

# The Gifted Voice

Newsletter from the Educators of the Gifted Organization

Fall Issue 2007

## President's Update

Special thanks go out to all our conference speakers, fellow organizers and you the teachers, parents, and administrators who came out to it and made it the success it was.

And now a brief update of what is happening to gifted programming in Ontario:

- Plans to have all gifted children back into regular classrooms full time are still moving forward based on "Education for All" – full text is on our website. Some boards broadcast the closings publicly. Some boards are establishing congregated classes. In some cases, special education teachers will be itinerant and spend some time in each classroom to assist with special needs children. We hope that will apply to the gifted as well.
- On a positive note, a new organization called "Gifted Ontario" has been in the planning stages over several months in 2007. This is a group of former students of gifted programs around the province who want to be of

support to gifted students. Many are university grads and adults in the workforce. In some cases, members are from classes of the early 1980's. They met on November 8<sup>th</sup> in Toronto and are establishing themselves. A website will soon be available. The president is Emi Morimoto and she can be reached at [emipmorimoto@hotmail.com](mailto:emipmorimoto@hotmail.com). They are registered in [facebook.com](http://facebook.com) as "gifted group" and also as "save full time gifted."

- The Ontario Ministry of Education has put out a new document "Shared Solutions: A Guide to Preventing and Resolving Conflicts Regarding Programs and Services for Students with Special Education Needs." This may be of interest to those who question IEPs, programming and gifted identification processes.

- the last course on giftedness for teachers was held in Sudbury this summer. Only a .5 credit course exists now at OISE and that will be taught in only one semester instead of two.

Otto Schmidt, President, EdGO, Toronto, Canada

## So Your Child is Gifted. What Next?

By Mary Carmen Galea & Maria Fantauzzi

(presented at the World Conference of the Gifted, 2007)

This question worries so many parents of Gifted children, and, I may add, that, to some extent, it bothers all parents. Parenting is the most rewarding, exciting, and frightening occupation in the world. Our children come to us as a clean slate and we are responsible to help shape their futures. Isn't that challenging enough? Why do we have to handle their giftedness as well? Unfortunately the innate intelligence is not something that we can juggle; we can only make sure that our offspring receive the correct and best education and up-bringing that is available. This involves not only making sure that their interests are well met, that the schoolwork they are getting is challenging and interesting, but also that their affective development is well taken care of. This paper will try to address the above three areas but the main focus of the paper is the emotional factor of the gifted child.

Meeting and challenging the student interests is fairly simple. Make sure that you note what activities your

son/daughter is most happy doing, talks most about, and is most enthusiastic about when speaking about his/her observations/reflections. Once you have the list of activities, try to make sure that, within your budget, you provide the right environment for your child to acquire more knowledge about these topics. Make sure that you do not start feeling compelled to buy the latest or most expensive games or gizmos. Children are very versatile and they can happily play for hours with empty cardboard boxes instead of the latest in technological games. Do not let salespeople persuade you that your child cannot possibly get ahead in school without the latest in technology and the most expensive thing in the store. Remember that you are buying gifts/learning tools for children and as children they still have childlike needs even though your offspring can hold his own with the best lawyers in the community.

What can an educator do to help the parents to program interesting work for their children? The teacher, like the parents, has to know the students well in order to plan for interesting lessons. But, believe it or not, the teacher need not be a walking encyclopedia or a master of all. S/he needs only to be flexible and to have enough faith in his/her students that they will find the means to learn

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## Are You a Visual Learner?

By Otto Schmidt

(condensed from the Gifted Development Center website)

If you prefer to think in pictures rather than in words you are probably a visual-spatial learner. Visual learners learn better when seeing things rather than listening to them. They usually learn in an all-at-once fashion and quite often the learning is permanent. They may be unorganized and oblivious to time when working. Repetition and drill work don't usually work for them. Seeing and digesting the whole or big picture first is important before learning the details some of which may be missed along the way. They do not learn by the step-by-step method used by teachers. It may be impossible for them to show their work because they can come to complete conclusions quickly after seeing the whole. Easy tasks may prove difficult, but difficult or complex tasks can be handled readily. They are often gifted creatively, technologically, mathematically or emotionally.

