a note from the editor

Recently I sat down with my 16-year-old son to help him figure out his course selections for the 2013–2014 school year. I was excited that he still sought my counsel about such matters. As we went through different mock schedules, we were faced with several dilemmas. How many Advanced Placement courses would he take? P.E. during the summer? In the end, we came up with several different scenarios and it was up to him to make the final decision. This whole exercise brought up several themes. Balance was a recurring theme. A course load that would challenge and prepare him for college, yet leave him time for sports and maybe a part-time job ... that was hard to find. Boundaries was another one—finding them, setting them far enough out, and recognizing frustration. Responsibility was a third theme, as at 16 years old he needs to weigh in on these decisions. The feature story by Melissa Hasan speaks to some of these same themes and how she negotiates with her young daughter. These moments add up and transform our little boys and girls into budding young men and women. As we begin to thaw out of winter, consider how you find balance with your child, where his or her boundaries are, and the responsibilities that he or she is ready to take on.

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Bend or Break:
Your IQ Is Not Your Identity

By Melissa R. Hasan  Page 4
I am often asked by parents what the most important "things" are to do for a gifted child. I always interpret this to mean, "What can I do at home to help my child reach his or her full potential and be successful and happy?" That is a difficult question as so many factors are involved in talent development, and many of them are beyond our absolute control. Also, how success and happiness is defined or measured varies from one family and individual to the next. But over the years, I have developed a list of characteristics that I have come to believe are some of the most important ones for parents to cultivate so as to help gifted children realize their dreams (notice I said their dreams and not their parents’ dreams). My list is based on the research literature in the field, as well as my own experience as an administrator of gifted programs and as a parent.

**Grit**

This is a concept that Angela Duckworth, a psychologist from the University of Pennsylvania, has developed and promoted. She and her colleagues (2007) defined it as "perseverance and passion for long-term goals" (p. 1087). Grit involves working assiduously in a talent domain over time, including maintaining effort despite failures, plateaus, and setbacks. Grit may emerge early in a young aspiring musician or artist or develop later as a high school student commits to the study of medicine or political science. How does one develop or cultivate grit? Although research has not specifically focused on this, finding one’s passions seems to be key, which takes time and deliberate searching. Parents can help by exposing children to a wide range of fields and topics of study through informal (e.g., trips to museums) and formal (e.g.,...
enrichment courses) learning experiences. We do this a lot with young children, but it is important to help middle school and high school students also investigate fields and careers to find their passions. Helping students understand that people who make creative contributions to society were in it for the long haul and that creative breakthroughs do not come out of the blue without commitment and hard work over extended periods of time is also crucial. Children can begin to get a picture of this by reading about the lives of eminent individuals and seeing that there were ups and downs, great triumphs and some failures along the way—and that the development of their abilities and talents is a lifelong journey.

Self-Control
This is another characteristic that Duckworth (2012) talks about. She defined it as the regulation of behavior, attention, and emotion to meet personal goals and standards. Self-control is what enables a student to stay focused on a day-to-day basis to meet the many smaller goals that are involved in reaching big life goals. Self-control is involved in working consistently to get good grades in a course even if it is not that interesting and choosing to do homework instead of socializing with friends, even though the latter is much more fun. It boils down to a willingness to do what it takes to get the job done even if the activity (e.g., practice) is not always that enjoyable. Self-control involves being able to delay immediate gratification so as to remain focused on a larger goal. This is an important skill to model and teach your child. There are many things in life that we all do that are a means to an end—a necessary step on the path toward more autonomous and enjoyable activities. Too many gifted children miss out on challenging and engaging opportunities because they are unwilling to work to get the grades that are needed to qualify or be selected for such opportunities. Like it or not, teachers will often choose students who are willing to work hard and make the most out of a special class or opportunity rather than a child who is very bright but does not demonstrate effort. In extreme cases, when the child’s educational environment does not match his or her ability, parents must advocate strongly for changes in curricula or programming rather than allow children to underachieve or mentally check out of “boring” or “slow-pace” classes completely.

