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- » **Roles in Gifted Education: A Parent's Guide** 2
By Ashley Y. Carpenter and Stacy M. Hayden
- » **Getting an A+ in Parent Participation: Helping Your Child Succeed in the Classroom** 6
By Dr. Pamela Roggeman
- » **Perfectionism: Helping Gifted Children Learn Healthy Strategies and Create Realistic Expectations** 8
By Dr. Hope E. Wilson and Dr. Jill L. Adelson
- » **A Book Study Framework to Help Parents Understand Giftedness & Gifted Programming** 12
By Amanda Franklin and Dr. Kristina Henry Collins
- » **How to Start an Academic Competition in Your Child's School** 18
By Pamela M. Peters
- » **Stop Fighting Who Your Child Is and Lean In** 23
By Deborah Reber

parenting for high potential



» Inside Back-to-School How-Tos

a note from the editor

Who do I contact at my son's school to discuss gifted programming options? Can I start an enrichment program at my daughter's school? How can I meet parents of other gifted kids?



As your gifted child heads back to school, you may have these or similar questions. Perhaps your child is newly identified. Or, your child needs more academic challenge. Maybe you crave the company of other parents to share ideas.

Think of this *PHP* issue as your how-to handbook to help kick-start the new academic

year, brimming with step-by-step strategies from those who've "been there, done that." Inside, you'll learn about who's who in your school, plus receive advice on ways to connect with your child's teacher, start a parent book club, launch an enrichment program, and support your child's emotional needs.

Time and time again, I'm impressed by the enthusiasm, passion, and generosity of parents, grandparents, and caregivers of gifted children. So many are eager to support gifted children, yet are often perplexed in how to get started. So, after you've read this issue of

PHP, ask yourself, *Where is the greatest need in my child's classroom, school, or district—and how can I fill it? How can I impact my corner of the world to support the gifted children in my life at home and school?*

Let me know if you're inspired to try something new, and we'll publish your story. When we share our talents and tales of success, we not only help others, but help change minds, policies, and practices.

Kathleen Nilles
Editor-in-Chief

Roles in Gifted Education: A Parent's Guide

By Ashley Y. Carpenter and Stacy M. Hayden



Being a parent in the “gifted world” is challenging, especially when you don’t have all the information. Whether your child has already been identified and is in a gifted program or you are looking for the school to better meet your child’s needs, it’s essential to know the various staff and administrators that can help you and your child navigate the gifted experience. Each of these staff members has different roles, responsibilities, and levels of training.

Many school staff members do not have training or knowledge of giftedness, gifted children, or gifted education, making your job as an advocate for your child vitally important. In 2014, only one state required pre-service classroom teachers to have training in gifted education. For teachers that serve gifted students, only 17 states require they have a certificate or endorsement in gifted education—and, often, this training does not start until after the teacher is in the position. As a parent, you can serve as a valuable partner to the school if you know who best to work with and how.¹

Become More Knowledgeable

Your first step is to find out what the gifted policy is in your area. Since the federal government does not mandate gifted education on a national level, every state, district, and school may have different policies and/or programs for gifted children.

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- Start by finding out your state’s policy on gifted education. Check with your local gifted association, which you can find on NAGC’s *Gifted by State* web page.²
- If your district has a gifted education program, identification policies, services, and other information should be available to you. Search your district’s local website for terms such as *gifted*, *gifted and talented*, *enrichment*, *talent development*, *advanced academics*, *AIG*, *G/T*, or *GATE*.

The Players

After investigating your state and district policies on gifted education, it’s also important to know who you will be interacting with and who to go to with questions or concerns. Every school and gifted program is different, but there are general things you can expect from the staff who are involved with your child’s education.



CLASSROOM TEACHER

A typical classroom teacher has a classroom of students with different ability levels. It is his job to help every student—of all ability levels—master grade-level standards. The expectation of grade-level mastery may be too low for your gifted child, and the classroom teacher likely does not have any formal training in gifted education. In fact, most teacher preparation programs only include a short lecture on gifted students, if that. In addition, many districts do not provide professional development on gifted education.

If you believe your child’s classroom teacher isn’t meeting your gifted child’s needs, it may not be intentional. The teacher may believe that students’ needs are being met by the gifted program, not realizing it is also the classroom teacher’s job to differentiate for gifted students. In schools that do not offer gifted services or even identify gifted students, teachers may not be aware that

gifted students exist. Many amazing teachers out there give their all to each and every student, but they may have never been exposed to information about gifted education.



PARENT TIP

You should contact your child’s classroom teacher if your child:

- Needs more challenging materials
- Has already mastered the content
- Continually says she is “bored”
- Should be referred to your district’s gifted program (if applicable)



GIFTED OR RESOURCE TEACHER

A gifted teacher’s responsibility is to provide services to children identified for the local program. Gifted programming looks different in each school. A gifted teacher’s responsibilities may include:

- Developing and implementing your child’s education plan. (*A few states are required to provide formal Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for gifted, but not many.*)
- Meeting with students (based on services)—may be yearly, monthly, weekly, or daily
- Communicating with the classroom teacher(s)
- Providing part-time or full-time gifted instruction
- Developing curriculum and enrichment activities for high-ability students
- Teaching core subjects for high-ability students
- Hosting after-school clubs
- Coaching academic competition teams
- Evaluating students referred to the gifted program

Building an ALLIANCE with the Classroom Teacher

- Ally with the teacher privately about your concerns
- Listen to what the teacher has observed about your child
- Learn about what the teacher thinks is best
- Initiate conversation about your child’s strengths and problems
- Ask about experimental ideas for engaging your child, plus interesting curricular and extracurricular activities
- Negotiate to find appropriate adult and peer role models
- Consent to alternatives if initial strategies are not effective
- Extend possibilities patiently

Adapted from *Why Bright Kids Get Poor Grades and What You Can Do About It* by Sylvia Rimm © 2008.

GIFTED STRATEGIES TO PROPOSE TO YOUR CHILD’S SCHOOL

STRATEGY	WHAT IS IT?	EXAMPLES
PRE-TESTING	A way to find out what your child already knows before the teacher starts teaching. If you suspect your child already knows the material, ask if they can be pre-tested.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a version of the post-test • Asking an open-ended, big concept question • Asking the essential questions • Asking students to perform a skill • Questioning students verbally • Having students rate themselves on the unit objectives
CURRICULUM COMPACTING	A strategy that streamlines and eliminates previously mastered grade-level curriculum for students who are capable of completing content at a faster pace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name it: Identifying content the student might have mastered • Prove it: Assessing the student on the content • Change it: Replacing the typical activities or content in some way
ACCELERATION	A strategy that allows the same content to be covered at a faster pace than typical.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole grade skipping • Early entrance to kindergarten • Subject acceleration • AP classes • Dual enrollment
GROUPING	A strategy that groups gifted students with their academic peers, making it easier for teachers to provide enrichment and acceleration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability grouping • Performance grouping • Academic or enrichment cluster grouping • Grouping by specific subjects or talent • Grouping by interest
ENRICHMENT	Activities that go beyond the regular curriculum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diving deeper into the curriculum standard • Researching and presenting a topic of interest • Participating in an academic competition • Designing a science experiment • Proposing an alternative assignment • Undertaking real-world problem solving
ACADEMIC COMPETITIONS	A strategy that can be incorporated as a club, enrichment cluster, curriculum for a gifted class, or an individual enrichment opportunity. Parents can volunteer to coach a team after school or help during the school day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destination Imagination • Future City • Future Problem Solving Program International • Global Math Challenge • Math Olympiad • National History Day • Odyssey of the Mind • Science Olympiad

Sources

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Reis, S. M., Renzulli, J. S., & Burns, D. E. (2016). *Curriculum compacting: A guide to differentiating curriculum and instruction through enrichment and acceleration* (2nd ed.). Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Renzulli, J. S., & Reis, S. M. (2014). *The schoolwide enrichment model* (3rd ed.). Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

You can typically expect the gifted teacher to have more knowledge of gifted education than a regular classroom teacher. However, the level of training is dependent upon state requirements, the district's professional development offerings, and how long the person has been in this position. It is not uncommon for administrators to recruit teachers to teach gifted students before they are trained.

