order to complete a project or make a decision. Create a list of the factors and/or actions and select the top three priorities. There are no right or wrong answers because each person is looking at the list from a different perspective. If your child has trouble picking out the top three, start by dropping the least important factor in the decision and try again.
- **OPV (Other People's Viewpoints).** Help your child walk in someone else's shoes to accept a situation or change her behavior/expectations. If your child has difficulty making friends, understanding why teachers give homework, or seeing a parent's point of view on chores, consider this tool.
- **Brainstorming With Post-Its®.** Participants use Post-It® notes to write down ideas related to a problem for 3–5 minutes and post them on a wall or flip chart. The pluses include speed and anonymity; the minus is there's no piggybacking of ideas. This process is effective for solving family problems or school-related conflicts.
- **Brainwriting.** Each family member takes a piece of paper and writes down an idea. The papers are put in the center of the table and exchanged; family members then read the idea on the paper they took and build upon it. This can be used with children who are less verbal to help them participate equally in idea generating and decision-making.

These tools will help build your child's self-esteem, make choices, solve problems, and think. ☺

Adapted from Shade, R. A., & Garrett, P. (2001, March). Teaching your child to think and make parenting fun again. *Parenting for High Potential*, 15, 28–30.

## Other Resources

### Relocation and New School

Plucker, J., Hill, C., & Yecke, C. (1998, March). We're moving again? Starting your gifted child in new school. *Parenting for High Potential*, 23, 31.

### Freshman Blues

Shanley, M. K., & Johnston, J. (2009, March). Real fears of incoming first-year college students. *Parenting for High Potential*, 15–18.

## Resources

*NAGC Mile Marker Series (2nd ed.)*. This CD contains these articles and more than 350 other resources for parents of gifted children at various stages of the gifted journey. \$24.95. <https://www.nagc.org/NAGC2/NGCShopper/ProductDetails.aspx?productID=NGC42112>

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