Finding Meaningfulness in Learning
Del Siegle, a leading expert on underachievement of gifted children, emphasized, “making school more meaningful ... is among the most promising strategies for reversing academic underachievement” (2012, p. 98). Even if your child is achieving satisfactorily, making learning more personal and meaningful can only enhance motivation and commitment. How do we do this as parents? One way is to encourage students to pursue their interests outside of school via formal programs or learning on their own at home. Rather than directly teaching their child, parents can assume a supportive role, providing resources, supplies, and encouragement and connecting children to other adults (e.g., career professionals) who can be helpful to them. Parents can request that teachers help students understand why learning something is important and how it will be helpful to them in the future (e.g., How might I use algebra or geometry in the

(Continues on p. 16)
Conceptual physics saved my sanity. A seemingly unimportant metallurgical fact I learned in high school has made parenting my toddler possible on most days. I graduated from a 2-year public high school for gifted students. Juniors and seniors from high schools all over the state are accepted each year to live in a dormitory on a university campus, far from home, and take classes following a typical college schedule. To say that I graduated from there is no small achievement, because in my years there, a little over 25% of incoming juniors left the school before graduation (J. T., personal communication, May 2012).

I believe that my high school experience prepared me for an adult life, especially as a parent, in a much more real sense than my undergraduate or even graduate school experiences. It was then that I learned that I am really smart. My mind can think amazing thoughts about all of the stuff I am smart about (like dangling prepositions and dense sentences). But no matter what subject it is, someone is always smarter. I may have helped my friend deconstruct Faust, but someone else had to hold my hand and lead me baby steps through analytical geometry. And U.S. history. And economics. But not civitas, because I rocked philosophy.

What was the most important thing I learned in high school? I learned from conceptual physics and interpersonal relationships that what is rigid—breaks. If it won’t bend, and you keep applying pressure, it will break. Shatter. Explode. And that is what happened to some of my classmates; usually those who chose to return to their home schools. They were unable to cope with the idea that someone else in the room was smarter, faster at solving a problem, or found a more elegant way to express the intangible.

In Genius Denied, Jan and Bob Davidson (2004) wrote that “the most common problem that gifted kids face is underachievement” (p. 49). They proposed that self-confidence is built by taking risks and pursuing challenging goals, which require all of one’s effort to reach. They went on to suggest that many gifted individuals become perfectionists who are afraid to fail, simply because they have never experienced failure. These individuals cannot meet their true potential because they are terrified of taking the risks necessary for substantial intellectual growth. They avoid intellectual or academic challenges, perhaps believing that having to work hard will prove that they are not gifted after all.

I have since learned about incremental and entity theories, popularly called growth and fixed mindsets by Dweck (2006), and have a new vocabulary for what I saw in high school. Students whose identity was wholly tied up in being “the smart one” could not face a reality that included so many gifted peers. Believing that their intelligence is “an unchangeable, fixed ‘entity,’” their focus was on measuring or proving their intelligence level (Blackwell, Dweck, & Trzesniewski, 2007, p. 247). They could not handle the frustration of truly difficult academic work, feeling that hard work proved that they weren’t so smart after all. Rigid students, with a fixed mindset, either broke and left or found a way to forge an entirely new identity to confront this new reality by changing their mindset. Flexible students, with a growth mindset, grew and blossomed—one adolescent drama after another. These were students who were excited to experiment, in class and in life, and who found a pool of wild new problems to solve on every front. They believed in their own power to change their intelligence level and looked at mistakes as opportunities to learn and improve.