You may be one of these children if you spend lots of time doing puzzles, completing mazes, building things, counting everything, playing chess, designing scientific experiments, programming a computer, or taking things apart to see how they operate.

### Visual Spatial Learner Learning Characteristics

Strengths	Weaknesses
Thrives on complexity	Struggles with easy material
Loves difficult puzzles	Hates drill and repetition
Fascinated by computers	Has illegible handwriting
Great at geometry, physics	Poor at phonics, spelling
Keen visual memory	Poor auditory memory
Creative, imaginative	Inattentive in class
A systems thinker	Disorganized; forgets details
High abstract reasoning	Difficulty memorizing facts
Excels in math analysis	Poor at calculation
High reading comprehension	Low word recognition
Excellent sense of humor	Performs poorly on TIMED

## Light Words

Who is more foolish, the child afraid of the dark or the man afraid of the light?

**Maurice Freehill**

Better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.

**Chinese Proverb**

There are two kinds of light - the glow that illumines, and the glare that obscures.

**James Thurber**

Firelight will not let you read fine stories but it's warm and you won't see the dust on the floor.

**Irish Proverb**

We cannot hold a torch to light another's path without brightening our own.

**Ben Sweetland**

Light gives of itself freely, filling all available space. It does not seek anything in return; it asks not whether you are friend or foe. It gives of itself and is not thereby diminished.

**Michael Strassfeld**

Lethargics are to be laid in the light, and exposed to the rays of the sun for the disease is gloom.

**Arctaeus**

We are each gifted in a unique and important way. It is our privilege and our adventure to discover our own special light.

**Mary Dunbar**

You can't have a light without a dark to stick it in.

**Arlo Guthrie**

There are two ways of spreading light; to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.

**Edith Wharton**

Turn your face to the sun and the shadows fall behind you.

**Maori Proverb**

Wherever you go, no matter what the weather, always bring your own sunshine.

**Anthony J. D'Angelo**

Dare to reach out your hand into the darkness, to pull another hand into the light.

**Norman B. Rice**

Chosen from [www.quote garden.com/light.html](http://www.quote garden.com/light.html)

whatever it is that attracts their attention. The students need encouragement, freedom to explore, a cheering section and clear limits. Gifted students, like all other children, will try to push the limits as far as they can, with the difference that with their debating skills they expect to win every battle.

For activities during weekends and holidays, as we explained in the previous paragraph there is no need for spending yourself into bankruptcy. Look around you and note all the small museums, architectural sites, libraries, free activities and other things of interest in your neighbourhood. These provide not only a pleasant morning or afternoon outing but also supply conversation topics for your dinner table for days to come. Make finding out these interesting places and information about them into a game and include all your children, not only the gifted one. For more detailed ideas of activities please refer to our Bibliography. But I reiterate: remember that your children are still children and if you treat them as such, you will not be disappointed.

Planning a curriculum for gifted students is very challenging. The author has to be constantly with an eraser in hand if s/he tries to be specific. True Gifted education is only bound by the student's imagination. Therefore besides planning for the teaching of basic skills, the curriculum has to be very open ended.

Now comes what is, in our opinion, the hardest area for parents and educators—the affective development of the child, the emotional factor. So many things could go wrong and there are so many factors beyond our control during the upbringing of child. Let us first start with sensitivity. Gifted students have a heightened sensibility towards life and the world around them. They feel acutely about the injustices that they see perpetrated in front of their eyes, day in and day out. So it is of the utmost importance that while some bizarre world events are taking place, these children discuss the events, so that they understand the underlying injustices that have been done and the causes of the incident; but do not dwell on the negative pictures of the catastrophe. It is also advisable to monitor the television coverage of the event and limit the time that they can watch about the catastrophe/problem. This would lessen the impact of that incident on young minds who though they might think as quickly as adults, yet their emotional capacity is still out of whack with their intellectual prowess.

