

Parenting the Creatively Gifted Child

By Kathryn P. Haydon

Creatively gifted kids often just don't fit the mold—any mold—and that's why it is critical to support them accordingly. Here are three ways that parents can help their highly creative children to be comfortable in their own skins.

Allow exploration. Highly creative kids may jump into a deep interest and stick with it for years. Or, they may prefer to explore. For example, your child might choose to play the trombone in fourth grade and then want to switch to the clarinet in fifth grade. You may need to ask yourself, *Why not change to clarinet?* To make activity switching more palatable and possible, you might consider renting

instruments in order to avoid investing too heavily in new equipment before you know the interest has staying power.

Find mentors. Creatively gifted children need people on their team who “get” them and inspire them to be just who they are. A mentor might be a grandparent, a neighbor, a babysitter, a tutor, or a community member. It might be someone who shares a deep interest with your child, such as physics or bird watching, cooking or reading. Or it might be someone who simply loves children and likes to listen to their musings. Highly creative children understand they are different from others, and they need to feel valued and

understood by someone who enjoys them just the way they are.

Identify meaning. Highly creative children tend to have a strong inner drive to pursue their interests, curiosities, and activities that they feel will help them grow and learn. On the flip side, engaging in tasks that don't hold personal meaning or deep enough learning (like that math work sheet in the homework folder) can be almost painful to complete. Children need someone who can help them identify what lights them up, their interests, and their motivations. Parents and creative children, together, can figure out ways to connect personal passions with activities that they find mundane, or search for new approaches that better connect with their own sense of purpose. Parents who support the flexibility, mentoring, and meaning needed by their children discover even more joy by successfully parenting their highly creative children. ☺

Author's Note

Kathryn P. Haydon is the founder of Sparkitivity. She facilitates innovative professional development workshops for teachers; consults with families to support their children's learning; and has written and spoken widely on the topics of creativity, creative learning, and supporting creative and gifted students. She co-authored *Discovering and Developing Talents in Spanish Speaking Students* (Corwin, 2012), and her current research focuses on developing innovative and creative learning infrastructures. Kathryn is a graduate of Northwestern University, and a Master of Science candidate in Creativity and Change Leadership at SUNY-Buffalo in New York.

