

Electronic Documents Available at:

<http://wagneradvancedhumanities.weebly.com/gifted-and-talented-resources.html>

NATURE AND NEEDS OF GIFTED LEARNERS

And Applications for the Classroom

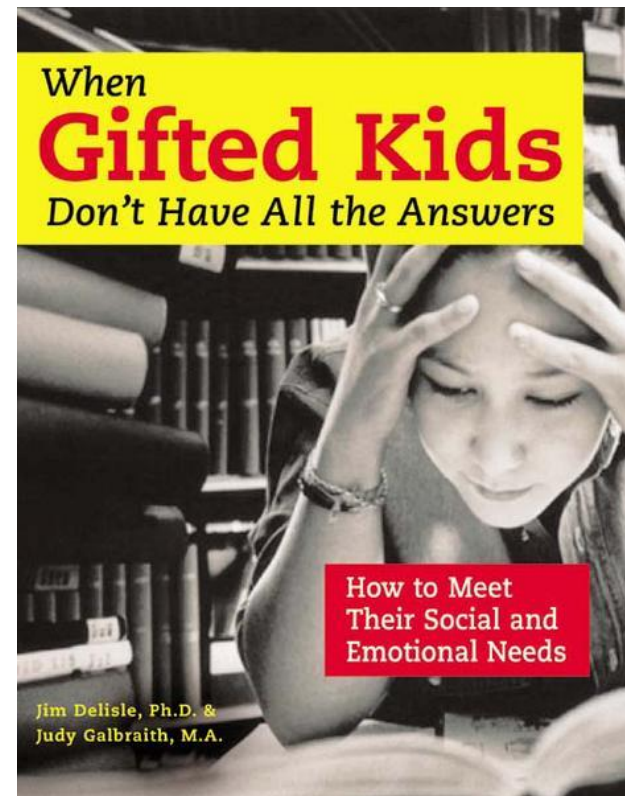
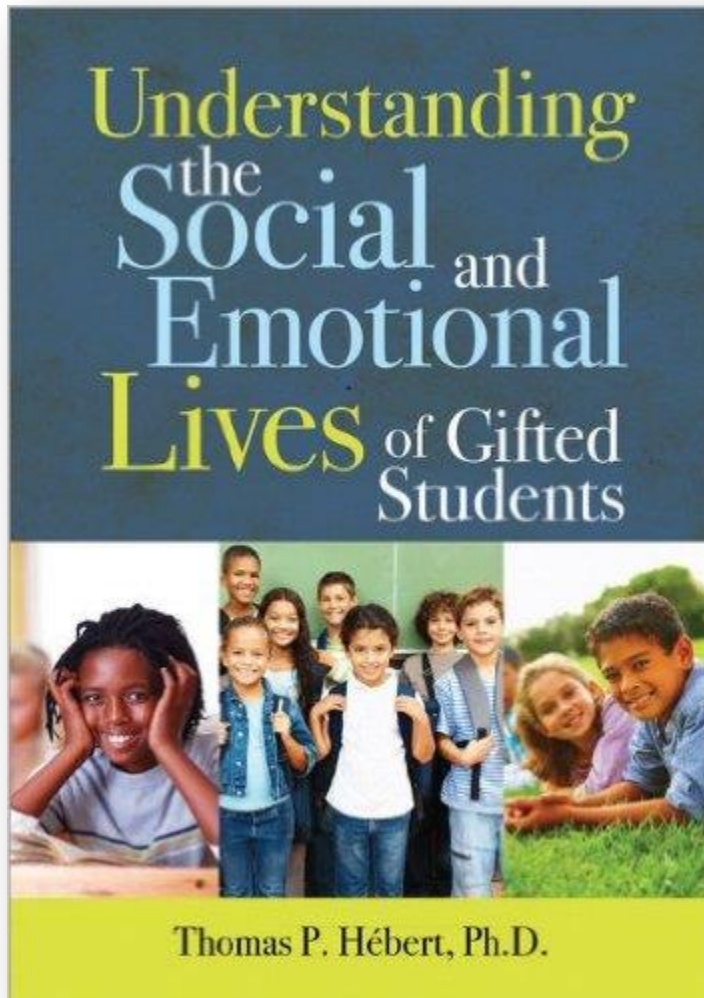
About Me

□ **Katrina Wagner**

- Starting 11th Year Teaching
- Pacific Cascade MS
 - Issaquah School District
 - 6th Grade Advanced Humanities
- BA Elementary Education – Pacific Lutheran
- Masters in Literacy from Seattle Pacific
- Specialty Endorsement in Gifted and Talented from Whitworth
- Leads PD classes for Issaquah School District for middle school teachers; Presented at the NAGC 2014 Convention; Presented at Whitworth Institute 2014
- Adjunct Professor: Whitworth University (Summer '15)
- Summer – Summer Institute for the Gifted (2 years)
 - Princeton University Housemaster, Instructor, and Academic Dean



Major Resources Used





Gifted is...

Photographic visual memory

QUICKLY GRASPS NEW CONCEPTS;
SEES CONNECTIONS, SENSES DEEPER MEANINGS

Intense, sometimes
unusual, interests

Curious and inquisitive

Wide area of interest

Superior/intuitive

questioning ability

Already knows; needs only
topics; pays attention to details;

Highly developed
sense of humor

Exceptional

Vocabulary

of problem solving
Strong sense of compassion
Strong sense of justice

keen sense of ethical sense
moral and ethical sense
sense of being "different"

existential worrying
often over

self-critical

Creates unique methods of organization

Gifted.

Attracted to computer technology

DIFFICULTY WITH WRITTEN EXPRESSION

Shows exceptional ingenuity
is keenly observant; has wild, seemingly silly ideas;

Fluent, flexible producer of ideas; highly curious.
Excellent comprehension and retention of concepts when interested

Ability to understand complex ideas

In-school
consistent academic performance

Unusual ability to devise or
adopt a systematic strategy
to solve problems and to change
the strategy if it is not working;
Creates new designs; Inventor.

MUST VISUALIZE
WORDS TO SPELL
THEM

Excellent ability
in using everyday materials;

EXCELLENT COMPREHENSION
AND RETENTION OF CONCEPTS
WHEN INTERESTED

Very sensitive to teachers' attitudes
Stubborn and opinionated

What is Giftedness?

- “In terms of classroom teaching, gifted students may be defined as those who have ability that exceeds grade- or age-level expectations by two years or more” (Winebrenner).