PARENT TIP

- Get to know your child's gifted teacher well
- Ask a lot of questions and share concerns about your child
- Use the gifted teacher as a bridge between you and the classroom teacher (if needed)
- Inquire about available resources
- Volunteer to help support the gifted program

depending on the size of the district and services offered. The coordinator may be responsible for communicating with the school board, superintendent, and possibly a parent advisory committee. If the coordinator's role is specifically to run the gifted program, it is likely she has formal training in gifted education.

PARENT TIP

It is important to speak with the gifted coordinator to:

- Ask questions about the district's gifted identification policy
- Resolve a concern if speaking with your child's school has not been successful
- Start a parent advocacy group
- Appeal a "not eligible" decision



GIFTED COORDINATOR

Gifted coordinators typically work at the district office where they ensure the fidelity of all gifted programs throughout the district. This role may be a full-time position or a small portion of her overall responsibilities,



SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF — SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST OR COUNSELOR

Most schools have a full-time counselor, but they may share a school psychologist with other schools in the district. School psychologists may be responsible for doing individual or group testing for admission to a gifted program. Counselors

(Continues on p. 17)



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Getting an A+ in Parent Participation: Helping Your Child Succeed in the Classroom

By Dr. Pamela Roggeman

Parental involvement in a child's education is consistently found to be positively associated with a child's academic performance.¹ But according to a University of Phoenix survey of K–12 teachers, many parents don't get a passing grade when it comes to class participation.² Nearly three-fourths of teachers say less than half of parents are involved in the classroom, and the majority of teachers (58%) say that less than a quarter of parents are involved.

Connecting with your gifted child's teacher is an important step in supporting your child's success. While collaborating with an educator may seem time consuming and overwhelming, a few tips can make it an easy, fruitful experience.

1

Reach out regularly, not just when there's a problem. Almost two-thirds of teachers would prefer that parents communicate with them regularly instead of waiting until there's a problem.³ Don't be afraid to be friendly and proactive in reaching out. The beginning of the school year is a perfect time to introduce yourself, your child, and provide a little background information on your child's passions and interests.



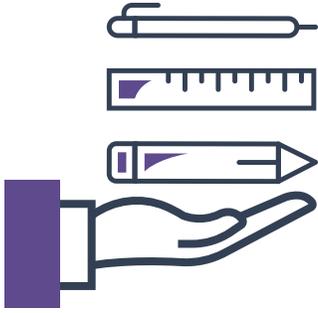
2

Ask for feedback on your child's performance. You may ask your children how school is every day, but you're only getting half of the story. Don't wait for the annual parent-teacher conference to learn about difficult subjects or areas of improvement you can help your child address. Three out of five teachers prefer that parents get involved by asking them about opportunities for improvement for their child.⁴

3

Identify the best way to reach out. One easy step to build better engagement is to ask your child's teacher his preferred method of communicating with parents. Every classroom is different, and establishing whether a teacher prefers emails, phone calls, handwritten notes, or another form of contact will help strengthen your lines of communication. Once you know the teacher's preference, it's important to adhere to that medium. Also, most teachers prefer that you schedule an appointment versus surprising them with an off-the-cuff hallway discussion.



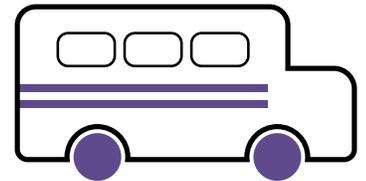


4

Donate back-to-school items to the class. Teachers spend more than 10% of their personal paychecks on classroom expenses.⁵ With that in mind, it's no surprise that over half of teachers prefer parents get involved by donating supplies to the classroom.⁶ Ask your child's teacher what tools she needs to help students succeed. If there are creative supplies, tools, manipulatives, or books you feel would benefit gifted and talented children, suggest those.

5

Ask about classroom activities. By knowing what students are working on, parents can help them avoid any last-minute requirements. Over a third of teachers prefer parents get involved by volunteering in the classroom. Participate in class field trips and activities, and don't just wait to be asked before you offer to help—let teachers know you're happy to lend a hand if you are available.



6

Don't forget to show your appreciation. Teachers spend many hours outside of school preparing lessons and supporting their students. Researching differentiated academic assignments or strategies for supporting your gifted child's psychosocial needs takes time. Teachers are not simply educators, but also role models and caretakers, and much of their work is done under the radar. Don't wait for Teacher Appreciation Week to say thank you.

Learning shouldn't be confined to the classroom, and we can't depend on one annual parent-teacher conference to check the box on parental participation in the classroom. High-ability students have varied and often-changing needs, so a strong line of communication is even more essential.

We need parent-teacher partnerships that are strong enough to identify, discuss, and resolve problems and opportunities for students throughout the year. This includes being both present for the student, addressing concerns immediately, and keeping up with regular communication with the teacher. By working together, parents and teachers can have a lasting impact on a gifted student's education.

Resources

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Author's Note

Dr. Pamela Roggeman has extensive experience in designing curriculum and preparing teachers in a university setting. She currently serves as the academic dean for the College of Education at the University of Phoenix. She also served more than 17 years as a secondary education English teacher and was named an Arizona Educational Foundation Teacher of the Year Ambassador of Excellence.

Endnotes

¹ Torpor, D., Keane, S., Shelton, T., Calkins, S. (2010). Parent involvement and student academic performance: A multiple meditational analysis. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community*, 38(3), 183–197.

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³ University of Phoenix, 2016 and 2017.

⁴ University of Phoenix, 2016 and 2017.

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⁶ University of Phoenix, 2016 and 2017.



Perfectionism: Helping Gifted Children Learn Healthy Strategies and Create Realistic Expectations

By Dr. Hope E. Wilson and Dr. Jill L. Adelson

One of the most common concerns of parents and teachers of gifted children is perfectionism. Gifted children often have nearly impossibly high expectations of themselves in academic and other settings, causing high levels of anxiety.¹ There are several ways in which perfectionism may manifest in children and many strategies for parents and teachers to help their students.

Healthy and Unhealthy Perfectionism

Although perfectionism can be a frustrating and overwhelming experience for parents and teachers, it can also have positive benefits for students. Perfectionism can be classified as healthy or unhealthy.² Although unhealthy perfectionism can be associated with stress, unyielding expectations, risk avoidance, and procrastination, healthy perfectionism is associated with high levels of achievement and dedication to academic performance. Students who exhibit healthy perfectionism have high expectations for their work, high levels of motivation to complete tasks, and high self-confidence in their abilities to reach those goals. Therefore, it is the aim of interventions to help children transition from unhealthy to healthy perfectionism.