In high school, I learned that sometimes you have to give a little or lose a lot. I learned how to take a deep breath and change my expectations. I learned that sometimes it’s okay to change the rules in the middle of the game, if that’s what it takes to keep the game going. Most of all, I learned how to learn from failure.
And that is how conceptual physics has saved my sanity as a new mother: I must bend or I will break. That is true of any mother of any toddler. As the mother of a gifted toddler, however, I use this high school lesson every day in another important way. I know that I must constantly find something challenging for my daughter, now 2, because I must teach her how to be flexible. I must intervene early to teach high-level cognitive functions that will help her to regulate her emotional reactions. Dawson and Guare (2010) outlined several of these executive functions that help humans to meet challenges and accomplish goals. Four of these, I believe, are crucial for gifted individuals to learn at a young age in order to cope with the anxiety and frustration that comes from being an intellectual outsider. Dawson and Guare defined them as follows:

1) **Sustained attention**: The capacity to attend to a situation or task in spite of distractibility, fatigue, or boredom.
2) **Flexibility**: The ability to revise plans in the face of obstacles, setbacks, new information, or mistakes. It involves adaptability to changing conditions.
3) **Emotional control**: The ability to manage emotions in order to achieve goals, complete tasks, or control and direct behavior.
4) **Goal directed persistence**: The capacity or drive to follow through to the completion of a goal and not be put off by other demands or competing interests. (p. 2)

I know that I must encourage my daughter to continue challenging activities that become frustrating and praise her for effort. I praise that she didn’t give up, not that she was smart enough to figure it out. And if she didn’t happen to figure it out this time, I’d point out that some things are hard and take more time to learn. We will try again on another day.

For my daughter, this has meant guiding her to do gross and fine motor activities regularly because without that encouragement her motor skills will fall years behind her intellectual interests. It has meant taking time out to jump and climb every day, even if it is a little scary for her. It has meant working puzzles labeled “age 3+” at age 20 months. It has meant continuing to work that puzzle even when she gets frustrated and throws a piece that just won’t turn properly. The important part is what happens when she reaches that point. I give her a hug, tell her that this is really...
hard work, and remind her it will keep getting easier as long as she keeps trying her best. We pick up the piece and I tell her how proud I am that she is a big girl who always tries and tries again. She tries again. And then we take a break by running through the house shouting “I did it” or something similar. Or sometimes she dissolves into a screaming, crying tantrum and we take a break and try again later.

Together we have found a few methods that help her cope with frustration and failure anxiety. We “stop, breathe, and think,” just the way Steve says in the Blue’s Clues episode “Blue Is Frustrated.” I realized how fully she has internalized this script when she told an Angry Birds™ toy: “It’s okay, Angry Bird. Take a deep breath. Do you need a hug, Angry Bird?” For more than an hour in the car that day, I watched my 2-year-old daughter demonstrate almost every coping mechanism we’ve tried, and it was a great opportunity to suggest several new ones, including alone time and a nap. Unfortunately, she was fairly distraught by the end of that hour when the toy was still angry. That episode led to an interesting conversation about how some people are just “made that way” and our words and actions cannot make them feel better.

When she decided, at 21 months, that she wanted to tie her shoes all by herself, we had a few rough mornings. We switched from tennis shoes to Velcro leather shoes. But when we woke up one rainy morning, I realized something had to change. Her need to be independent with her shoes wasn’t going to change, so I changed the rules. I asked her to please help me put on the shoes, and then said, “Let’s hurry. You tie this one and I’ll tie the other one, and we’ll be done so fast!” After one was tied (and double knotted with the sock folded down over the tie, of course), I said, “Oh man, you’re doing such a good job! Tying shoes is really hard, though. It takes lots of practice before it gets easier. I’ve had years and years of practice. Can I help you with that one since we’re trying to hurry?” And she said yes! Even better, the next day she told me that tying shoes is really hard, and we haven’t had a shoe tantrum since! I made a little shoelace toy just in case, and occasionally we get it out and do the bunny story¹, but the crisis was completely averted. She understood and accepted that she wasn’t ready to tie her own shoes, once I validated her need for independence and found a way to include her in the shoes routine. Now she opens her shoe cabinet, gets out her own shoes every morning, and helps us put them on. She takes them off and puts them back in the shoe cabinet when we get home. Currently, I am using the backward chaining method² to teach her how to dress and undress herself, in preparation for preschool acceleration. For her part, she is working on potty-training in order to make that acceleration possible.