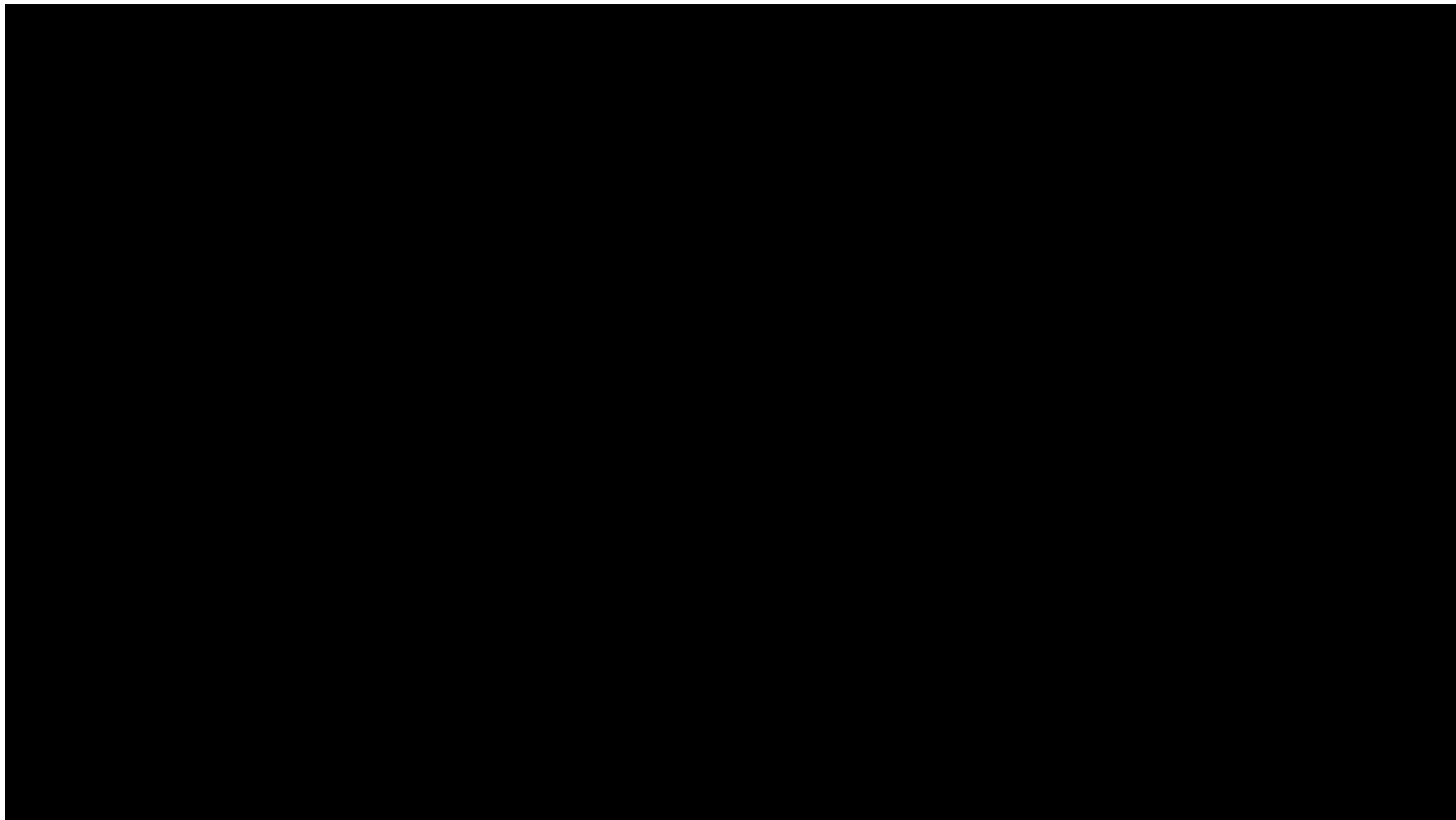
- **Big Five**
 - ▣ Learn new material faster and at an earlier age
 - ▣ They remember what they have learned for a very long time
 - ▣ They are able to deal with concepts that are too complex and abstract for their age peers
 - ▣ They have a passionate interest in one or more topics
 - ▣ They do not need to watch the teacher to understand what is being said, and they can process more than one task at a time.

**“WHAT MAKES A CHILD GIFTED AND TALENTED
MAY NOT ALWAYS BE GOOD GRADES IN
SCHOOL, BUT A DIFFERENT WAY OF LOOKING AT
THE WORLD AND LEARNING.”**

CHUCK GRASSLEY

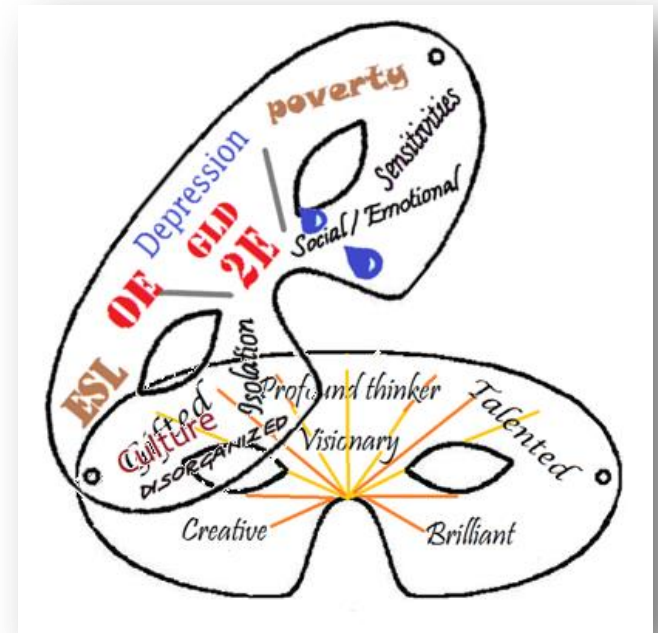
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Video



Myth #1: Gifted Kids are Lucky

- Possible Problems
 - ▣ How can we turn them in to strengths
- Perfectionism
- Sensitivity, Intensity and Depth
- Overexcitabilities



Possible Problems Associated with Characteristics of Gifted Children

Possible Problems	Strengths
Impatient with others; dislikes basic routine	Acquires/retains information quickly
Asks embarrassing questions; excessive in interests	Inquisitive; searches for significance
Strong-willed; resists direction	Intrinsic motivation
Resists routine practice; questions teaching procedures	Enjoys problem-solving; able to conceptualize, abstract, synthesize
Dislikes unclear/illogical areas	Seeks cause-effect relations
Can worry excessively about humanitarian concerns	Emphasizes truth, equity, and fair play
Constructs complicated rules; often seen as bossy	Seeks to organize things and people
May use words to manipulate; bored with school and age-peers	Large facile vocabulary; advanced, broad information

Adapted from Clark (1992) and Seago (1974).