Gifted children are usually very competitive, perfectionists, and argumentative. These traits may not exactly enamour them to adults because they tend to challenge rules and push the limits of others. However, the problem lies not in being competitive or a perfectionist but how these children can handle what in their mind they construe as 'failure'. It is extremely important that the example that we set as parents and teachers, when things do not work out as we wish, is a good and reasonable one.

My nephew took his family on a weekend vacation to Montreal. He had some business to attend to at the same time. He parked his van full of camping equipment, cell phones, business documents, credit cards and so on, in an underground garage annexed to the Science Centre. Two hours later he finds out that the van was gone. His reaction, after the police had come and gone, was very positive and a great example of what to do when you are not winning. He told his children and his wife: "I have a business appointment in an hour. I need some decent clothes. Let's go get some." His 11 year-old son was beside himself when he heard this, and said to his dad: "How can you think of buying new clothes when we have lost so much. All my card collection is gone, my favourite sweater, my favourite everything is gone!" His father answered, "What would you like me to do, scream or cry? I have looked at the situation and we need to move on to the next thing on the agenda!" When later in the week the boy lost a sailing race that he thought he had in his pocket, instead of complaining and finding blame, he philosophically said: "Oh well, it seems it is just not my week! I will analyse the video and study my moves to find where I wasted time."

Many children try to cope with similar situations by withdrawing from the activity and, hence, not only deprive themselves of the pleasure of doing something worthwhile but cheat others out of the experience of watching and participating in an activity that could have great results.

Their heightened sensitivity could lead to other problem areas mainly in relationships. Having the ability to reason is not the same as having the ability to make a good decision. These children have a sense of humour and vocabulary that is not appreciated by their peers. The long and difficult words they use make them, oftentimes, appear pompous and bossy while they often find themselves to be the only one laughing at their own jokes. Now most adults love to talk and debate with these children; hence, in return, gifted children prefer the company of adults. This is all well and good as long as they are still children; but what will happen in their teen years and later on in life. They have to learn to study the situation and react accordingly. What a load to carry!

So are these children happy? These children will be happy as long as we treat them as children. Parents should not treat their offspring as if they are in awe of them. The parent/child relationship should remain as such and not change because the child has been identified as gifted. On the other hand, parents should not expect a nine-year old to behave like a fifteen-year old, even though he/she may sound so older-like. By keeping children behaving like children as long as possible will not make for dependent adults

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## Acceleration and Gifted Children

This letter was written by a father in response to the question, "Why are school boards so reluctant to consider whole grade acceleration for gifted children?"

The times are changing faster than ever before in human history. People have to be able to predict what is going to happen in order to take care of themselves. When people are exposed to change they resist that change since it will make things less predictable for them. When people are presented with complexity they try to find some simple principles which will make the complex situation predictable. (See science for an extreme example of this.) Therefore, people will want these simplifying principles to be true. They will resist anything which casts doubt on the truth of those principles.

In the case of schools this means that all children must be as alike as possible. That is, they must learn the same things at the same time and look and act the same. Anyone who does not fit these expectations is wrong/bad/sick/in need of treatment. Any excuse for keeping children of the same age in the same box is acceptable. All children must be gifted. All children must be best served by being grouped by age. It must be bad for children to let them learn too soon or too quickly. Any children who learn before their age peers must be suffering in some way because of it. It cannot be natural for children to be different and diverse.

Now when you add to that quite natural human fear of the unknown the needs of bureaucracy, you get rules which make things easier for the administrators. If the child's age tells one exactly what the child knows and needs, then things are made quite a bit easier. You don't have to know anything else about the child. You don't have to make exceptions which are always difficult for bureaucracies. You don't have to think or understand. All you have to do is ask the age and put them into the correct box. Administrators fear exceptions and complexity. Thus, they will not admit that exceptions and complexity exist, for if they don't exist, administrators will not have to deal with them. Now teachers do a lot of administration just like principals and superintendents do, so they feel much the same way but with the additional motivation of avoiding more work by insisting that all children of a certain age are just alike.