Obviously there are days when I don’t bend enough, or she won’t bend at all, and someone has a crying meltdown. Sometimes it’s her and sometimes it’s me. I know now that the real lesson in life is how to deal with frustration without having a major tantrum and without quitting. I accept that part of my responsibility to my gifted daughter is to teach her this life skill and to support the development of her executive functions, especially of sustained attention, flexibility, emotional control, and goal-directed persistence (Dawson & Guare, 2010). I also know that I must convince her that true identity cannot be wholly consumed with IQ or EQ (Goleman, 2005) or learning preference (Fleming & Mills, 1992). These factors are a part of each of us, but they are not our core. Armed with these lessons, I hope that I can prepare her for the day that she walks into a classroom of geniuses who shake her confidence to its very core. And I hope that she will walk out of that room knowing that her deep inner value as a human being is untouched by rising or falling intellectual rank.

References


Footnotes

1. The bunny story is used to teach the steps of tying. “Here is the ground. Here is the tree. The bunny hops around the tree and pops through the hole.”

2. Backward chaining is a method used (among other places) in Applied Behavior Analysis and suggested by Dawson and Guare to teach students sustained attention. The student first completes only the last step (e.g., Step 5) of the task to earn a reward. When the last step is mastered, the student will complete Steps 4 and 5 to earn the reward. Each preceding step is mastered before a new step is added, until the student is independently completing the entire task for a reward.

Author’s Note

Melissa Hasan, M.A., graduated from the Indiana Academy of Science, Mathematics, and Humanities and holds a B.A. in creative writing and an M.A. in Near Eastern languages and cultures. She has worked in many positions as an educator of students with special needs on both ends of the spectrum. She lives with her husband and gifted toddler in California.
Frost didn’t call his poem “The Road Taken.”

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Finding the right distraction for a gifted child

“I’m Bored!”

Spring Fever and the Gifted Child

By Desiree R. Lindbom-Cho

“I’m bored!” It is the refrain dreaded by all parents. By the time winter weather has come and gone, all kids, not just gifted ones, are ready for a change of scenery and/or a change in routine. What is an overworked parent plagued by spring fever to do? Finding the right distraction for a gifted child can prove especially challenging given gifted individuals’ propensity for overexcitabilities (Piechowski & Chucker, 2011). These overexcitabilities can manifest in a variety of ways, including restlessness, avid curiosity, overactive imaginations, and heightened emotional sensitivity, among others (Silverman, 2000). Combining a gifted child’s unique overexcitabilities with boredom resulting from winter routines can confound even the most resourceful parent. Thus, finding new places to see, new things to do, and new or familiar faces with whom to play can alleviate the inevitable bout of cabin fever that sets in at this time of year for younger and older children alike. Options for finding an activity that will meet the needs of your child are numerous if one knows where to look in the community.

If we are fortunate, this March will come in like a lamb and remain that way too. This gives children and families the opportunity to get out of the house and explore their local areas. A quick search on the Internet using your hometown and “park” as keywords can yield lists of recreational sites specific to a local area. Further use of a favorite search engine can reveal community event calendars. I know that when I deliberately search for kid-friendly events for my entire family to enjoy, I find out about goings-on that I did not even know were going on! When I am really lucky, they are free or, at the very least, inexpensive to attend. An outing to our local farmers’ market on Saturday mornings can be as costly as I want, and allowing my gifted 6-year-old to bring his own money provides us with a real-world opportunity to budget for breakfast and other treats if so desired.