Possible Problems	Strengths
Intolerant, perfectionistic; may become depressed	High expectations of self and others
May be seen as disruptive and out of step	Creative/inventive; likes new ways of doing things
Neglects duties or people; stubbornness	Intense concentration; long attention span and during periods of focus; persistence in areas of interest
Sensitivity to criticism or peer rejection	Sensitivity, empathy; desire to be accepted by others
Frustration with inactivity; may be seen as hyperactive	High energy, alertness, eagerness
May reject parent or peer input; nonconformity	Independent; prefers individualized work; reliant on self
May appear disorganized or scattered; frustrated over lack of time	Diverse interests and abilities; versatility
Peers may misunderstand humor; may become “class clown” for attention	Strong sense of humor

The child who . . .	may also be the child who . . .
shows superior reasoning powers and marked ability to handle ideas	is impatient; seems stuck-up or arrogant; challenges your authority; has difficulty getting along with less able peers
can solve problems quickly and easily	wants to move on quickly to more challenging problems, despite what the rest of the class is doing; hates to "wait for the group"; gets bored and frustrated
shows persistent intellectual curiosity and asks searching questions	drives you crazy with questions; asks inappropriate or embarrassing questions; is perceived as "nosy"
shows exceptional interest in the nature of humankind and the universe	has difficulty focusing on ideas that are less grand and sweeping; feels that everyday class work is trivial and meaningless; can't "connect" with interests of age peers
has a wide range of interests; develops one or more interests to considerable depth	seems scattered and disorganized; takes on too many projects at once; gets obsessed with a particular interest; resists direction or interruption; rebels against conforming to group tasks; disrupts class routines; is perceived as stubborn or uncooperative
has an advanced vocabulary	talks too much; uses words to intimidate other people; finds it hard to communicate with age peers; seems pompous or conceited—a "show-off"; plays word games that others don't understand or appreciate; dominates discussions; has trouble listening
is an avid reader	buries himself or herself in books and avoids social interaction

continued . . .

The child who . . .	may also be the child who . . .
learns quickly; comprehends readily	gets bored with the regular curriculum; gets impatient with peers for being "slow"; resists assignments that don't present opportunities for new learning; dislikes drill and practice; does inaccurate or sloppy work
grasps mathematical concepts readily	has little or no patience for regular math lessons or homework
is creative and imaginative	goes too far; seems disruptive; lacks interest in mundane assignments or details; wanders off the subject
sustains concentration for lengthy periods of time	has tunnel vision; hates to be interrupted; neglects regular assignments or responsibilities; is stubborn
shows outstanding responsibility and independence	has difficulty working with others; resists following directions; seems bossy and disrespectful; is unable to accept help; is a nonconformist
sets high standards for self; is self-critical	sets unrealistically high goals; is perfectionistic; lacks tolerance for others' mistakes; fears failure; avoids taking risks or trying new things; becomes depressed
shows initiative and originality	resists going along with the crowd (or the class); is a loner
shows flexibility in thinking; considers problems from a number of viewpoints	has difficulty focusing on or finishing assignments; has trouble making decisions

continued . . .

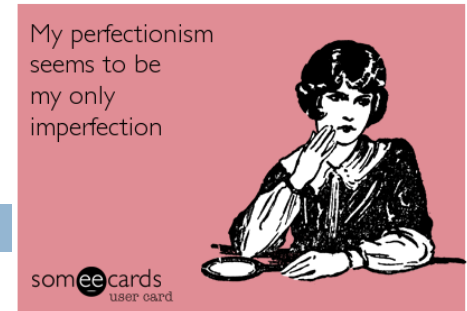
Myth #1: Gifted Kids are Lucky

- Eight Gripes of Gifted Students
 - “No one explains what being gifted is all about – it’s kept a big secret.”
 - “School is too easy and too boring.”
 - “Parents, teachers, and friends expect us to be perfect all the time.”
 - “Friends who really understand us are few and far between.”
 - “Kids often tease us about being smart.”
 - “We feel overwhelmed by the number of things we can do in life.”
 - “We feel different and alienated.”
 - “We worry about world problems and feel helpless to do anything about them.”

Perfectionism

- **One of the most critical issues related to giftedness**
- **Can be manifested in many different forms**
 - ▣ **Self-Oriented Perfectionists**
 - Individuals who establish high personal standards for themselves and measure themselves according to those high standards
 - Unable to accept mistakes, worry about what others think, mistakes blown out of proportion, stress and sleepless nights, trouble forgiving self, acceptable for others to make mistakes
 - ▣ **Other-oriented Perfectionists**
 - Individuals who demand very high standards of others in their lives
 - Rather do all the work than deal with others “less than,” causes relationship problems
 - ▣ **Societally prescribed perfectionists**
 - Individuals that believe that others in their lives maintain very high standards for them

Perfectionism



□ Mind Games Perfectionists Play

- Mood swinging between “high” and “lows”
- The numbers game and all-or-nothing thinking
- Focus on the future and pining over the past
- Telescopic thinkers
- Putting goals above everything else

□ What to do?

- Adaptive and maladaptive
 - Adaptive: working hard, striving for achievement, efficacy, conscientiousness, organization, structured work habits
 - Help students realize that it can be harnessed in positive directions; help them appreciate the trait

The Perfectionist ←-----→ The Optimalist

Journey as a straight line ↔ Journey as an irregular spiral

Fear of failure ↔ Failure as feedback

Focus on destination ↔ Focus on journey and destination

All-or-nothing thinking ↔ Nuanced, complex thinking

Defensive ↔ Open to suggestions

Faultfinder ↔ Benefit finder

Harsh ↔ Forgiving

Rigid, static ↔ Adaptable, dynamic

What a Perfectionist Thinks

- "If I can't do it perfectly, what's the point?"
- "I should excel at everything I do."
- "I always have to stay ahead of others."
- "I should finish a job before doing anything else."
- "Every detail of a job should be perfect."
- "Things should be done right the first time."
- "There is only one right way to do things."
- "I'm a wonderful person if I do well; I'm a lousy person if I do poorly."
- "I'm never good enough."
- "I'm stupid."
- "I can't do anything right."
- "I'm unlikable."
- "I'd better not make a mistake here, or people will think I'm not very [smart, good, capable]."
- "If I goof up, something's wrong with me."
- "People shouldn't criticize me."
- "Everything should be clearly black or white. Grays are a sign of confused thinking."