Therefore, schools will happily ignore reality and punish anyone who attempts to bring reality to their attention. Individual teachers and administrators are exceptions to the above SIMPLE PRINCIPLE WHICH MAKES A COMPLEX SITUATION PREDICTABLE as one would expect. But you can reasonably expect schools to act according to the principle and be pleasantly surprised if one does not.

Reality isn't always pretty.  
Larry

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but will make childhood and the miracles of being young last that much longer.

What if, you may ask, twins or siblings are considerably different in intelligence and one makes the grade and the other does not? If the children have had a stable upbringing and feel secure in themselves, this should not matter in the least. In fact to make a student attend classes that are clearly no on his intellectual range or where s/he is constantly at the bottom of the heap would be disastrous. The bright sibling would not be able to cope with the pressure of the dynamic group and the gifted sibling may resent the fact his brother is not performing to par.

This paper has been written to generate discussion and ideas how we can suitably program to help children obtain as high a score on the Emotional quotient as on their intellectual one. Consequently, there can be no conclusion to the paper - only the hope of a better future for our children as we learn more and more about the emotional and social development of the Gifted and Talented.

### MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION FORM

Membership is valid for one year beginning on the date of our conference.

Please fill in and mail this form:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Prov. \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

School/Board Affiliation (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

School Address/Contact Information (if applicable)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Position You Hold \_\_\_\_\_

Interested in (please circle one or more)

Elementary / secondary / parent / advocacy group

Name of group \_\_\_\_\_

Please make out a cheque for \$30 payable to EdGO and send it to

**EdGO Membership**

## Contests, Competitions and Challenges By Bernard Beales, Special Education Facilitator: Gifted – D.D.S.B.

Gifted students, by the very nature of their identification, require differentiated learning experiences beyond those normally provided in the school program to reach their potential. One way to enrich and extend the learning experience is by encouraging students to take part in contests, competitions and challenges. In a recent survey done by the Durham District School Board, over one-third of the parents of gifted students, when asked to identify the most important parts of the gifted experience, responded with "To participate in enriching activities and competitions at the school and board levels".

In the Durham District School Board, our gifted students have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of board-sponsored competitions including: Junior and Intermediate Think Bowl Tournaments, Theatre Sports Olympics, Junior Math & Science Olympics, Junior and Intermediate Debating Competitions, and new this year, The Academic Pentathlon. But even if your school or district school board does not host such events, there are still many rewarding enrichment opportunities available. Below is just a fraction of the great events waiting for you to join in.

[Ed. Note Due to lack of space the extensive list could not be included in this issue. For those who would like a copy of the list, please e-mail Mr. Beales at [Beales\\_Bernie@durham.edu.on.ca](mailto:Beales_Bernie@durham.edu.on.ca) ]



## Characteristics of Good Problem Solvers By Bill W. Tillery Arizona State University Department of Physics and Astronomy

Observations of the actions and characteristics of good problem solvers lead to some generalizations that may be helpful. Here are some of those generalizations:

1. One characteristic of good problem solvers is the tendency to fully understand a problem before doing anything else. This may mean reading parts or the entire problem several times, then reading it again to be completely sure they understand all of the parts and relationships of the problem. Yes, the use of good reading skills

is very much a part of successful problem solving. A lack of success in problem solving is often a result of not understanding exactly what the problem is stating.