Nationwide lists of museums, parks, and zoos also exist, and parents can simply enter their state name on these websites to find nearby attractions. For instance, the National Park Foundation lists all nationally registered sites, not just famous parks such as Yellowstone. There may be hidden places of interest in your own state. Just recently, a friend showed us around her hometown of Natchitoches, LA, a mere 3 hours from our home. It was only after looking at the National Park Foundation’s website that I realized I had seen a national historic park near the Cane River area. Likewise, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums lists accredited facilities that must uphold a certain standard of care for their animals. The International Council of Museums has a page dedicated to museums in the United States and is maintained by John Burke from the Oakland Museum of California. Types of museums and recommendations from readers are also included. (See the Resources section of this article for links to the national lists noted here.) When going out to see new places is impossible due to the weather, time, money, or any or all of the above, finding new things to do at home becomes another option.
option. Hitting up a local library for activity or craft books is one option, and finding books to read for fun is a bonus. Otherwise, the Internet quickly becomes my best friend as I look for different projects and experiments to occupy a busy mind. I hate to admit it, but I am a closet Pinterest user. There are endless art projects, science experiments, and hobby ideas for my son and I to enjoy together. For an older child, independent projects can be found, and a sense of accomplishment can be gained by allowing your son or daughter to work at a project of interest on his or her own. Of course, Pinterest is only one place to look, and giving children the opportunity to search the Internet with you will ensure that interest is peaked.

Having friends join outings or activities at home can contribute to the fun. Including friends who have similar interests and abilities as your child increase the likelihood that all will enjoy themselves. For gifted children, having peers who are close to their mental age, not their chronological age, is a top factor in choosing friends (Silverman, 2000). Also, parents should not be alarmed if their gifted child does not want to have a friend come to play or join in a family field trip as studies have shown that gifted adolescents have a greater tendency toward introversion compared to their nongifted peers (Cross, Speirs Neumeister, & Cassady, 2007). This means that time for reflection and the need to be alone sometimes may be important to a gifted child (Silverman, 2000).

Cabin fever may plague us all at this time of year, but the refrain “I’m bored” need not add to a family’s irritation. Instead, families can turn to resources online and in their local community to combat children’s ennui. Bringing along a friend or two and knowing when a gifted child might just want some down time to be alone will make the outings and activities that much more fun. *

References

Resources

Footnotes
1. I am not local to Louisiana and was happy to discover the correct pronunciation is Nack-uh-dish.

Author’s Note
Desiree R. Lindbom-Cho, Ed.S., graduated from Concordia College in Moorhead, MN with a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and a major in English literature. She has been fortunate to teach across grade levels in regular, special, and gifted education settings. Currently, she is pursuing her doctorate at Louisiana State University.
Many parents are in search of ways to best encourage their gifted children in the arts. As arts programs receive less financial and administrative support from the public school systems, parents are seeking additional resources. This article will provide a beginning point for parents to support artistic development for gifted children, based upon the work of the Arts Network of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC).

All children benefit from participation in arts programs. Specifically, studies show that the arts support academic and cognitive development (Ruppert, 2006) and social and emotional support (e.g., Lufirig, 2000). For academically gifted children, the arts provide not only a venue for the development of creative and flexible thinking, but they also facilitate gifted behaviors such as connection making, task commitment, abstract and symbolic thinking, and analysis. However, for students with specific gifts in the arts, including visual arts, music, theater, dance, and creative writing, instruction in the arts is vital for both the development of talent and social and emotional support. For highly creative children, participation in programs for the arts provides an outlet for creative expression as well as the creation of peer groups of other children who experience heightened sensitivity (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977) or less adherence to social norms (e.g., Larson & Borwn, 2007). These experiences can have long-term benefits for highly creative and artistically gifted children (e.g., Catterall, 1998).

**Characteristics of Artistically Gifted Children**

Parents of young children often wonder how to know if their child has particular gifts in the arts. The first sign of talent in children is often an increased interest in an art form. For example, a child might enjoy concerts, art museum exhibits, or theater productions. Parents can facilitate these interests by providing opportunities to attend cultural events showcasing a variety of media. In addition, children may express their interests through the production of art by drawing, painting, singing, or playing musical instruments. By providing access to a variety of materials to encourage creative expression, parents can support the child’s emerging interests.