How a Perfectionist Feels

- Deeply embarrassed about mistakes she makes
- Disgusted or angry with herself when she is criticized
- Anxious when stating her opinion to others
- Extremely worried about details
- Angry if her routine is interrupted
- Nervous when things around her are messy
- Fearful or anxious a lot of the time
- Exhausted and unable to relax
- Plagued by self-hatred
- Afraid of appearing stupid
- Afraid of appearing incompetent
- Afraid of being rejected
- Ashamed of having fears
- Discouraged
- Guilty about letting others down

Sensitivity, Intensity and Depth

- ❑ Cannot bear to see others suffer
- ❑ Easily hurt emotionally
- ❑ Acutely aware of needs and emotions of others
- ❑ Can be very hard on themselves; do not forgive themselves easily
- ❑ Sensitive to criticism
- ❑ Intensely self-critical and self-analytical
- ❑ Put a lot of pressure on self
- ❑ May become obsessive with the intricacy or beauty of phenomena at hand



Dabrowski's Overexcitabilities

□ Five Overexcitabilities (heightened sensitivities):

- Psychomotor
- Sensual
- Imaginational
- Intellectual
- Emotional



- ## □ “...elevated emotional, intellectual, and imaginational overexcitabilities distinguished participants identified as gifted...” (28)

Dabrowski's Overexcitabilities

- Psychomotor Overexcitabilities (heightened sensitivities):
 - Surplus of energy
 - Examples: rapid speech, marked excitation, intense physical activity, marked competitiveness
 - Psychomotor Expression of Emotional Tension
 - Examples: compulsive talking and chattering, impulsive actions, nervous habits, acting out
 - Movers and shakers in society
 - People around them may find them overwhelming
 - High potential for misdiagnosis as ADHD
 - “although children or adults with this overexcitability might be riveted to a task mentally, their bodies are likely to fidget and twitch in their excitement in ways that can resemble hyperactivity.”



Dabrowski's Overexcitabilities



- Sensual Overexcitabilities:
 - ▣ Enhanced sensory and aesthetic pleasure
 - Examples: seeing, tasting, touching, hearing; delight in beautiful objects, sounds of words, music, form, color, balance
 - Tags on clothes are uncomfortable; certain fabrics are problematic
 - Flicker or buzzing lights may bother or distract them
 - ▣ Sensual expression of emotional tension
 - Examples: overeating, self-pampering, buying sprees, wanting to be in the limelight
 - ▣ Often become gourmet chefs and connoisseurs of food/drink

Dabrowski's Overexcitabilities

- **Imaginational Overexcitabilities:**
 - **Free play of the imagination**
 - Examples: frequent use of image and metaphor, facility for invention, fantasy, and detailed visualization, poetic and dramatic perception
 - Think in images, highly creative, rich imaginations
 - **Capacity for living in a world of fantasy**
 - Examples: creation of private worlds, imaginary companions, dramatization
 - **Spontaneous imagery as an expression of emotional tension**
 - Examples: missing truth and fiction, elaborate dreams, illusions
 - **Low tolerance for boredom**
 - Examples: need for novelty



Dabrowski's Overexcitabilities

- Imaginational Overexcitabilities:
 - Implications for the classroom:
 - Devour science fiction and fantasy
 - Thrive in classroom activities that allow them to invent and create
 - Enjoy poetry and drama



Dabrowski's Overexcitabilities

□ Intellectual Overexcitabilities:

□ Intensified activity of the mind

- Example: thirst for knowledge, curiosity, concentration, capacity for sustained intellectual effort, avid reading, keen observation, detailed visual recall, detailed planning

□ Penchant for probing questions and problem solving

- Example: Search for truth and understanding, forming new concepts, tenacity in problem solving, focus on issues of justice

□ Reflective thought

- Example: Thinking about thinking, love of theory and analysis, preoccupation with logic, moral thinking, introspection, conceptual and intuitive integration, independence of thought



Dabrowski's Overexcitabilities

□ Intellectual Overexcitabilities:

□ Implications for the classroom:

- Voracious readers
- May bombard teachers and parents with questions about issues that concern them deeply
- Appreciate rich curriculum that addresses major concepts and ideas
- Enjoy stimulating discussions about big ideas
- Striving for understanding and truth may be more critical than academic achievement or high grades



Dabrowski's Overexcitabilities



- Emotional Overexcitabilities:
 - Feelings and emotions intensified
 - Examples: extremes of emotions, complex emotions and feelings, identification with others' feelings
 - Strong affective expressions
 - Examples: feelings of unreality, strong affective memory, concern with death; can be hard on themselves and have difficulty forgiving themselves if they hurt someone's feelings
 - Capacity for strong attachments and deep relationships
 - Examples: difficulty adjusting to new environments, responsiveness to others; strong emotional ties
 - Strong inner dialogue and self-judgment

Myth #2: Giftedness = Achievement

□ Gifted Underachievers

□ “...exhibit a severe discrepancy between expected achievement (as measured by standardized achievement test scores or cognitive or intellectual ability assessments) and actual achievement...must not be the direct result of a diagnosed learning disability and must persist for a period of time...” (233)

□ Origins:

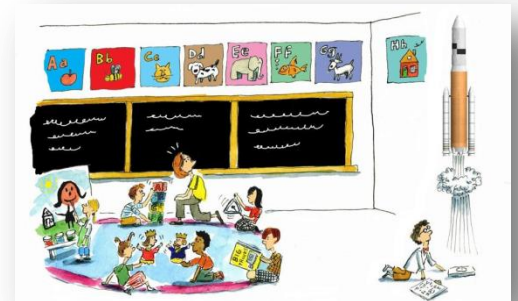
■ Personality, family, social, cultural, and environmental

Myth #2: Giftedness = Achievement

□ Personality

▣ Underachieving students...

- More aggressive, judgmental, less persistent
- Mental health problems (i.e. anxiety or depression)
- Inappropriate coping strategies
 - Avoidance, procrastination, defensiveness
- Poor organizational skills
- Little motivation to play the conventional school game
- Undiagnosed learning disabilities



Myth #2: Giftedness = Achievement

□ Family

□ Underachieving students...