It is important to note that unhealthy perfectionism has been associated with depression and anxiety disorders, greater levels of violence and substance abuse, and eating disorders.³ This topic is complex and outside of the scope of this article, but when serious concerns about a child's mental health arise, it is imperative to seek help from a mental health professional. You can find local mental health professionals using the American Psychology Association (APA) *Psychologist Locator* at <https://locator.apa.org>, or by contacting your health insurance to locate a provider.

Perfectionism and Gifted Children

Although perfectionism, both healthy and unhealthy, affects many populations (notably athletes, musicians, and performers), it poses special concerns for gifted students. Facing unchallenging schoolwork, many gifted children have been able to achieve perfect (or near-perfect) scores on assignments with relatively little effort. The expectation of mistake-free achievement often becomes reinforced by teachers, parents, and even peer groups. Thus, it is the high ability and achievement of gifted students that puts them at particular risk for perfectionism.

Helpful Reads

Letting Go of Perfect: Overcoming Perfectionism in Kids

Jill L. Adelson and Hope E. Wilson

An in-depth analysis of each of the perfectionistic profiles, with practical suggestions for parents and teachers to help children overcome perfectionism and develop healthy skills.



Penelope Perfect: A Tale of Perfectionism Gone Wild

Shannon Anderson

The story of a young girl who works to maintain control of her world through perfectionistic tendencies. Includes developmentally appropriate language, colorful pictures, and a set of activities and conversation starters.



The Perfectionism Workbook for Teens: Activities to Help You Reduce Anxiety and Get Things Done

Ann Marie Dobosz

This workbook provides reflective activities for adolescents to consider their own thought processes in relation to perfectionism. Based upon Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, it provides a structure and insights into changing perfectionistic tendencies.



The Perfect Percival Priggs

Julie-Anne Graham

This book details the story of Percival Priggs, who focuses on external motivations and rewards. It can help students move from a product-orientation to a process-based motivation. The target age for this book is early elementary, but could be used with older children as a starting point for conversations.



How to Be an Imperfectionist: The New Way to Self-Acceptance, Fearless Living, and Freedom from Perfectionism

By Stephen Guise

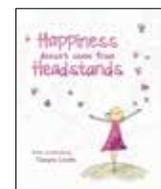
Rather than focusing on problems, this book provides young adults and adults with practical solutions for overcoming perfectionism. Written in a conversational tone, it conveys solid strategies in an engaging format.



Happiness Doesn't Come From Headstands

Tamara Levitt

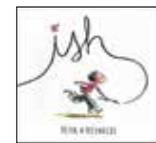
In this charming tale for early elementary students, Leela tries unsuccessfully to master a headstand in her yoga practice. This book weaves together a narrative that happiness does not depend upon the success of the attempts, but through the celebration of hard work.



Ish

Peter H. Reynolds

This book shows how a child responds to negative criticism about his artwork, and then is able to use his "mistakes" in creative ways. It demonstrates how creativity can be used to combat perfectionistic tendencies.



What Does Perfectionism Look Like?

Most people are familiar with “overachieving” (or high-achieving) perfectionism, but perfectionism may also manifest itself as procrastination or risk-avoidance. Although these are presented as separate profiles, many gifted children fit multiple categories and their perfectionistic behaviors/profiles may vary by area (e.g., homework, extracurricular activities, school projects).

The Academic Achiever

Academic Achievers are primarily characterized by high expectations for their academic performance, with a strong focus on external evaluations, such as grades. Academic Achievers are often emotionally upset and extremely disappointed with grades that are less than the very top levels of performance. They often engage in dichotomous thinking. A gifted child, for example, may consider scoring 89% on a spelling test “failing.” They also

often generalize poor performance on one assignment or in one class to their overall level of intelligence or self-worth. In this case, they may consider

scoring 89% on one spelling test means, “*I must not be very smart*” or “*I am terrible at spelling.*” To help Academic Achievers, parents can deemphasize grades and external evaluations, focusing instead on growth, learning, and the satisfaction from completing projects and homework—before the grades are returned or work is evaluated.

The Aggravated Accuracy Assessor

Aggravated Accuracy Assessors focus on mistakes and spend inordinate amounts of time attempting to create “perfect” work. These children often spend longer on their homework than is healthy, to the detriment of other activities, such as socializing with friends and family, participating in extracurricular activities, and even sleeping. These workaholic tendencies can add stress to family dynamics. Aggravated Accuracy Assessors often have difficulty relaxing standards, and they may refuse to submit a rough draft or may re-write class notes with neater handwriting. Some strategies for helping these students are to model mistakes, provide examples of imperfections in role models from books and movies, and stick to schedules that limit time spent on assignments allowing for a healthy balance of activities.

The Risk Evader

When faced with exacting standards and the possibility of not being successful on the first attempt, Risk Evaders will often disengage. For example, a musically talented child may not audition for a solo in the school concert to avoid the

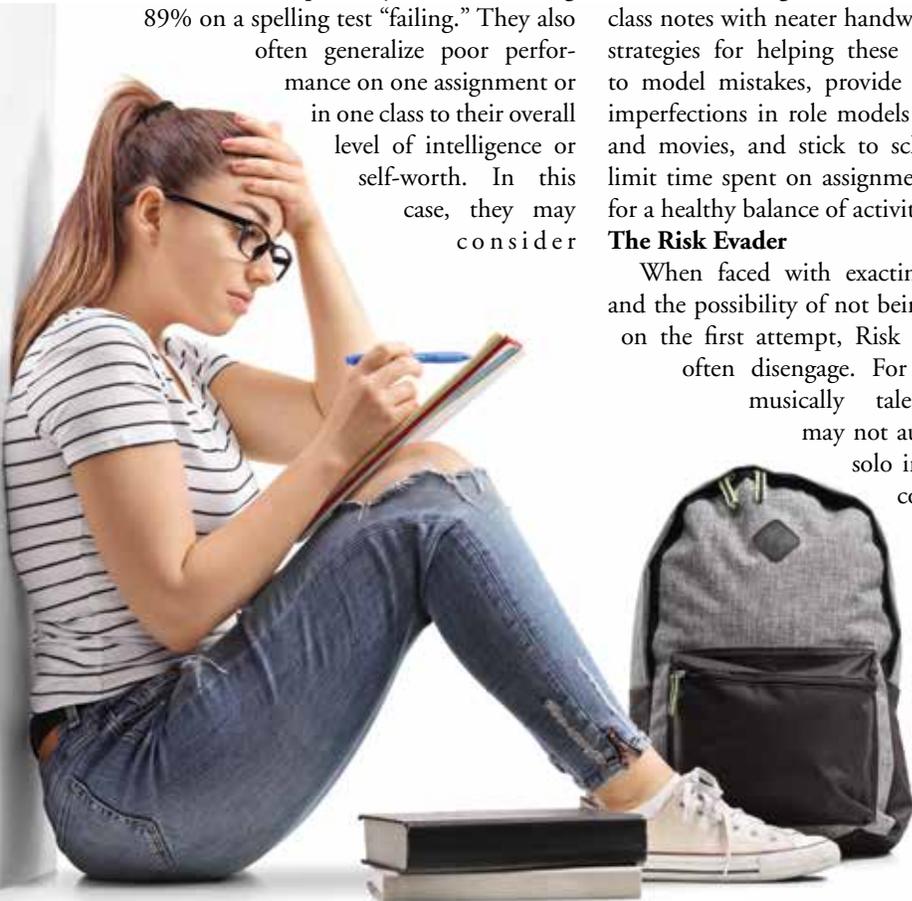
potential disappointment of not being selected. Alternatively, a high school student may avoid Advanced Placement or honors classes, worrying that she might not be able to achieve high grades in more challenging classes. At younger ages, Risk Evaders may avoid answering questions in class or completing assignments. Parents and teachers can work to create safe environments for these children to take academic risks, and adults should praise attempts, rather than the outcomes, of these endeavors.

