

Gifted Voice NEWSLETTER FOR FALL, 2005

Join us for the next EDGO-TAGO Conference Friday, October 20, 2006!

For those who did not attend the last one, visit our new website for a summary of presentations.

EDGOTAGO.COM IS NOW ONLINE! Visit our new website:

www.edgotago.com Please send us your ideas on how we can make the site and our services better. Mail@edgotago.com

Enrichment Centre – visit www.DiscoverTeenergy.com Featured Topics “Activities Database” which has over 500 activities to stimulate the lives and learning of young people. Add your events to the Events Calendar for free. Send your ideas for interesting activities to submit@discoverteenergy.com and they will be included in the database.

Articles

Identifying Gifted Students from Low Socio-economic Backgrounds

(excerpts from Dept. of Education article, Government of Western Australia)

Many gifted and talented students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds and experience varying degrees and forms of educational disadvantage.

Identification

Early identification may be difficult but is necessary to prevent escalating educational disadvantage. In identifying these students, mainstream checklist items often become irrelevant because students display some of the following characteristics, which are typical for their other age mates:

- Learning performance shows weakness in school knowledge and vocabulary
- Interest in, and enjoyment of, a range of reading material may not be evident
- Problem-solving activities may indicate a preference for a different learning style
- Students often prefer visual to auditory learning strategies
- Self-motivation for task completion is less evident

However, some behaviours displayed may give classroom teachers cues for making further investigations about the ability of students:

- Students may demonstrate a special talent instead of a general talent
- Outstanding creativity

- Curiosity, an ability to generate new ideas or the provision of clever solutions to problems
- Observation and outstanding memory
- A sense of humour and flexibility in thinking
- Ability to think systematically and logically
- Leaders among their low socioeconomic peers outside the classroom and school

What To Do For These Students

Provision of exciting, challenging situations in a student's area of interest will assist him or her to display talent.

Provision should also consider:

- encouraging students to value individual differences and accepting unique ability
- enrichment from as early age as possible
- encouraging student's strengths
- developing creativity and leadership
- relating to real needs
- use of group work
- use of role models, mentoring
- emphasis on steps in problem-solving
- provisional participation in a formal gifted program without formal identification

What is Enrichment for Gifted Students?

(Otto Schmidt, Gifted Programming Consultant, www.AccentonSkills.com
Toronto, Canada)

Enrichment is probably an integral part of many young gifted people's lives already. Enrichment encourages gifted students to:

- expand knowledge and skills in regular school curriculum
- learn new skills and interests for personal satisfaction/need
- involve themselves with older, other gifted students or adults based on expertise and common interests
- learn new skills or add to existing ones

The learning of all students should be enriched during the school year but sometimes the average student may not be able to handle more than what the curriculum offers and/or expects. Gifted students, on the other hand, can often handle much more. When gifted students are challenged through enrichment, brainpower and potential are being tapped. Enrichment is also a great way to keep gifted students from getting bored.

Enrichment activities can include:

- visits, excursions, festivals, weekend community activities
- contests, competitions, science fairs, leadership training
- starting new school clubs, taking on school leadership roles
- students researching, finding and bringing in guest speakers
- using technology to assist teachers, administrators or other students
- course modifications to allow a gifted student more control of learning
- independent study work acceptable to teachers

(see www.DiscoverTeenergy.com “Activities Database” for over 500 activities)

Enrichment can enhance:

- creative thinking
- self-awareness
- higher-level thinking
- problem-solving
- communication skills
- research skills
- spirituality
- leadership skills
- level of maturity/sophistication
- motivation, enthusiasm, tenacity, responsibility

Gifted students often have the luxury of being able to handle schoolwork quickly and easily. As a result, time may be available for exciting, interesting, challenging enrichment activities that enhance their lives.

Giftedness and Crime

(source: Rita Culross, Ph.D.

<http://www.familyeducation.com/experts/advice/0,1183,25-26300,00.html>)

“According to Marylou Kelly Streznewski in her book “Gifted Grown Ups: The Mixed Blessings of Extraordinary Potential,” gifted people may make up as much as 20 percent of the prison population. Given that estimates of giftedness in the population range from 3 to 5 percent, her data suggests that the gifted are over-represented in the prison population. The majority of inmates are young males, often from lower socioeconomic groups. (It is also true that their crime victims share those demographics.)

The more important questions relate to why the gifted become involved in crime. Although a certain level of intelligence is required for some crimes (e.g., computer hackers), it seems counterintuitive that bright people with potential would choose a life of crime. Some researchers have theorized that gifted individuals who turn to crime lack a well-developed sense of morality. They lack

control over their own behavior or are not guided by a strong sense of right and wrong. The gifted criminal may consider crime a challenge: Can I do this and not get caught? Other researchers point to biological factors or inconsistent parenting as the origins of criminal behavior. A person who does not fit in or who feels isolated may commit crimes as a way to be accepted (e.g., in a gang). As the tragic events of 9/11 have shown us, bright individuals can engage in evil acts.”

According to "Kids Who Know Too Much", studies show that 50% of death row prisoners in two US states have IQ's of 130+. Another study showed that 17% of all federal penitentiary criminals had IQs of 130+. The average IQ of kidnappers is 142. Think what they could have accomplished had they been appropriately nurtured and educated?

Living Life as a “Giftie”

(by Wenxin Xu, Gr. 10 student at Don Mills Collegiate Institute, Toronto, ON, his article in the North York Mirror, Toronto, Canada)

If someone were to see me on the street, they might think Chinese. In Chinatown, where Chinese are everywhere, I am a teen. And in my own school, where there is a sizeable population of Chinese teens, people would look at me and think “giftie.”