- May experience sibling rivalry; motivation issues
- Have a lack of appropriate support at home
- May be using underachievement as a power struggle with parents

□ School Environment

- The “coolness” factor
- Low teacher expectations for culturally diverse students
- Talents not supported in the classroom



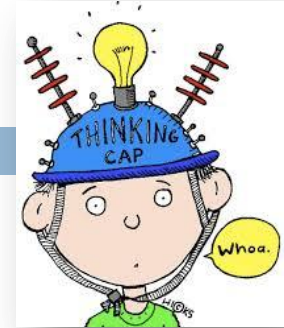
Myth #2: Giftedness = Achievement

- Traits and behaviors that may prevent identification
 - ▣ Boredom: Some may say so, but many will tune out and say nothing
 - ▣ Intensity in one subject; will neglect homework and classwork for other classes
 - ▣ Will use advanced vocabularies to “retaliate”
 - ▣ So much excitement about a discussion topic they monopolize the conversation or begin “preaching” about it to the teacher.
 - ▣ Dislike or resentment of working with others who do not have equally high abilities
 - ▣ Possess a vast knowledge; will correct others in inappropriate ways
 - ▣ Use advanced humor and cunning to intimidate, manipulate, or humiliate
 - ▣ Prefer to work independently and resent adults that make them follow specific procedures they dislike

Myth #3: Gifted Kids are Just Clever Kids

- Advanced levels of moral maturity with consistency between values and actions
 - ▣ Transcend societal norms
 - ▣ Experience a high level of compassion
 - ▣ Will follow their ethical principles when faced with dilemmas and will not follow the crowd if it means compromising their values
- Drive to Achieve Self-Actualization (the process by which an individual becomes what he or she is capable of)
 - ▣ Strong need for intellectual stimulation; “hunger for growth”

Myth #3: Gifted Kids are Just Clever Kids



- Highly developed sense of humor
 - ▣ Able to recognize absurdities in everyday situations
 - ▣ Can interpret their world in ways that may reduce threats and defuse painful experiences
- Resilience
 - ▣ Studies of resilient children found they share traits with gifted children
 - Intelligent curiosity, self-efficacy, positivity, healthy sense of humor, problem-solving ability

Myth #4: Gifted Kids are Socially Immature

- “...no evidence that gifted young people were more vulnerable or flawed in their social adjustment. Rather, they noted that many gifted young people have assets that, when supported, may actually augment their ability to overcome adversities and utilize their talents to achieve personal fulfillment.” (54)



Myth #4: Gifted Kids are Socially Immature

- “Gifted students don’t seek to separate themselves socially from classmates, but sometimes it does happen.” (150)
- GT students often prefer complicated, rule-based games that others don’t understand
- GT students are often concerned with world problems that may not interest others their age
- GT students advanced vocabularies isolate them
- GT students seek out others whose minds operate at the same fast pace; may gravitate to adults or older children
- GT students who feel distanced may resort to solitary play or a world of video-game playmates

Myth #5: Gifted Kids are All the Same

□ **Moderately Gifted**

- Most common group
- IQ range of 130-144 (2-3% of the overall population)
- “There are virtually no points of common experience and common interest between a 6-year-old with a mental age of 6 and a 6-year-old with a mental age of 12” (Clark).

□ **Highly Gifted**

- IQ range of 145-159
- More energy; think faster; more intent and focused on personal interests
- Less able to benefit in regular classroom experiences

□ **Profoundly Gifted**

- IQ range of 160-180+ (1 child in 10,000-1 million)
- Differently wired neurons; provide more complex and efficient neural highways
- More isolated by choice
- Seldom seek popularity or social acclaim

The Bright Child...

knows the answers

is interested

is attentive

has good ideas

works hard

answers the questions

top group

listens with interest

learns with ease

6-8 repetitions for mastery

understands ideas

enjoys peers

grasps the meaning

completes assignments

is receptive

copies accurately

enjoys school

absorbs information

technician

good at memorization

enjoys straightforward

sequential presentation

is alert

is pleased with own learning

The Gifted Learner...

asks the questions

is highly curious

is mentally and physically
involved

has wild, silly ideas

plays around, yet tests well

discusses in detail, elaborates

beyond the group

shows strong feelings and
opinions

already knows

1-2 repetitions for mastery

constructs abstractions

prefers adults

draws inferences

initiates projects

is intense

creates a new design

enjoys learning

manipulates information

inventor

good guesser

thrives on complexity

is keenly observant

is highly self-critical

Six Common Profiles

- “The Successful”
- “The Challenging”
- “The Underground”
- “The Dropout”
- “The Double-Labeled”
- “The Autonomous Learner”



“The Successful”



- As many as 90% of identified gifted students
- Learned the system
 - ▣ Learned what “sells” at school and home; display appropriate behavior
- Learn well
- Score high on tests
- Rarely exhibit behavior problems; eager for approval
- Often become bored in school; get by with little effort
- Just go through the motions; fail to learn skills needed for autonomy
- Competent, but often unimaginative
- Rarely develop their gifts and talents

“The Challenging”

- Divergently gifted
- High degree of creativity
- May appear to be obstinate, tactless, or sarcastic
- Question authority (often in front of the class)
- Do not conform to the system
- Little recognition and few rewards/honors
- Feel frustrated; struggle with self-esteem
- May challenge peers; be unwelcome
- At risk for dropping out, drug addiction



“The Underground”



- Often middle-school females (boys often happen in high school)
- Deny talents to fit in with non-gifted peer group
- May undergo a radical transformation
- Insecure and anxious
- Will benefit from being accepted as they are at the time
 - ▣ But should not be permitted to abandon all projects/advanced classes

“The Dropout”



- Angry (with adults and themselves)
- Not met their needs for many years
- May act depressed, withdrawn, act out
- Interests often lie outside the regular curriculum; fail to receive support
- School seems irrelevant to them
- Often gifted students identified late (high school); bitter and resentful
- Need a mentorship

“The Double-Labeled”