The Controlling Image Manager

Controlling Image Managers are focused on the perceptions of others and attempt to preserve the appearance of perfection or high levels of success. This can easily create conflicts with peers when students quit playing or “throw” games when it appears that they will lose. These children may also be overly concerned with the appearance of the final product, rather than the growth and learning that occurs through the process. Parents and teachers can help Controlling Image Managers by modeling good sportsmanship and helping children develop pride in the process and effort rather than the final product.

The Procrastinating Perfectionist

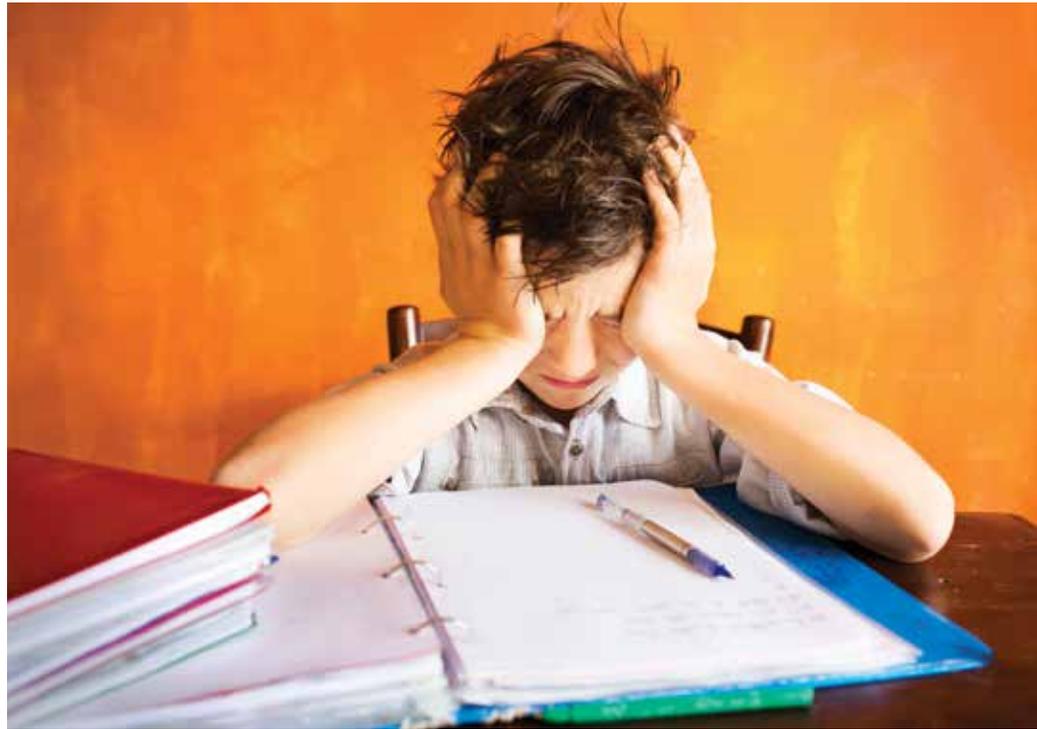
Faced with looming (and often insurmountable) expectations and the fear of not meeting them, the Procrastinating Perfectionist will delay beginning his work. Children may fall into this habit as a way to avoid risk or preserve their image. If they wait until the last minute and rush through their work, then they have an excuse for a lapse in quality. Other children may procrastinate due to anxiety about their project. They may have difficulty breaking the project into manageable pieces or be paralyzed by the fear that their performance will not live up to their expectations. Parents and teachers can help Procrastinating Perfectionists by clearly communicating timelines, as well as working with children to divide large tasks into manageable sub-goals and smaller deadlines to combat procrastination.



What Can Teachers Do?

Although teachers can feel frustrated and unsupported when teaching children who display perfectionistic tendencies, several simple interventions may be useful. Teachers can work to create a safe classroom environment for students to take academic risks by modeling mistakes. That is, teachers can explicitly call out errors they themselves make and model how to deal with it. Teachers can also focus praise on attempting difficult tasks, effort put into achievement, and individual student growth, rather than evaluation of the final product or grades. Additionally, they can avoid such dichotomous phrases and labeling as, “*You’re so smart!*” or “*You are really good at math!*” For many classes of gifted learners, it may be preferable to refrain from recognizing honor roll or other grade-based achievements to lessen the competition among students.

(Continues on p. 22)



PERFECTIONIST PROFILES: DO ANY OF THESE SOUND FAMILIAR?

PERFECTIONIST PROFILE	CHARACTERISTICS	HOW PARENTS CAN HELP
ACADEMIC ACHIEVER	Strong focus on external evaluations such as grades Tends to view in extremes—“all or nothing”	Deemphasize grades and external evaluations Focus on growth, learning, and satisfaction first
AGGRAVATED ACCURACY ASSESSOR	Focuses on mistakes and spends extraordinary time creating “perfect” work Spends more time perfecting work to the detriment of socializing, extracurriculars, and even sleeping	Model mistakes Provide examples of imperfections in role models from books and movies Limit time spent on assignments
RISK EVADER	Disengages to avoid potential disappointment Avoids challenge, participating in class, completing homework	Provide safe environments for taking risks Praise efforts, not outcomes
CONTROLLING IMAGE MANAGER	Focuses on perceptions of others Tries to maintain image of perfection and high levels of success	Model good sportsmanship Praise process and effort vs. final product
PROCRASTINATING PERFECTIONIST	Delays initiating work to avoid risk May exhibit anxiety about project, or have difficulty breaking into manageable parts Fears performance will not live up to expectations	Communicate timelines Work with children to divide large tasks into manageable sub-goals and smaller deadlines

A Book Study framework to Help Parents Understand Giftedness & Gifted Programming

By Amanda Franklin and Dr. Kristina Henry Collins

You've received a letter notifying you that your child is eligible for your school's gifted program. Of course, you're thrilled! You recognize your child's unique talents, and you are glad the school will provide an environment that fosters those talents.

But the academic and talent development that your child will receive at school must also be complemented by social and emotional support. The letter you received likely doesn't cover that, but there are many books that can help provide the information you need to support your child at home. A book study with other parents is a great way to learn more. It is informal, yet comprehensive, allowing for networking, parent-to-parent support, and resource development. It can serve as a collaborative model to help you explore the social-emotional aspects of giftedness and foster your child's talents in the context of home and community.