In addition to increased or heightened interest in the arts, another characteristic of many artistically talented children is heightened creativity. Creative children are able to think of many new and novel ideas and to expand upon those ideas. Sometimes creative children express themselves by a lack of adherence to the social norms exhibited by their peers, such as unusual dress or style choices, different out-of-school activities, or language. Additionally, young children often participate in highly imaginative play. Other researchers have also indicated that highly creative and gifted children have increased emotional, psychomotor, sensual, imaginative, or intellectual sensitivities (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). These characteristics may make creatively gifted children more vulnerable in social contexts. Thus, participation in programs for the arts with other children who share these characteristics can provide an additional peer network and support for emotional growth. These programs can also act as a safe environment for creative expression.

Another characteristic of children talented in the arts is an increased ability to analyze works of art. In a visual medium,
this may include increased attention to color, composition, and design details. For example, a child who insists that her shirt is magenta—not merely pink—may be exhibiting this trait. In music, this may be characterized as heightened consideration of tone, pitch, or quality of auditory input, including not only musical pieces, but also spoken word or environmental sounds. These children may also exhibit increased ability to identify musical pieces or individual instruments within a complete orchestra. In theater and creative writing, children may provide specific insights into the delivery of spoken word, experimenting with inflection and tone or word choice. Gifted writers may choose unusual vocabulary in spoken words. They may be particularly verbose, or alternatively, may be more laconic, as the child may more carefully consider words before speaking or writing. Sometimes these skills naturally develop throughout a child’s early years, while at other times these skills are rapidly expanded upon after instruction.

Finally, children who are talented in the arts often express their gifts through the advanced or prolific creation of art. In the visual arts, this may include drawing, painting, sculpting, building, photographing, or creation through digital media. For many children, this includes an ability to create highly representational images with a high degree of precision, and may also include more abstract images that contain attention (or intuition) toward design elements, such as color, composition, texture, and balance. In performance-based arts, such as music, dance, or theater, this technical proficiency may include the ability to match pitch, perform complex musical pieces, or interpret these pieces to reflect personal style. Parents should also keep in mind that all aspects of artistic skill and proficiency take some amount of instruction and practice. Students with innate gifts in the arts must be provided with instruction and ample time to develop these gifts into talent.

Support for Artistically Gifted Children

Parents of gifted children, and particularly those of artistically gifted children, often wonder about the best ways to support their children’s artistic development. Perhaps the most important step is to advocate for arts programs at the local, state, and national levels. Parents can become involved in the local school parent organizations and school boards, providing input and support for the continuation and expansion of art and music programs in the schools so that children have the opportunity to further develop their skills and abilities in the arts. As school budgets shrink, parents can find out from local teachers what materials they need and make donations. Parents can also show their support of programs by attending art shows, concerts, and theater productions of local schools. Younger children, as age appropriate, can be encouraged to attend, providing additional cultural experiences.

In addition to the public schools, communities offer a variety of cultural and artistic opportunities. In urban areas, cities have major theaters, symphony orchestras, operas, ballet companies, and art museums. Even in smaller towns and rural areas, local community theaters and art galleries provide opportunities. Community groups, recreational centers, art museums and galleries, and music groups often offer classes and summer programs for children. These often provide an affordable alternative to private schools and lessons for many families, and many offer financial assistance and scholarships to those in need. Local colleges and universities also often provide classes and lessons for children. Additionally, the development of private summer camps that focus on the arts has provided additional opportunities for parents to provide support for their children’s artistic capabilities. Many colleges and universities offer summer camps for talented secondary school students as well. For older students, many larger school districts and private schools offer specialized schools for artistically talented students, such as magnet schools.