Conceptually, the gifted program is supposed to choose, with an IQ test, the most intelligent students and place them in a separate class, enriched by extra funding, special teachers and a modified curriculum. For better or for worse, however, it's much more than that.

First, the students in the gifted class are not there because they are hard workers or because they study well, or even because they are good students; they have been chosen for their ability to absorb information quickly.

In fact, my class prides itself in its ability to pass exams without doing assignments, without studying and often without taking notes. This approach worked well in primary school, worked OK in junior high, and well, flops in high school. The volume of information we are required to know has exceeded what we can cram into our heads in a single night. I look up at the colleges and universities and then I look down at my horrid work habits and I am afraid. I am very afraid.

Unfortunately, regardless of how afraid I am, my peers expect me to read five books a day, write mathematical treatises in my spare time and regularly donate apples to my teachers.

I am not at all ashamed to say that I do none of these. The label, however, seems branded into my forehead.

When someone finds out I am a giftie, a rift inevitably forms between the two of us. I am expected to be different, arrogant, uninterested in the same things as other teens – an adult in disguise.

When I do find friends outside my class, we are inevitably separated within several years when we graduate to different schools, he to a nearby one and I to a gifted one much farther away.

That is not to say, of course, the program is unnecessary or superfluous; it is simply both good and bad. Through it, I have met many talented individuals, some of whom have enormous potential.

The extra material and unique environment will certainly help these students to achieve their goals. As for myself, I simply cross my fingers, close my eyes and hope the readers of my college transcript will skim over my grades, see the word gifted and place as much weight on that as my peers and teachers have in the past.

Reducing Stress in Gifted Students

(source unknown)

Most gifted students are typical children and have the same needs as others - physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and social needs. Giftedness, however, can sometimes add an extra dimension of intensity or depth that results in additional stress.

Causes of extra stress:

- accepting their exceptional skills, talents, and abilities as well as admitting their weaknesses/limitations
- trying to be understood and accepted by other gifted students, "normal" peers and adults
- understanding the difference between pursuing excellence and trying to achieve at a perfectionist level
- developing acceptable socializing skills with people
- developing a healthy self-concept and self-appreciation
- dealing with people who stereotype and have unrealistic expectations of them
- understanding the ways in which they are like and different from other students

To reduce stress, consider the following:

- develop a solid understanding of giftedness
- recognize efforts, achievements and improvements in a way that is free of unrealistic performance expectations
- provide opportunities to engage in challenging and exciting activities that test abilities without any pressures
- help them develop patience with themselves and others
- provide opportunities to be safely and extravagantly creative
- distinguish between hard-and-fast rules and those that can be changed
- help students learn when and how to share creative perceptions, insights and thoughts appropriately with others

- show what is and is not in their control i.e. their energy and attitudes but not their marks or awards
 - allow and accept stronger emotional responses within limits
 - provide methods for dealing with “boring” subjects and the occasional incompatibility with teachers
 - provide counselling and advice when needed
 - set appropriate expectations for effort and achievement
 - decide on appropriate goals given strengths and weaknesses
 - engage in activities with gifted peers as well as others
 - provide realistic expectations as to what they can and can't solve in life
 - help students learn how to make life meaningful
 - accepting and loving them the same as other children
 - do not allow giftedness to be an excuse for rudeness, inappropriate behaviour or words
 - provide opportunities for silence, contemplation, reflection, meditation
 - encourage participation in sports and other physical activities in different environments
 - encourage doing things for fun once in a while, not always for educational purposes
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I Get Super Grades! Now what?

(by Otto Schmidt, Gifted Programming Consultant, www.AccentonSkills.com, Toronto, Canada)

What should gifted students do once they achieve great academic results? When marks are super high regularly, it usually means that learning skills are well mastered, motivation and responsibility are high, and there is probably plenty of enjoyment and satisfaction in the effort. Once that level of operation has been reached, gifted students can be led into other areas to further enrich and enhance their lives:

Become Consistent

Work to have all marks at roughly the same high level. A spread of 5-10 marks, or more can suggest: effort is not consistent, like and dislike of courses, not as disciplined in some subjects as others.

Do Volunteer Work

There is usually more free time. Don't give up important relaxation time, however. While volunteering: search for new areas of interest, talk to and get to know experts, keep a personal journal of experiences. Volunteering can be a great way to pin down summer jobs.

Develop New Interests

Start collections, read new magazines, get involved in local groups or school clubs, take a night school course, listen to new kinds of music, learn to play a

musical instrument, get into crafts, learn to meditate, become an environmentalist.

Tutoring

There are many students who would appreciate assistance with subjects that are difficult. Teach the "weakest" subject to increase abilities.

Research Careers

Who says you can't be a lawyer before you get your degree? Become an expert and specialist.

The Arts

See (live or on TV) plays, concerts, rehearsals, exhibitions, displays, showings, photo and art galleries, TV show tapings. Fill gaps with activities that nurture creativity, emotional wellness and sensory awareness.

Inspirational Words about Intelligence

Obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it. - Michael Jordan

"Whatever you can do, or dream you can – begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. -Goethe

"Have as your goal to do your best and to make a difference. We are in the world to make a difference, and everything we do changes the world."

"The greatest thing in the world is not so much where we are, but in what direction we are moving."

"Once the mind has been stretched by a new idea, it will never again return to its original size." ...Oliver Wendell Holmes

Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people.

Life is tough. It's even tougher if you're stupid.
