Parenting Gifted Children to Support Optimal Development

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Why worry about it?

• Gifted children’s development varies from that of their age peers

• Teachers, physicians, and administrators will often be unfamiliar with gifted development

• Most books on parenting do not include sections on gifted children
Characteristics and Development

- Gifted children often exhibit different characteristics than their age peers
- These require different learning interventions
- Unfortunately many in education are aware of the characteristics and needs of gifted children
Characteristics and Development

• Characteristics and needs of course vary by child
• Somewhat dependent upon how one conceptualizes and identifies *giftedness*
• Despite this, there are still certain characteristics that are common across the gifted population
Characteristics and Development

• Gifted learners frequently demonstrate rapid learning rates
• They can understand abstract and complex concepts (e.g., time, mathematics, etc.)
• Gifted children often surpass their age peers in basic skills
Characteristics and Development

• In order to address these characteristics, gifted children need exposure to new and challenging information

• They must have access to rich and deep curriculum

• Access to cognitive peers who demonstrate the same speed and depth of learning a must
Characteristics and Development

• Gifted children often exhibit well-developed memories
• They show intense and lasting interest in certain subjects
• Gifted learners frequently possess and use critical and creative thinking, processing, and problem-solving skills
Characteristics and Development

• Gifted learners benefit from programs and enrichment settings where these characteristics can be nurtured
• Opportunity to set and evaluate own priorities when solving problems
• Exposure to alternative methods of solving problems
Characteristics and Development

• Gifted children benefit from exposure to tasks and problems that let them deal with abstractions and the consequences of choices

• Gifted learners also need opportunities to draw generalizations and to test them
Characteristics and Development

• Gifted children often use advanced thinking, processing, and problem-solving skills

• Often demonstrate a high degree of motivation

• Show flexibility and insight within their thought processes
Remember Their Chronological Age!

- Gifted children are still children
- They enjoy, and often benefit more, from age-appropriate literature
- Attempts to hurry development can result in the loss of many of the pleasures of childhood
- Use age-appropriate materials but focus upon critical and creative thinking
Sensitive Periods

• Based upon work of theorists such as Bloom and Montessori

• Those stages in time when a child concentrates mainly on one aspect of his or her environment or learning to the exclusion of everything else

• Basic guidelines
Sensitive Periods

- Movement (birth to 4 years)
- Refinement of the senses (birth to 5 years)
- Language (birth to 6 years)
- Weaning (5 to 6 months)
- Order (18 months to 2 years)
- Manners and courtesies (2 to 6 years)
- Numbers (4 to 5.5 years)
Sensitive Periods

• Visual complexity (birth to 2 months)
• Hearing (prenatal to 6 months)
• Language (18 months to 4 years)
Sensitive Periods

- Bloom suggested that moving through these sensitive periods early might indicate giftedness.
- For *some* gifted children, their intelligence might be represented by more extensive vocabulary and sentence structure.
- Similarly, some believe early reading may indicate giftedness.
Family Dynamics

• Gifted children’s cognitive, psychomotor, and affective skills develop in a variety of environments
• Home, school, enrichment settings, other environments
• None of these is more important than the home
Family Dynamics

- Nature vs. Nurture
- Interactions between parents and children, siblings, or others cause joy or tension
- Less tension is the goal
- Less stress means more brain function focused upon development
Family Dynamics

- Parenting styles affect the home environment
- Family dynamics improved if *all* members of the family modify their behaviors in ways that support the development of all children
### Types of parenting

- **Uninvolved (Rejecting/Neglecting)**
- **Permissive**
- **Authoritative**
- **Authoritarian**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenting Style</th>
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<th>Unsupportive</th>
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Uninvolved Parenting (aka Rejecting/Neglecting)

- Parents make few demands upon children
- Parents exhibit low responsiveness to children’s needs
- Parents offer little communication to their children
- Children’s basic needs are met, but parents otherwise detached
Permissive Parenting

- Parents rarely discipline their children
- Parents possess relatively low expectations regarding children’s maturity and self-control
- Are more responsive than demanding
- Tend to be non-traditional and lenient in approach
- Encourage children to self-regulate and are non-confrontational
Authoritative Parenting

• Demands that rules and guidelines be followed
• Also responsive to children and demonstrates a willingness to take questions
• Failure to follow rules followed by nurturing to increase likelihood they will be followed next time
• Assertive, but not intrusive or restrictive
• Allows children to feel supported and fosters communication
Authoritarian Parenting

- Places high demands on children with low levels of responsiveness
- Strict rules and harsh punishments
- Little time is spent explaining why certain rules have been chosen or implemented
- Parents seek obedience
- Parents derive status from accomplishments
**In Review . . .**

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Parenting Style Is a Choice

- Greatly affects family dynamics
- A child’s happiness, self-esteem, and social competence are greatly influenced by parenting style
- Uninvolved lowest
- Permissive perform poorly in school and have difficulty with authority
- Authoritarian obedient and well-behaved but lower across all three
Family Composition

• Each child is unique
• All children benefit from parental support supporting their differences
• Parents must differentiate in their parenting much as teachers differentiate instruction at school
Differentiation

- Readiness
- Interests
- Learning Profile
Family Composition

• Differences into type and amount of:
  • Supervision
  • Support
  • Discipline
  • Nurturing
Family Composition

• All children need a home environment that makes him or her feel safe to become who he or she is destined to be
• One child’s needs are not more significant than another’s
• Accomplishments of all should be celebrated
Family Composition

• Continuum of parenting support
  • Early age
    • Most time at home
    • Parks, libraries, museums, etc.
  • Later enters school
    • Outside the home
    • Ask about perceptions of and from these experiences
    • Tailor outings to interests
  • High school
    • Opportunities to work with cognitive peers
Programming Options

• In school
  • Differentiation
  • Cluster grouping
  • Pull-out services
  • Special classes
  • Special schools
Programming Options

- Early entrance to Kindergarten
- Single subject acceleration
  - Child is highly advanced in one area
  - Advanced in that area
  - Remains with age peers
- Grade skipping
Social and Emotional Needs

• All children have these
• Gifted children’s tend to be different
• If counseling necessary, find someone with experience with the gifted
Perfectionism

- Can be positive or negative
- Enabling perfectionism is the drive for excellence that represents intrinsic motivation
- Disabling perfectionism can be a barrier to achievement or performance
Enabling Perfectionism

- Empowers the gifted child to do his or her best work
- A sense of pleasure derived from the labors of painstaking effort
- A motivator that encourages some gifted children to do an excellent job
Disabling Perfectionism

• Gifted child may be plagued with feelings of depression, guilt, or shame caused by his or her work
• To compensate, gifted children often engage in procrastination, self-deprecation, and other face-saving behaviors
• Leads to underachievement
Underachievement

• Discrepancy between expected achievement (IQ tests) and actual achievement (grades and teacher assessments)

• Sometimes a consequence of other emotional, mental, or physical problem

• Often caused by gifted child’s attitudes, motivations, and perceptions
Other Resources
Questions
Questions

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