2. In attempting to understand a problem, good problem solvers tend to be physically active rather than silently reading to themselves. For example, the good problem solvers might make a sketch as they read the problem in an attempt to better understand the situation being described. Other active actions include circling parts of the problem, making diagrams, and talking to themselves about their understanding of the problem. Talking to themselves or thinking aloud tends to cause problem solvers to be more careful as they analyze the problem.
3. Once a problem is understood, part of the physical activity of good problem solvers involves the breaking of a complex problem into a series of sub problems—smaller steps that can be dealt with one after another. This is sometimes done by circling parts of the problem, drawing question marks, and thinking out loud. When possible, good problem solvers deal with problem situations by breaking the problem into parts and finding the solution in small, careful steps.
4. While breaking a problem into smaller parts, the good problem solvers are continuously checking and rechecking the accuracy of each step. The poor problem solvers, on the other hand, tend to jump to conclusions, guessing the answer to one or more of the substeps, sometimes with hasty and illogical reasoning. They have not recognized the need to work each step precisely and accurately from the beginning to the end.
5. The breaking of a complex problem into smaller steps and the checking and rechecking of the accuracy of each step require an understanding that the steps can be done, and that careful analysis will result in the correct answer. This is a matter of experience, but also requires confidence and an attitude that all problems can be solved by analysis. Confidence and attitude are critically important, and problem solving should be approached with a spirit of adventure rather than something to be dutifully and methodically done.
6. Just like the acquisition and sharpening of any other skill, practice makes perfect. The more problems you solve, the better you will become at problem solving. All of this involves self-discipline, personal involvement, exploring your own thinking, and taking responsibility for your own learning.

Adapted from Problem Solving Techniques by B.W. Tillery

## Mentorship Guidelines for Parents and Educators By It Weinberg The Public Television Outreach Alliance

If we want them to achieve, we must link them with achievers- One plus one— Pass it on

One of the most valuable experiences a gifted student can have is exposure to a mentor who is willing to share personal values, a particular interest, time, talents, and skills. When the experience is properly structured and the mentor is a good match for the student, the relationship can provide both mentor and student with encouragement, inspiration, new insights, and other personal rewards.

### Guidelines:

1. *Identify what (not whom) a youngster needs* The student may want to earn a particular skill or subject or want someone to offer help in trying out a whole new lifestyle.
2. *Decide with the youngster whether he or she really wants a mentor.* Some might just want a pal, advisor, or exposure to a career field, rather than a mentor relationship that entails close prolonged contact and personal growth.
3. *Identify a few mentor candidates.* If access to local resources is limited long-distance mentors are an option. Who's Who directories and the Encyclopedia of Associations are rich sources of potential mentors.
4. *Interview the mentors.* Find out whether they have enough time and interest to be real role models, whether their style of teaching would be compatible with the youngsters learning style, and whether they are excited about their work and want to share their skills.
5. *Be explicit about the student's abilities and needs* and about the potential benefits the mentor might derive from working with the young person.
6. *Prepare the youngster for the mentorship.* Make sure the youngster understands the purpose of the relationship, its benefits and limitations, and the rights and responsibilities that go along with it.
7. *Make sure you understand* these things as well.
8. *Monitor the mentor relationship.* If, after giving the mentorship a fair chance, you feel that **the youngster is not identifying with the mentor, that self-esteem and self-confidence are not being fostered, that com-**

**mon goals are not developing or that expectations on either side are unrealistic**, it might be wise to *renegotiate the experience with the youngster and the mentor*. In extreme cases seek a new mentor.

### Questions to ask the student:

1. Does the student want a mentor?
2. Does the student simply want enrichment in the form of exposure to a particular subject or career field?
3. What type of mentor does the student need?
4. Is the student prepared to spend a significant amount of time with the mentor?
5. Does the student understand the purpose, benefits, and limitations of the mentor relationship?

### Finding Mentors

To identify mentor candidates,

1. use your own circle of friends and their contacts,
2. other parents of gifted students,
3. local schools,
4. local universities,
5. businesses and agencies,
6. professional associations,
7. local arts groups,
8. organizations such as the American Association of Retired Persons.
9. State Governors Schools
10. magnet high schools for gifted students.

### Questions to ask Mentors:

1. Does the mentor understand and like working with gifted youngsters and adolescents?
  2. Is the mentor's teaching style compatible with the student's learning style?
  3. Is the mentor willing to be a real role model, sharing the excitement and joy of learning?
  4. Is the mentor optimistic, with a sense of tomorrow?
- For more information, contact Gray and Associates, in care of the International Centre for Mentoring, 4042 West 27th Avenue. Vancouver, BC, Canada V6S 1 R7 If you want to become a mentor, call your local volunteer coordinating agencies or clearinghouses such as United Way.  
One plus one — Pass it on.

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