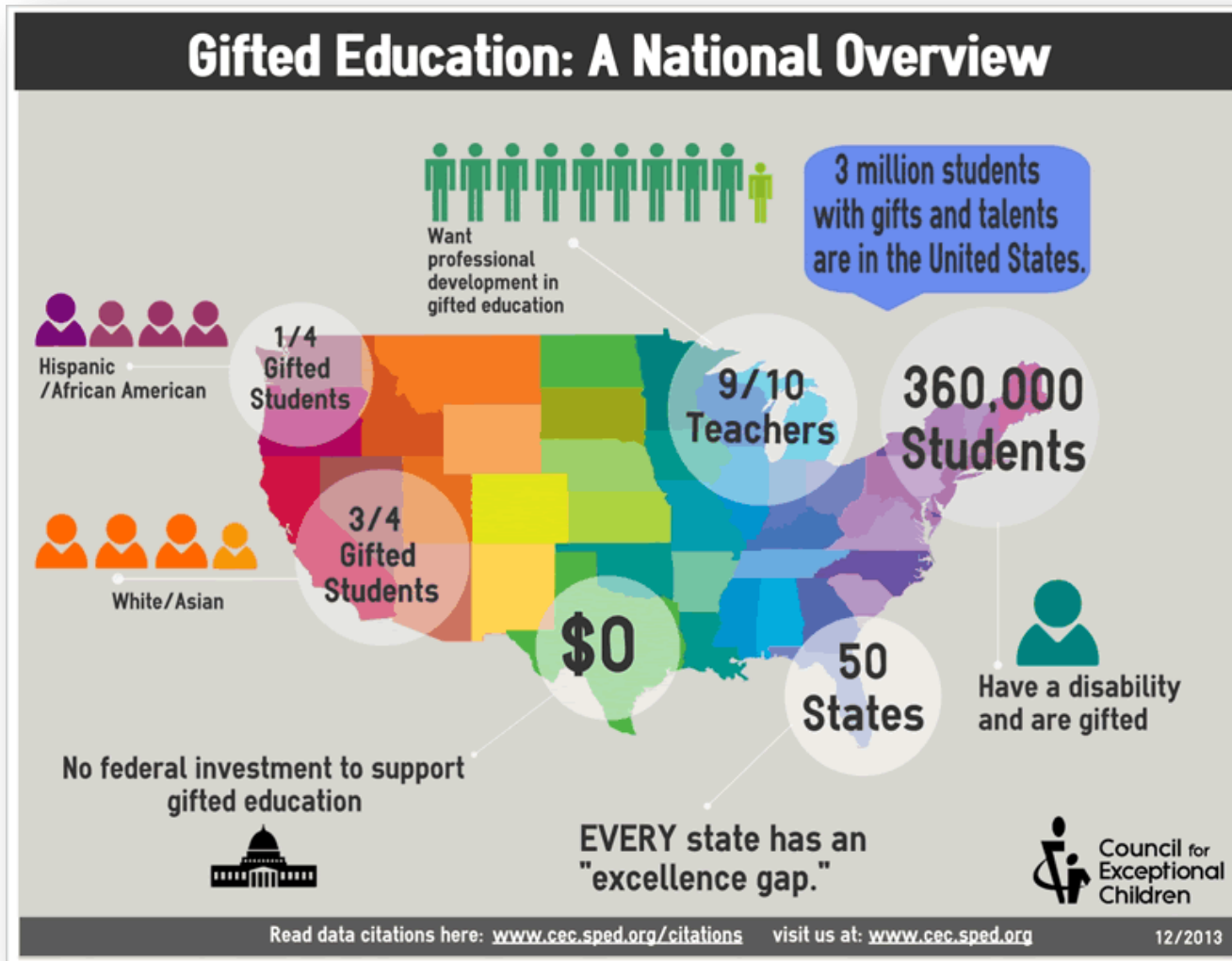


- ❑ Physically or emotionally handicapped in some way
- ❑ Twice-exceptional
- ❑ May have sloppy handwriting or disruptive behaviors that make it difficult to complete work
- ❑ Often seem confused about their inability to perform school tasks
- ❑ Show symptoms of stress, discouragement, frustration, isolation
- ❑ May use humor to demean others to bolster self-esteem
- ❑ Want to avoid failures
- ❑ School systems tend to focus on weaknesses instead of nurturing their strengths

“The Autonomous Learner”

- Few gifted children demonstrate this at an early age
- Learned to work effectively in the school system
 - ▣ Use the system to create new opportunities
 - ▣ Make the system work for them
- Strong, positive self-concepts
- Successful
- Well-respected
- Frequently serve in school leadership
- Independent and self-directed
- Accept themselves and take risks

Myth #6: Gifted Kids Will Do Well at School



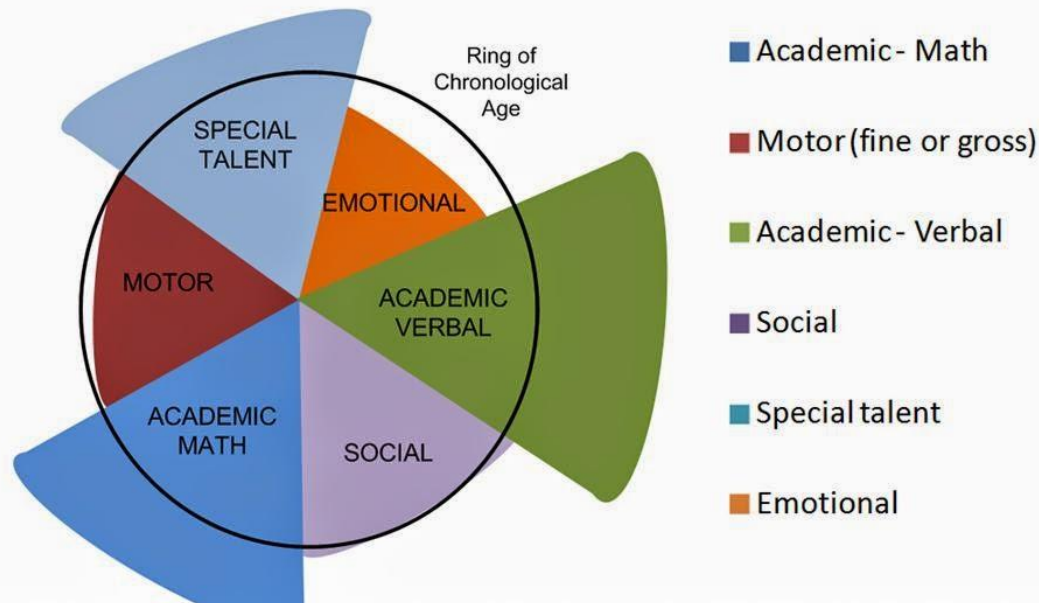
Myth #6: Gifted Kids Will Do Well at School

- Gifted children are the largest group of underachievers in education
 - ▣ At least 63% of students with an IQ of 130 or above are seriously underachieving and many of these students have a record of truancy.
- Much of the educational community believes that gifted kids can succeed on their own and don't need any special nurturing; little is done to meet their needs
 - ▣ They are among the most poorly served in the school population.