Finally, perhaps one of the most effective and easiest ways to find support for artistically gifted children is to join the National Association of Gifted Children’s Arts Network. The membership of this network includes parents, professionals, teachers, and university faculty who are dedicated to support the arts in gifted education. The mission of the group is two-fold: to promote the inclusion of arts throughout the curriculum for all students and to promote the advancement of specialized programs.
For those students with gifts and talents specifically in the arts. As the network moves forward as an organization, the leadership looks forward to providing bi-monthly resources for parents and teachers to promote artistic development among children of all ages. In addition, the leadership is actively soliciting input from members to develop an exciting program for NAGC’s 2013 annual conference in Indianapolis. For further information, please contact the current chair, John Gaa (JohnG@central.uh.edu), or chair-elect, Hope Wilson (hope.e.wilson@unf.edu).

Final Thoughts
For parents, the decreasing emphasis on the arts in public education may be discouraging. However, along with the Arts Network, there are many ways in which parents can encourage artistic and creative development in their children. Arts education and participation in the arts is important for all children and is vital to the development of talent among artistically gifted children.

References

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Hope E. Wilson, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at the University of North Florida. John Gaa, Ph.D., is a professor at the University of Houston.

For more information about NAGC’s Arts Network, visit http://www.nagc.org/ArtsNetwork.aspx.
academic achievement is only the beginning...

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ABCs of Being Smart: J is for Journey

By Dr. Joanne Foster

The old saying, “life is a journey” may sound clichéd, but the words are nevertheless true. Children can learn a great deal from the travels and directions chosen by others, and especially from people whose life stories or experiences offer inspiration by virtue of their effort, perseverance, and acquired success.

What follows here is a list of accomplished individuals whose last names all start with the letter J. They’re representative of many men and women who have joined the top ranks in one field or another by working hard—jarring the status quo by juggling, jostling, or overcoming jeopardy (it can be a jungle out there)—and often their journeys are jubilant and just.

(Jumping off point for parents and kids: Pick any letter, area of interest, or subject area, and see what journeys you can discover. Then share and learn from them.)

All That Jazz

Musicians enhance the landscape of musical performance through melodies, production, lyrics, or creative forays into song and dance. The people below carefully prepared, rehearsed, fine-tuned, and shared their craft—entertaining and enriching countless lives with music and talent.

• Michael Jackson (multi-talented entertainer); Quincy Jones (trumpeter/composer/bandleader/producer); Mick Jagger (rock star); Janis Joplin (singer/songwriter); Billy Joel (pianist/singer/composer); Scott Joplin (ragtime composer/pianist); Elton John (singer/songwriter/producer); Al Jolson (singer); Etta James (singer); Norah Jones (singer/songwriter)

Jockeying for Position

Exceptional athleticism involves practice, commitment, and a willingness to propel oneself toward excellence even when the competition is daunting. The athletes whose names appear here harnessed their strength, energy, and desire, and beat the odds to become exceptionally skilled in their respective sports.

• LeBron James (basketball); Michael Jordan (basketball); Bobby Jones (golf/founder of the Masters Tournament); Jackie Joyner-Kersee (multiple Olympic gold medalist–heptathlon); Reggie Jackson (baseball); Magic Johnson (basketball); Florence Griffith Joyner (multiple Olympic gold medalist–sprinting)

Joys of Jurisprudence and Political Pursuits

Public service and leadership are commendable pursuits, but not everyone has the inclination to work in the limelight or the sustainability to succeed in the public sector. Those who make their mark and strive to improve the state of societal affairs often have interesting life stories, and it can be intriguing to see how tenacity, decisions, learning, and profundities can lead to triumph, and even have broad impact.

• Andrew Jackson (7th U.S. president, 1829–1837); Jacob K. Javits (politician—many Javits Fellowships are awarded annually in support of students who exhibit excellence); John Jay (first Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court)

Journals and Other Jottings

Authors of all ages compose poems, articles, books, presentations, plays, and various other kinds of writings. Words have the power to change the way people think and act and can be extremely influential. Parents and teachers are well-positioned to encourage children to write and also to read (and find good reading material); to share literary experiences; and to discuss the different kinds of messages words convey so children can develop meaningful understandings and learn to be discerning.