Choosing a Book Club Strategy

Whether you are a part of an informal group of parents of gifted children, on the board of a sanctioned parent group or state affiliate, your district's gifted coordinator, or a school psychologist, the following offers a guide for how to start and sustain a book study focusing on the needs of gifted children. One strategy that can be used to discuss books is the roundtable discussion method. Roundtable discussions are great for one-day orientations and small group discussions, giving parents an opportunity to engage in conversations related to their own child's giftedness. (See sidebar on page 14 for other implementation methods.)

Our book club used this method to facilitate an introduction to the social and emotional support of gifted students using Karen Isaacson's *Raisin' Brains: Surviving My Smart Family*.¹ A light read narrated from the parent's perspective, *Raisin' Brains* is the first of Isaacson's books on parenting and teaching gifted children. Facilitators using this book may wish to recommend her other books and/or supplemental material² as follow-up reading.

We provided a copy of *Raisin' Brains* to our participants—students enrolled in a university course on gifted and talented development—and gave them two weeks to complete the book prior to the roundtable discussion. In addition, we asked participants to prepare written responses to assigned, predetermined prompts. Written prompts and the responses were used as guiding themes in the discussion of each chapter of the text. Participants typed their responses into a single Google document that included all discussion prompts for each chapter, which enabled collaborative resource development and resulted in a product that each participant could take with them after the book club ended. During the roundtable discussion, the prompts and excerpts from each chapter were displayed using a PowerPoint. We suggest doing this as a visual to guide the discussion, but also to provide some information about each chapter for any participant who may not have completed the entire reading.



Giftedness for Newbies

Book clubs are just one strategy for learning and understanding what your child's gifted identification means. Here are a few other suggestions to follow once you receive the notification that your child qualifies for gifted and talented programming:

Explore the concept of "giftedness."

- Familiarize yourself with the definition and description of giftedness that your school district uses. Use Google to compare different perspectives on the definition of giftedness.
- Begin to examine how your child exhibits her gifts and talents.

Learn what your school and community offer.

- Identify the gifted services and programs your child's school and district offer.
- Familiarize yourself with the national, state, and local educational agencies that govern and promote policy and practices for gifted education programming.

Communicate and collaborate with your child's teachers.

- Ask how you can develop your child's gifts and talents at home.
- If needed, seek the guidance of the school's gifted coordinator for additional resources and/or strategies.

Find your support system.

- Find (or create) a local network of support with other parents and community members.
- Join and/or subscribe to newsletters and journals of different gifted organizations.

Identifying Topics or Themes

What does “giftedness” look like and how can parents go about supporting the social and emotional needs of their gifted children? In *Raisin’ Brains: Surviving My Smart Family*, Isaacson answered this question by drawing on her experiences as a daughter and mother of gifted individuals. Isaacson used humor and personal anecdotes about her experiences to offer insight into the complexity of recognizing and nurturing giftedness in individuals across the age spectrum, from her elderly parents to her five children. Through her reflections, she provided the reader with descriptions of important social and emotional contexts of development and the possible consequences when a gifted child’s needs aren’t supported. Isaacson’s exploration into the characteristics, interests, and needs of gifted individual provides an easy-to-grasp, conceptual introduction to giftedness for any parent or family member seeking guidance in nurturing their gifted child.

Together, our book club participants reviewed each chapter to develop brief descriptions within the context of characteristics of giftedness as interpreted by Isaacson. In addition, a synthesis of the content presented was linked to identify key terms and themes, like *asynchronous development*, *emotional intelligence*, *underachievement*, *perfectionism*, *multipotentiality*, and more.³ Additional details for this review including key terms, themes, and a summarized excerpt from each chapter can be found at <http://creativelygifted.wp.txstate.edu/resources>.

Across the chapters, participants identified essential elements that most impact parenting gifted children. These topics represent separate concepts that can be further explored or used to develop a more comprehensive, parent-based workshop on supporting the gifted child. Potential topics can be discussed under categorized units: characteristics of giftedness, parental self-awareness and empowerment, students’ academic self-concept and self-advocacy, and models for talent development. Facilitators can guide parents in interactively unpacking these topics through the lens of their child’s academic/developmental level, gifts and talents, personal interests, and cultural value considerations.⁴

From Notification to Understanding

When parents receive a letter about their child’s eligibility for a gifted program, it’s not just a notification about enrichment and accelerated work their child will be doing at school; it’s also the first indication for understanding the type of support system the gifted child needs. In fact, gifted children have unique and different needs in terms of their individual learning and development, and these needs must be recognized and supported by educators and family members alike.⁵ A book study is a great way to provide parents with orientation to gifted programming and to facilitate collaboration between the home and the school.

For parents, engaging in a book study with each other

Successful Book Club formats

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	TIME FRAME	DESCRIPTION
 <p>General roundtable discussion</p>	One day	Prior reading is recommended, but isn’t necessary. The facilitators may provide parents with brief descriptions of the book along with a central theme of each chapter. Using a PowerPoint or handouts, this information can be used to facilitate discussions around that identified theme or essential question. This can be done as one large group or within clusters.
 <p>In-depth online book study</p>	10–14 weeks	Parents read, on average, one chapter per week with opportunities to discuss and share information regarding the book and giftedness in an online setting. Centralized themes or prompts can be used to guide the discussion.
 <p>Face-to-face book study</p>	7 weeks	Parents read, on average, two chapters per week and meet in person to unpack the content within the assigned chapters with anecdote discussions and experiences.

Suggested Readings for Parent Book Clubs

Parenting Gifted Children to Support Optimal Development: An NAGC Select

Stephen T. Schroth & Jason A. Helfer



The Joy and the Challenge: Parenting Gifted Children

Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted



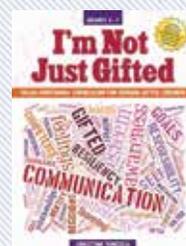
Educating Your Gifted Child: How One Public School Teacher Embraced Homeschooling (Perspectives in Gifted Homeschooling) (Volume 6)

Celi Trepanier & Sarah J. Wilson



The Everything Parent's Guide to Raising a Gifted Child: All You Need to Know to Meet Your Child's Emotional, Social, and Academic Needs

Sarah Herbert Robbins

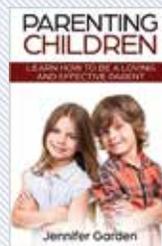


Gifted: Raising Children Intentionally

Chris Davis

I'm Not Just Gifted: Social-Emotional Curriculum for Guiding Gifted Children

Christine Fonseca



Parenting Children: Learn How to be a Loving and Effective Parent: Parenting Children with Love and Empathy

Jennifer Garden

Parenting Gifted Children 101: An Introduction to Gifted Kids and Their Needs

Tracy Inman & Jana Kirchner



Smart Parenting for Smart Kids: Nurturing Your Child's True Potential

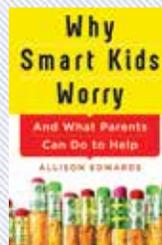
Eileen Kennedy-Moore & Mark S. Lowenthal