Myth #7: Gifted Kids Will Succeed

Asynchronous Development

Areas of Development



Asynchronous = uneven development. Gifted children in their development are out of step with their same-age peers. Also, each gifted child is different in their asynchronous development. For example, imagine a lever on the end of each pie shape which would pull or push the area of development according to the individual child. **ASYNCHRONOUS** development is the **HALLMARK** of giftedness.

Will they succeed?

- Gifted children are at risk for believing that “giftedness” is enough
 - “Everything is easy.”
 - No ownership of success early in life
 - Fail to see connection between effort and outcome
 - Can’t take pride in results
- Didn’t earn their giftedness; they don’t know what to do in the future to succeed
 - Will attribute failure to their lack of ability; not effort
 - Lack skills, like hard work, persistence, patience, perseverance, and discipline
- Sooner or later they will reach a level where everyone is gifted
 - They need to possess the skills to maximize their gifts

Death with Honors?

- Who's Who Among American High School Students 30th Annual Survey of High Achievers (Lake Forest, IL: Educational Communications, 2000).
 - ▣ Polled 2,804 high-achieving 16-18-year-olds
- Results:
 - ▣ 23.1% have considered committing suicide
 - ▣ 4.2% have tried committing suicide
- Why?
 - ▣ 76.4% - General Depression
 - ▣ 49.9% - School Pressures
- What did you do?
 - ▣ 81.2% - Worked through it alone/started to feel better
 - ▣ 27.7% - Talked to a friend



Strategies to Nurture the Social/Emotional Characteristics

- Guide gifted students to self-understanding through literature
 - Bibliotherapy
 - Draw parallels between their experiences and characters' experiences
 - Use biographies and videos too!
 - Can help gifted students appreciate their emotional sensitivity and intensity
 - Let's gifted children know they are not alone in facing their problems
 - Incorporate meaningful follow-up activities
 - Creative writing, journaling, writing raps or songs, designing commercials, role-playing, creative problem solving, art
 - Allow them to be individual or collaborative

Strategies to Nurture the Social/Emotional Characteristics

- Facilitate social action/community service projects
 - ▣ Allows gifted students an outlet for their intense empathy
 - ▣ “There is no age requirement for doing something extraordinary.”
- Facilitate moral discussions
 - ▣ Use short stories, accompanied by thought-provoking discussion questions and follow-up activities
 - ▣ Profiles in Character by Max Malikow
 - 26 short stories
 - Designed to teach universally admire values

The Ten Commandments . . .

. . . That Foster Elitism

(How Gifted Children Develop Feelings of Superiority)

- I. Thou shalt be told that boredom is part of life and that easy, redundant work must be tolerated.
- II. Thou shalt often hear classmates express frustration because the test was hard . . . when thou thought it was easy.
- III. Thou shalt procrastinate on long-term assignments until the day before they are due . . . and thou shalt turn them in and get A's.
- IV. Thou shalt hear classmates ask questions of thy teacher that thy teacher answered clearly yesterday.
- V. Thou shalt receive numerous telephone calls from classmates the night before a test asking how to solve a difficult problem.
- VI. Thou shalt consistently get good grades without having to work or study hard.

. . . That Foster Understanding

(How Gifted Children Develop Humility as They Develop Their Talents)

- I. Thou shalt regularly experience work that is relevant, stimulating, and challenging.
- II. Thou shalt have expectations placed upon thee that are in line with thy aptitude.
- III. Thou shalt learn that self-discipline, long-range planning, and hard work are necessary before thou canst produce quality work.
- IV. Thou shalt have the opportunity to hear thy classmates ask questions of thy teacher and thyself that are hard questions—questions which require deep thought and careful consideration.
- V. Thou shalt find it necessary to occasionally phone thy classmates to ask for their help and perspective.
- VI. Thou shalt work hard to earn thy good grades—and come to realize that the excellence of thy work and the quality of thy ideas are more important than grades.

continued . . .

VII. Thou shalt know the answer to every question the teacher asks . . . and can answer the questions no one else can.

VIII. Thou shalt have thyself, thy grades, and thy work held up, by thy teacher, as examples to be emulated.

IX. Thou shalt be chosen first by the team captain for spelling, math, and geography bees.

X. In short, thou shalt have ample opportunity to believe that aptitude is equated with human value and that if thou art smarter, thou art better.

VII. Thou shalt experience humility as questions are raised by thy teacher and thy classmates—questions to which thou dost not know the answer (and of which thou never thought).

VIII. Thou shalt, through associations and discussions with thy classmates, come to appreciate that talents come in many forms and that no one talent is more valuable than another.

IX. Thou shalt come to realize that thou, too, hast both strengths and weaknesses, as do other students.

X. In short, through a diversity of experiences with thy classmates and teachers, thou shalt come to a fuller and richer understanding of every person's worth. Thou shalt come to realize that human value and intellectual aptitude can never be equated.

Adapted from Bruce A. Clair's "The Ten Commandments," *Gifted Child Today* (September/October 1985).

What would you do?

- Choose a student profile
- With a small group, make decisions on:
 - ▣ What type of gifted student is this?
 - Profile? Characteristics?
 - ▣ How should they be best served in the classroom?

Profile #1

ALONZO

Alonzo hummed cheerfully to himself with an elfish grin as he quickly worked subtraction problems on the first grade paper. Considered small for six years old, he could barely touch the floor with his toes, and his skinny little legs swung rapidly to the beat of his humming as his shoes made a swishing sound when they rubbed against the floor tile. A prissy long-haired girl gave Alonzo several dirty looks and three verbal reprimands before reporting to the teacher, "Alfonzo is making a lot of noise and I can't do my math." Alonzo looked at the teacher and produced a wide toothless smile, and said, "I'm making a song about cooking cabrito (goat). Do you want to hear it?"

Sure enough, Alfonzo had been creating a song as he worked the mundane problems on his paper. The song was quite graphic, and described not only the killing of the goat, but also the meat preparation, eating of the goat, and family celebration that followed the meal. Alfonzo even created a yell as a grand culmination of his composition.

Alfonzo loved add-on stories in the classroom and always dreamed up an unusual twist when it was his turn to add to the story. During art activities, Alfonzo asked for materials that were not provided to enhance his creations. One day, Alfonzo asked me if the class could play a new game he had created. As one can imagine, Alfonzo's game involved lots of noise and movement, including climbing, jumping, and singing.

