CENTENNIALS:
The World is Waiting!

By Dr. Angela Housand

Today's youth are connected across the street and across the globe in a web of communication like no other generation before. Generation Z, also known as Centennials, are considered "mobile-natives" and are even more technologically savvy then their Millennial predecessors. Nearly three-quarters of children own or have access to a smartphone and a whopping 92% of Centennial teens, ages 13–17, report going online daily.[1] Thanks to Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, and a myriad of other apps, social media has transformed *how* people communicate, and the *ways* they acquire, create, and share information. No longer is technology merely a tool, it is *the medium* for attaining knowledge, collaborating with peers, exchanging ideas, creating products, and sharing knowledge and insights.

Gifted youth are in an unparalleled position to build influence in a global society. They are highly capable of participating in social networks; however, rather than learning, they typically use networks for socializing with friends or following mainstream fads. If they want to build influence, gifted youth must shift their use of social networks from socializing to showcasing talents or attaining recognition. To accomplish this shift, they must identify their interests, know their talents, understand the benefits of community participation, and recognize the power of a give-and-take dynamic. They must see that capability, possibility, exchange, and motivation are required to actively participate in global networks.[2]

Capability

Active social networkers must be capable of absorbing, applying, and recognizing the value of new information. High-ability youth, who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude or competence in a given domain, are well-positioned

to see the value of new information and ways to apply it. They crave intellectual engagement, are open to new experiences and information, are able to creatively interpret new information, and can apply information to new situations.

Therefore, a gifted person's capacity for engaging in social networks should extend beyond recognizing new content to include interpretation and application. While gifted youth may not have the life experiences of adults, they do have the intellectual capacity to actively engage with adults in meaningful ways that brings value to both parties. This collaboration and interaction opens the door to opportunities previously unavailable.

Gifted youth can also build a professional web presence that reflects their talents. An easy way to accomplish this is by claiming a unique domain name and creating a website. A unique domain name might simply be a son's or daughter's first and last name (e.g., firstlast.com). The goal is to have control over the children's names so that when they are *googled*, they are in control of the content people find. GoDaddy offers affordable domain name

registration and web hosting; some easy-to-use website creators include Weebly, WIX, and Squarespace.

Possibility

Possibility makes engaging in social networks advantageous, as it provides the opportunity to gain new knowledge and develop new skills. It's possible for gifted youth to participate in social networks by identifying and researching a topic of interest to gain knowledge, skills, and intellectual stimulation. While conducting research about their topic, they should be seeking the "who, what, when, where, and how" of their interest domain. Gifted youth should look for general information, professional conventions, processes or procedures used for productivity, influential thought leaders, and opportunities to contribute in their area of interest.

However, parents shouldn't assume that their children intuitively know how to use the Internet for research purposes. Parents should model these behaviors or enroll their child in a Google Power Search course (www.powersearchingwithgoogle.com/).

Exchange

Social media provides the opportunity to exchange information at lightning speed while enabling anyone to build social capital or credibility within a network. Building credibility relies on a dynamic, give-and-take process: Individuals share their talents, which provide a benefit to a group or community; in return, the community provides the individual with support, resources, and opportunities for growth.

Initially, the *taking* happens through research about a topic of interest. However, gifted youth must also *contribute* to the network community by creating quality content that has value to others in the network. Content can be creative, but also needs to reflect the contributor's advanced knowledge and talents.

Younger children might start contributing to a network by participating in the DIY.org community. Here young people can explore numerous interest areas, learn new skills, and share their own creations in a kid-friendly environment. For adolescents and emerging adults, full access to the Internet is a must, with YouTube being one of the most popular means of sharing content (video products). Other outlets for sharing include:
- SoundCloud (music)
- Flickr (photographs)
- Pinterest (interests and ideas)
- Yelp (reviews/critiques)
- SlideShare (presentations)

There are also applications for both *creating* and *sharing* original content within digital communities:
- Scratch (video game creation)
- Blogs (written pieces)
- Instagram (photographs)
- Fade In (screen writing)
- Prezi (presentations)
- ThingLink (images and videos)

Motivation

The reason to participate on the Internet can be either prescribed (e.g., school assignments), social, or intrinsically motivated. Often, young people know how to *socialize* using the Internet, but they may not be skilled at *learning* on the Internet.

The goal is to leverage intrinsic motivation and interest to ensure that the time spent online produces benefits beyond a network of *friends* to a network of *peers and supportive professionals.*

Motivation can come from seeking to fulfill curiosity[3] or it might be tied to identity, aspirations, or the desire to learn something new. Regardless, the content needs to be interesting or personally meaningful if one is to search voluntarily. To ensure that our gifted youth have a goal for seeking information on the Internet, it is helpful to determine those interests in advance. Listen and watch to learn:

- How do they *like* to spend their time?
- What books do they read?
- What kinds of things do they ask to know more about?
- When given the opportunity to choose, what types of activities or topics do they choose?
- When do they get excited about learning something new?

For some youth, personal interests are easy to recognize or clearly define. However, when interests are unclear, youth need to be exposed to new opportunities and experiences. The Internet provides a wealth of opportunity for exploration. Parents should consider exploring the Internet alongside their children to investigate interests, model the behaviors they use to find information, and to share strategies for staying safe online.

Once gifted youth are aware of their interests and talents, understand the structure of social networks, and recognize areas for contributing to those networks, they can start producing content that has the power to build influence. Whether participating in discussions, writing blogs, creating videos, or sharing products that have been developed, the Internet is ripe with opportunity and just waiting for talent! ⚙

Author's Note
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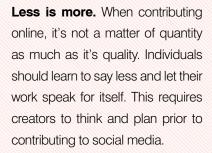
Endnotes
[1] Pew Internet Research. (2015). *Teens, social media & technology overview 2015.* www.pewinternet.org/files/2015/04/PI_TeensandTech_Update2015_0409151.pdf

[2] Inkpen, A. C., & Tsang, E. W. (2005). Social capital, networks, and knowledge transfer. *The Academy of Management Review, 30*(1), 146–165.

[3] Housand, B. C., & Housand, A. M. (2012). The role of technology in gifted students' motivation. *Psychology in the Schools, 49*(7), 706–715.

Rules for Creating Content for Social Networks

There are a few rules for creating content that are important for any young person to understand.

Less is more. When contributing online, it's not a matter of quantity as much as it's quality. Individuals should learn to say less and let their work speak for itself. This requires creators to think and plan prior to contributing to social media.

Listening is important, particularly before stating opinions. Nobody appreciates uninformed opinions.

Be engaging. Provide only high-quality content (final drafts of written work, edited videos, best images, and stunning artwork), and work that has an emotional component to it.

Contribute consistently and regularly to the appropriate online venues to get noticed.