Ten Things Not to Say to Your Gifted Child: One Family's Perspective

Nancy N. Heilbronner & Jennifer Heilbronner Munoz

Why Smart Kids Worry: And What Parents Can Do to Help

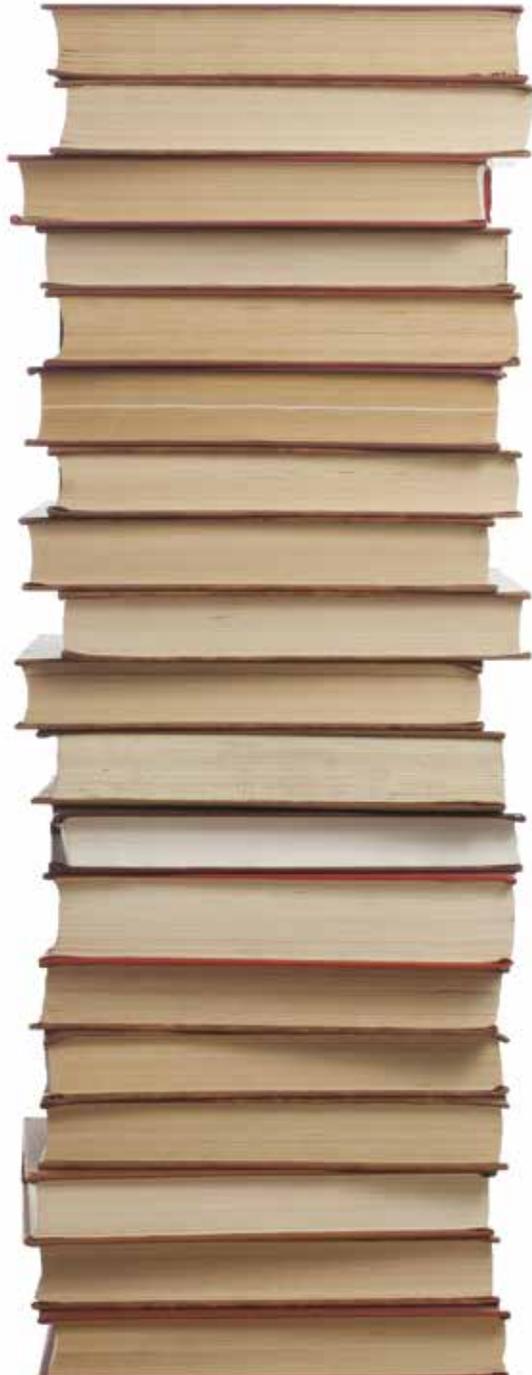
Allison Edwards



Writing Your Own Script: A Parent's Role in the Gifted Child's Social Development (Perspectives in Gifted Homeschooling) (Volume 8)

Corin Barsily Goodwin & Mika Gustavson

provides an opportunity to fully understand the diversity of a child's talents and gifts, and the social and emotional supports that work best for them.⁶ Whether you're a parent of a gifted child, an educator of a gifted child, or a gifted adult yourself, consider starting a book club as a resource and tool to help others discover, understand, and support gifted individuals.⁷ ☞



Authors' Note

Amanda Franklin is a graduate student at Texas State University, where she is completing her master's degree in Secondary Education with an emphasis in talent development and gifted education. She currently teaches high school English in New Braunfels, Texas. Her research interests include the social, emotional, and cultural needs of gifted learners, and underrepresentation in gifted education.

Kristina Henry Collins, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of curriculum and instruction at Texas State University. She received both her Ph.D. and Ed.S. from the University of Georgia, a master's in mathematics from Jacksonville State University, a bachelor of science in engineering from the University of Alabama, and a Military Science diploma in cryptology from the United States Navy. Dr. Collins has many years of experience with STEM teaching and leading in Title I middle schools and high schools. Her research focuses on STEM identity, STEM talent development, parent engagement, and multicultural gifted education. ☞

Endnotes

- ¹ Isaacson, K. L. (2002). *Raisin' brains: Surviving my smart family*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.
- ² Gable, H. H. (2015, January). *Heidi Hass Gable: Gifted, creative and highly sensitive children* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybmgVSdsMu8>
- ³ Collins, K. H. (2017). From identification to Ivy League: Nurturing multiple interests and multi-potentiality in gifted students. *Parenting for High Potential*, 6(4), 19–22.
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- ⁷ Halsted, J. W. (2011, Sept 14). *Using books to meet the social and emotional needs of gifted students*. Retrieved from <http://sengifted.org/using-books-to-meet-the-social-and-emotional-needs-of-gifted-students/>

(Continued from p. 5)

may be part of the gifted identification committee that reviews each child and determines gifted eligibility. If your child also has a disability, behavioral disorder, or struggles academically, counselors are a good resource.

PARENT TIP

You should contact school support staff if:

- They are responsible for gifted identification at your school
- You are concerned your child may also have a disability or behavioral disorder
- You need to request accommodations/504 Plan for your twice-exceptional child
- You want referrals to mental health and community services for your child



ADMINISTRATOR

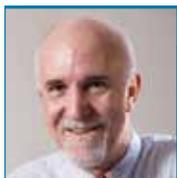
The school administrator—most often the principal or vice principal—is responsible for the safety of all students, meeting state and district requirements, and ensuring the entire school runs efficiently. The administrator may

be under immense pressure from the school district to produce satisfactory test scores, especially if the school has had low scores in prior testing years. The administrators of your child's school must delegate responsibilities to all staff within the building in order to be successful. They may hire a gifted teacher or assign a staff member to gifted identification without knowing how these processes fully work themselves. A typical administrator has very limited training on gifted education unless they were a gifted teacher in the past or have a gifted child of their own.

PARENT TIP

You should contact your school administration if:

- You have already tried to work with your child's teachers and gifted teacher with no success
- You are concerned about implementation of the gifted program
- You would like to create a parent advisory board or advocacy group to support the school's gifted program
- You feel skipping a grade is appropriate for your child



SUPERINTENDENT

This is the head administrator of the district, accountable to the school board, to which all school administrators and personnel report. Typically, the superintendent will refer all discussions related to a specific child's placement and/or programming back to the school's principal.

Superintendents should only be contacted as a last resort, after all avenues have been explored with the professionals listed previously.

Your Role

Being a parent of a gifted child offers a completely new perspective on education. While many parents can sit back and trust the process, parents of gifted children need to be prepared to be an advocate for their child. Talking to other parents of gifted students at your child's school, on the playground, at the grocery store, church, or even online, will give you perspective, information on programming you were unaware of, and a support system.

If you are not happy with your child's current educational experience, start with his teacher. There is nothing better for your children than a great relationship with their classroom teachers. The best way to work with teachers is to focus on what you want the outcome to be, not push the gifted label. Do you want your child challenged in math, to skip a grade, to be able to test out of a unit they already know? Do you want to help start an academic competition team? By working with the staff members at your child's school, you can help create an environment where gifted children thrive. ☺

Resources

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Authors' Note

Ashley Y. Carpenter is a graduate research assistant at the National Center for Research on Gifted Education and a doctoral candidate at the University of Connecticut. She is a former gifted middle school teacher and the proud parent of a twice-exceptional child.

Stacy M. Hayden is a doctoral student at the University of Connecticut. Prior to pursuing her Ph.D., she taught gifted elementary students and worked with the Young Scholars Program in Alexandria City Public Schools, Virginia.