Alfonzo's home language is Spanish, and most of his creativity is reflected in his native language and culture.

Alfonzo's family moved away for work two months ago and Alfonzo has just returned. His records from his other school indicate that he had deficits in many areas including language and reading. In addition, his records indicate that he was a discipline problem. Alfonzo has been quieter than before and has started withdrawing from activities he previously enjoyed.

Profile #2

HELEN

As an eleventh grader, Helen appears to be comfortable with school. She admits she does not have trouble getting along with other kids, but laughs and says she just doesn't have much to do with them. Other people at school just don't have the same interests; all they want to do is get out of school as quickly as possible, get a job, and live some sort of inane existence. Most of them are just interested in going partying or getting drunk on a Friday night.

Helen calls herself introspective. She believes in solving things herself. She loves learning stuff that is mentally stimulating. Helen hates it at school when she can't understand something. She grills the teachers until she gets the answer. English freaks her out because there are so many interpretations and she doesn't ever know whether is right or wrong. Science and math are better because they are precise.

Both of Helen's parents are teachers and she feels she is a disappointment to them. Her mother was a cheerleader in high school and extremely outgoing. Both parents were active in student government and notably popular.

Helen spent her tenth grade year of high school in France. Now when she gets angry at her parents or others, she just swears a lot in French or locks herself in her room.

Profile #3

ALYSSA

Alyssa is seven. She loves school, her friends, and her family. Just recently, she played a main part in the school play. Her performance was flawless even though she had lines and cues that were exceptionally challenging for any child of her age. Her parents and grandparents were there to videotape the whole thing.

At school, Alyssa is extremely popular. Her teacher acknowledges her talents and gifts, but is frustrated by the way Alyssa seems to control the whole class. When working in groups in the classroom, group members refuse to act and participate with Alyssa's consent. What is most frustrating is that here control should be a turn-off, yet, the kids in the classroom all seem to only want to work with Alyssa. During lunch and recess, all of the second grade kids flock around her. This frustrates the teacher because Alyssa is not always nice to other children. The teacher has caught her in several lies and she tends to be manipulative and teases the children with mean insults. When the teacher addressed her concern about Alyssa's mean behavior to her parents at the beginning of the year, her parents became defensive and insinuated that maybe the teacher was jealous because Alyssa seemed to hold more control over the classroom environment than the teacher.

A couple of days ago, Alyssa's teacher found two girls crying under a tree. Alyssa had told the girls to sit under a tree during lunch and recess because they were stupid and ugly and could not hang around her and her friends. The teacher called a conference, and after attending the parent conference concerning Alyssa's behavior, Alyssa's parents requested that Alyssa be moved to another classroom. They believe that leaving Alyssa in her current class will hinder Alyssa's positive self-esteem as the teacher obviously does not like their daughter.

Profile #4

ALEX

Alex is thirteen. He hates school and everything about it. It seems that Alex is nothing but a disappointment to his parents and his teachers. About the only people that really like him are his friends. They are great. When Alex is with his friends he can keep everyone laughing and having a good time.

Alex was grounded for life last week. Report cards came out and he had a 95 in physical education. All of his other grades were below 75.

Alex was put in gifted classes when he was in the third grade. At this time he made wonderful grades. Since then, he has not done so well. None of his friends are in gifted classes and Alex is embarrassed when one of his friends finds out he is a "geek."

Mrs. Smith, his English teacher, has really been on his back lately. She keeps insisting that he is brilliant and she can't understand why he is determined to ruin his life the way he is. Just yesterday, he spoke up for himself, "What do you know about life? All you are is a teacher! I'm only thirteen – get off my back!" Mrs. Smith just sighed. Nothing happened. Maybe he ought to do this to his parents. They might leave him along just like Mrs. Smith is doing now.

Profile #5

JADA

Jada came home and slammed her book bag on the kitchen table. She barked at her mother, "We have to do a project today for history that explains the importance of going back in time and looking at our past. We have to present this in an "unusual" manner. I hate Mr. Gomez! Why can't I just do the work in the book?"

Jada is a twelve-year old sixth grader. She loves school and seems to have many friends. She is one of two children. Jada's older brother is in high school and loves loud music. This is Jada's biggest complaint because they live in a small apartment and it is hard to find a place that is peaceful and quiet.

Jada's teachers all refer to her as the perfect student. Jada boasts that she has never received anything lower than an A in her entire life. She is always prepared, and loves to do things exactly as she is told. One of her teachers commented that she does not like to be given assignments that ask her to go out on a limb. She is happiest when she is busy doing routine class work. She does special assignments that require creativity, but none of these are out of the ordinary and she usually shows a great deal of stress when one of these assignments are due. Jada has confided to the teacher that she hates having to do assignments that make her create her own ideas. It is much easier to read and report what other people have to say about things.

Jada's mother is proud of her daughter and displays her academic work on the walls and shelves of their small apartment. She readily admits that she was never a student and Jada's achievements leave her feeling inadequate as a parent. Jada has never asked for help with homework. Her mother is glad because Jada is learning things her mother could not help her with.

Next year, the school will be offering honors classes and Jada has just informed her counselor that she doesn't want to take any of them. She knows there will be nothing but extra work and more projects – the kind that require new and different ideas.

Profile #6

RYAN

Ryan is a gifted child who has a specific learning disability. He is a bright seven-year old with an IQ of 120. He can comprehend material written on a fifth grade level if read to him, and he is able to recite a litany of sophisticated scientific facts concerning reptiles and other creepy crawlers gleaned from a variety of scientific journals and the internet. His spoken vocabulary is comparable to boys twice his age, but Ryan is a functional non-reader. Ryan can name off the letters and tell the sound each makes, but he is at a total loss as how to use this information to decode all but the simplest of words. As a result he is repeating first grade.

Ryan's mother is extremely supportive and reads to Ryan constantly. His father, however, is furious that his son cannot read and blames the school for his son's lack of ability to read. He believes that if Ryan had a better first grade teacher, he would be reading. He does not buy into learning disabilities and is furious with his wife for signing papers that have given the school permission to serve him in the special education program.

Our Job As Teachers...

“...to encourage a new generation of students to use their gifts in socially constructive ways and seek ways to improve the lives of others rather than merely using their talents for economic gain, self-indulgence, and the exercise of power without commitment to contribute to the improvement of life and resources on the planet.”

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