• James Joyce (Ulysses); James Jones (From Here to Eternity); P.D. James (Phyllis Dorothy, author of many crime fiction and mystery novels); Thomas Jefferson (3rd U.S. President, 1801–1809, wrote first draft of the Declaration of Independence); Norton Juster (The Phantom Tollbooth—my favorite book!)

Creative Juices

Innovative thinkers have the capacity to alter day-to-day lives, including how people look at the world, and how they engage with all it has to offer—personal attire, perspectives, appreciation of the arts, health, and so on. For example, the individuals mentioned below might well have influenced these aspects of everyday life, and how we enjoy or even extend them. Who has transformed the way you live? And what lies beneath—and beyond?

• Marc Jacobs (fashion designer); Carl Jung (Swiss psychiatrist who focused on the collective consciousness); Wolfman Jack (disc jockey/radio broadcaster); Peter Jackson (award-winning film director of the Lord of the Rings trilogy); Edward Jenner (doctor who developed smallpox vaccination)

Consider the journeys—the jams, jitters, junctures, and joys.

(This installment of “ABCs of Being Smart” is an ideal time for me to give special thanks to Jennifer Jolly—editor of Parenting for High Potential—who gives me both latitude and encouragement as I continue to work my way through the alphabet.)

Author’s Note

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future? Why is it important to understand world history?). With a little bit of research on their own, parents can help students understand the connection between subjects in school and future careers and professions or how understanding in one subject is necessary as a prerequisite for more advanced study later.

Developing Appropriate Attitudes Toward Work and Ability

We all know that ability and talent has to be combined with a strong work ethic and commitment to study or practice in order for students to be successful in achieving their career and life goals. Carol Dweck, a psychologist, has popularized the idea of *mindsets*, or beliefs about intelligence and ability. According to her, a *growth mindset* or a belief that ability, including intelligence, can change, grow, and improve with practice and study, is crucial for sustaining a long-term commitment to the development of one’s talents. In contrast, a *fixed mindset*, or a belief that one is born with a certain amount of ability or intelligence that is fixed and immutable, can hinder performance and achievement even among the most talented individuals. Research by Dweck (2008) and others shows that children who hold a growth mindset about their abilities and intelligence will persist through difficult times and rebound from setbacks (e.g., poor grades, not being selected for a program) more readily. How do parents cultivate a growth mindset? According to Dweck, the messages we give children about their performances and grades, specifically the type of praise, can influence their beliefs. Praise that focuses on recognizing and rewarding hard work and feedback that is centered on improvement and growth will promote healthy attitudes toward both ability and effort. (You can read more about how parents can use praise to reinforce a growth mindset in Dweck’s book, *Mindset.*)

Enjoyment of Solitude

A consistent finding within the research literature on giftedness is the value of developing the ability to enjoy spending time alone. Historical accounts of the lives of individuals who make creative contributions to society reveal that often, this alone time was a result of difficult circumstances. Whether self-imposed or the result of external conditions, this alone time was used productively by individuals—to pursue independent projects, read broadly, write in journals, practice musical instruments, make art, or study. How can parents cultivate enjoyment of solitude in children? It is challenging in current times with Facebook and texting as children can literally always remain connected to friends. Modeling of independent pursuits helps as well as encouragement and facilitation of a quiet place to do their work, study, practice, engage in hobbies, dabble in new interests, or just retreat to for reflective thought. Parents can stress the importance of *down time* to recharge and rejuvenate, set rules or guidelines for phone and Internet use during family dinners or events, and show through their own actions how to balance productive use of solitary time with social activities.

Grit, self-control, finding meaningfulness in learning, developing appropriate attitudes toward work, and the ability to enjoy solitude are the first five skills to cultivate in your gifted child.

Part 2 of this article, which discusses the next five important characteristics, will be included in the next issue of PHP.

References