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¹ National Association for Gifted Children & The Council of State Directors for Programs for the Gifted. (2015). *2014–2015 state of the states in gifted education: Policy and practice data*. Retrieved from [http://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/key reports/2014-2015 State of the States \(final\).pdf](http://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/key%20reports/2014-2015%20State%20of%20the%20States%20(final).pdf)

² National Association for Gifted Children. (n.d.). *Gifted by state*. Retrieved from <http://www.nagc.org/information-publications/gifted-state>.

How to Start an Academic Competition in Your Child's School

By Pamela M. Peters



Photo © 2018 Science Olympiad.

Research suggests that academic competitions provide opportunities for content differentiation as well as emotional growth. Participating students learn how to cope with subjectivity, engage in friendly competition with their peers, get exposed to role models in their field of interest, and build resilience.¹ With limited resources, school districts often do not prioritize these types of programs. Starting a competition program at your child's school is a great way for parents to share their talents and support their child's school by providing challenging programming. I took the initiative and successfully started

a Math Olympiad program at my child's school and want to encourage other parents to do the same. Following are the questions I am most often asked by parents on how to get started.

How did you decide which program or competition to bring to your school?

When my son skipped from second to fourth grade, I knew that fourth grade math would still not be enough to challenge him. I'd heard that Mathematical Olympiads for Elementary and Middle Schools (MOEMS) was offered at other schools in our district, and I thought a program like that would challenge him and make him struggle a bit. I thought this would benefit my son and other students who did not know how to handle difficult academics because they were never forced to work outside of their comfort zones. And I knew it would help provide differentiated learning materials in a subject for which it is often difficult for teachers to develop curriculum.

What type of research did you do before proposing the idea to the school?

I reached out to the assistant superintendent with a few district-specific questions. Were parents allowed to run after-school programs? *Yes.* How many of the other schools in our district had MOEMS? *2 out of 5 schools.* How were those funded? *The principal provided funding or parents paid related fees.*

Answers to my questions about the program requirements, fees, and time commitment were readily available on the website.

How did you approach the school?

That was super easy. I made an appointment with the principal, went in prepared with all of the information I had gathered, and

Formal Program Options

There are a number of national and international academic competitions that are easy to coordinate at your school. They typically have training materials, curriculum, and competition rules available online and have relatively low registration fees.



Community Problem Solving (CmPS), www.fpspi.org/community-problem-solving—Students can work in teams or as individuals to apply problem-solving strategies to real-world problems.



Destination Imagination, www.destinationimagination.org—Students work in teams to research, design, and build a solution to a specific challenge.



Future City, futurecity.org—Future City is a project-based learning program where students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades imagine, research, design, and build cities of the future.



Kids Philosophy Slam, www.philosophyslam.org—Kids answer a philosophical question such as, “*What is the meaning of life?*” in words, artwork, poetry, or song.



Math Olympiads, www.moems.org—Math problem-solving contests for teams of up to 35 students in grades 4 through 8.



National History Day, www.nhd.org—Middle and high school students work individually or in groups to research a historical topic of their choice then present their projects to a team of judges.



Odyssey of the Mind, www.odysseyofthemind.com—Students engage in creative problem-solving that allows them to engage in hands-on teamwork.



Science Olympiad, www.soinc.org—Students participate in tournaments that showcase STEM content.

Informal Program Ideas

Parents can also approach their school to lead informal lunchtime or afterschool activities once or twice per month.

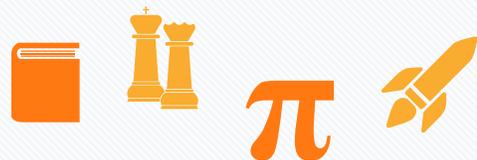
Book Club—Pick a genre or rotate themes

Chess—Teach them the basics and let them enjoy

Foreign Language—Teach kids to converse in your home language

Math Club—Focus on fun, such as Pi Day or Fibonacci numbers

Space Race—Watch live feeds from the International Space Station, imagine living on Mars



Getting Started

- 1. Determine the need.** What does your child/school need? Talk to teachers and other parents.
- 2. Research the options.** Is there a program or an academic competition that can help meet that need? Does this align with your personal skills and interests? There are great online resources that can help. Find out if the program is available at any other schools in your district or community.
- 3. Create a proposal.** Be sure to include how this will help the school community, what you are able to do, and what you would like from the school or district (space, transportation, communications, funding, supplies). Think about how much time you can devote to this project so that you can be clear about your needs.
- 4. Meet with the school or district administration.** Bring your proposal and any additional information you have. It is much easier for you to make a case and for the administrator to make a decision if all of the relevant information is available. Be flexible: Schools often have needs or conditions you don't know about.
- 5. Build enthusiasm.** Talk to teachers, students, and parents about the new program. Share your excitement and ask your child to do the same.

got it approved that day. The teachers and the principal were very supportive and excited to have MOEMS on campus.

Did you coordinate with the department head/subject head of the school?

No, because that position didn't exist at our school. If there had been a math subject leader, I would have consulted with her about my son's needs and she would have been involved in my initial information-gathering process.

Did you ask other parents or teachers to help run the program?

Yes! Once MOEMS was approved, I was approved to send a note home to all fourth and fifth grade parents with information on the program and an invitation to all parents to get involved. Two parents immediately contacted me, excited to help. Having collaborators meant I was able to give students more individual and small group attention.

Due to other commitments, many parents may not be able to run the program, but may be interested in getting involved for short periods of time. For special events like Pi Day (March 14), I asked for additional parent volunteers, who helped us create a successful celebration of good pie and pi.

What was the time commitment?

We met for one hour a week after school. My time outside of that averaged about an hour a week, which I used for lesson prep (using the MOEMS curriculum) and grading or inputting scores from the monthly exams.

How did you communicate with administrators, teachers, parents, and students? Did the school handle the communications?

I communicated with everyone directly. I sent an initial email to fourth and fifth grade teachers, asking them to encourage students to participate. I also sent newsletters via email and/or paper to the kids in the program. (For those in Title

I schools, it's important to remember that not all families have internet access.)

What about fees, transportation, and supplies? How were they paid?

MOEMS is inexpensive, but it's not free. To ensure the program was accessible to everyone, I decided against having parents contribute. Instead, I sought out a sponsor: Our local Mathnasium tutoring center sponsored the team every year I coached. They covered fees and supplies, and the Home and School Club paid for any copies I needed to make.

What benefits did the students receive from this program?

We called ourselves "mathletes" and all of us—parent coaches and kid mathletes alike—had a blast at our practices. The students were exposed to new math concepts and problem-solving skills that carried over to other areas. They had to work through challenges: No student got every problem correct, so it was tough for everyone.

I believed MOEMS at my child's school should be open to anyone, not just kids who were the top scorers on math achievement tests. This paid off tremendously. I saw students who were not known for being the strongest math students excel and surpass the kids who did better in the classroom. I saw one student work all year, never getting any questions correct. On the last exam he got 4 out of 5 correct, and was so incredibly proud of himself!

What type of benefits did you gain from launching this program?

There are so many personal benefits to starting a program like this. First of all, I enjoyed it tremendously. I got to know the other coaches, the teachers, the principal, and the district administration much better. I also saw how much the kids enjoyed the program.

Also, the staff, teachers, and administration knew that I was willing to support them and help solve a problem they faced but lacked resources to solve: providing



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additional opportunities for advanced learning. Demonstrating my willingness to collaborate meant that when I brought an issue to their attention they saw me as more than a complaining parent. I became a founding member of our district parent advisory council, and I was asked to provide feedback as the district tried to address some issues with math education at the middle school level. I was also able to successfully advocate for my daughter to start kindergarten early.

What if I don't have the time to run the program by myself?

When I started this project, I worried that I would have to do it all on my own. In the end, I found collaborative parents and a sponsoring organization.

Based on that experience, my biggest piece of advice is: Ask everyone. It's much easier to reach out to people you know, but that may limit your circle and possibly make other parents feel unwelcome. In fact, none of the other coaches are people I would have thought to ask. All, with one exception, worked full-time jobs, but were able to get some flexibility one afternoon

a week to volunteer. MOEMS would not have been possible without engaged, flexible collaborators like I was able to find.

How do you get students interested?

It's like the movie, *Field of Dreams*: If you build it, they will come. To be honest, I was worried that very few kids would want to stay after school every week to do math. I sent notes to the teachers and talked to them personally, asking them to encourage students. I had my son talk it up to the other kids, and he reported that kids seemed excited. MOEMS limits a team to 35 students, which made me laugh. At the outset, I imagined a handful of kids who would want to participate in this regularly. I got 30 students to enroll the first year, and every other year we had to start a waiting list. I built it—with help from a team of collaborators—and they definitely came. ☺

Resources

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Prufrock Press.

Hoagie's Gifted Education Page.

Academics. Retrieved from <http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/academics.htm>

Author's Note

Pam Peters is the mother of two gifted children, ages 13 and 7. She is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Educational Psychology with a dual focus on Gifted Education and Research Methods, Measurement, and Evaluation at the University of Connecticut. Pam has also worked with parents who are advocating for gifted services for their children or schools.

Endnote

¹ Ozturk, M. A., & Debelak, C. (2008). Affective benefits from academic competitions for middle school gifted students. *Gifted Child Today*, 31(2), 48–58.

(Continued from p. 11)

What Can Parents Do?

Parents of gifted perfectionists also face challenges. To help children move from unhealthy to healthy perfectionism, parents can foster a process-based, rather than performance-based, home learning environment. Specifically, helping children to take pride in a job well done, the learning completed, and the growth experienced, instead of emphasizing a final evaluation or grade, can mitigate unhealthy perfectionism. This can be as simple as celebrating the learning at the end of the marking period—before the report cards come home. Additionally, parents can encourage, and model, participation in fun activities outside of traditional areas of strength, such as bowling, karaoke, or

dancing to popular music. These activities can help children embrace mistakes as learning experiences. Finally, parents can work to establish clear communications to help develop partnerships with teachers, so everyone can work together for the success of students.

Final Thoughts

Although unhealthy perfectionism is a common concern for gifted children, parents and teachers can help children learn healthy strategies for excelling academically. Children with unhealthy perfectionism can fit several profiles, each of which presents unique challenges that can be met through simple interventions.☞

Resources

Adelson, J. L. (2007). A “perfect” case study: Perfectionism in academically talented fourth graders. *Gifted Child Today*, 30, 14–20.

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Authors' Note

Hope (Bess) E. Wilson, Ph.D., is an associate professor of education at the University of North Florida, where she teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in assessment, educational psychology, and statistics. She is an associate editor for the *Journal of Advanced Academics*,

and her work has also been published in *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, and *Roeper Review*. She was the 2017 Early Leader Award recipient for the National Association for Gifted Children, is president-elect for the Florida Association for the Gifted, and is a founding board member of the Innovation Collaborative, a non-profit organization working at the intersection of the arts, sciences, and humanities.

Jill L. Adelson, Ph.D., is an associate professor of educational psychology, measurement, and evaluation at the University of Louisville. She graduated with a joint Ph.D. in Gifted Education and Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistics from the University of Connecticut. She is co-editor of *Gifted Child Quarterly*, co-PI of Project SPARK: Supporting and Promoting Advanced Readiness in Kids, and evaluator of STEM Starters+ and the Reaching Academic Potential (RAP) Project. She is the recipient of numerous awards from NAGC: Early Leader Award (2016), Early Scholar Award (2014), *GCCQ* Paper of the Year Award (2013 and 2009), and A. Harry Passow Classroom Teacher Scholarship Award (2003).

Endnotes

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Stop Fighting Who Your Child Is and Lean In

By Deborah Reber

Raising any child is a challenge, but gifted children have their own unique academic and social-emotional needs that require additional levels of patience, involvement, commitment, and resolve. Depending on the child, it can be exhausting, frustrating, or sometimes, even embarrassing, to the point that some parents, whether consciously or subconsciously, have difficulty accepting their child's personality and traits.

Fighting with reality about who our children are is something many parents do, but at our child's expense. Because by doing this, we can't implicitly support them. Instead, we become frustrated with their perfectionism. We encourage them to ignore their anxiety. We inadvertently reprimand them for who they are.

To fully embrace who our child is, we have to lean in. *All the way.*

Leaning in looks different for everyone, but at its core it's about surrender. And the good news? When we surrender to who our child is, everything begins to get easier. Our child gets to be who they are without receiving the message that they're doing it wrong, and over time, they feel more confident. They may even begin to recognize their personal strengths while feeling inspired to develop areas of weakness.

Here's How to Get Started

Let yourself mourn. Every parent has a vision of what our child's life will look like, but most of us come to the realization that the reality is quite different from what we thought. It's important that we allow ourselves space for guilt-free grieving for the image we had versus what actually is. By giving it a voice, our sadness loses its hold over us and we're freer to lean in.

Recognize when you're fighting reality. Parents of twice-exceptional children can find themselves frustrated when their expectations for their child don't mesh with reality. Notice when you use universal fighting-reality words—beginning any sentence

with the two words "*She [or he] shouldn't,*" followed by a behavior, trait, or characteristic—and make a conscious effort to ban those words from your vernacular. Instead, focus on skills your child is "working on developing." And, if you feel the need to explain your child and his behavior to others, be sure to lead with the strengths: "*He's has a real knack for...*"

Reframe "what is." Notice things your child does that get under your skin (interrupting, spacing out, dilly-dallying, non-stop talking) and reframe them not as conscious choices, but rather the manifestation of who she inherently is, lagging skills and all. When we can reframe in this way, our child can become more secure, which allows her to develop and grow in a way that feels positive.

Start now. Identify one thing you regularly feel frustrated about that's inherent to who your child is and choose to let it go and accept it.

Excerpted from *Differently Wired: Raising an Exceptional Child in a Conventional World* by Deborah Reber (Workman Publishing). Copyright © 2018.

Author's Note

Deborah Reber is a bestselling author, certified life coach, and speaker who has spent the past 15 years writing inspiring books for women and teens. However, raising a twice-exceptional son and experiencing the heartaches, headaches, confusion, and unexpected gifts that is typical for parents raising these exceptional kids sparked a transformation in Debbie's passion and led to a conscious shift from the realm of teen advocacy to the world of supporting the millions of parents who are raising unique kids. She launched TiLT Parenting—a website, podcast, and social media community—in April 2016, where she is building a community of supportive parents of neurodiverse children.





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