

20 TIPS FOR NURTURING GIFTED CHILDREN*

by Bertie Kingore



Illustration by Jeffery Kingore

- 1. Appreciate gifted learners as children.** Just as all children do, they need love, friendship, reasonable standards of behavior, responsibility, time management skills, free time, and creative pursuits. They need your involvement in their development of independence. Appreciate them for who they are rather than who they may become.
- 2. Interact with families with gifted children.** Gifted children seek interest-mates and intellectual-peers as well as age peers. You may also find solace interacting with another parent who lives with and loves a gifted child.
- 3. Recognize how the personal and instructional needs of a gifted child differ from others.** Gifted students require intellectual peers who understand more abstract ideas and get their jokes. They learn best when instruction is at a pace and level that respond to their accelerated readiness to learn.
- 4. Appreciate the differences among high achievers, gifted learners, and creative thinkers.** Skim the accompanying chart that compares high achievers, gifted learners, and creative thinkers, and ponder which column or combinations of columns best fits your child. Consider discussing the chart with your children to elicit their perceptions.
- 5. Understand the developmental crises for gifted students.** Linda Silverman cautions that gifted students experience uneven development, underachievement often related to a lack of curriculum challenge, conflict between achievement and popularity, and difficulty selecting a career due to multipotentiality. Access her web site for further information.

- 6. Assure your child that being different is okay.** Gifted children can feel disconnected from age peers who interpret so differently. Help them appreciate individual differences in others and themselves. Provide a place where it is safe for children to be themselves.
- 7. Be an encourager.** A parent uniquely understands the whole child as you view your child in multiple scenarios over an extended period of time. As an encourager, validate your child's worth and goals as you encourage passions for learning.
- 8. Emphasize that what is learned is more important than any grade.** Interact enthusiastically as your child shares school work with you. Rather than focus upon the grade, prompt your child's response with: *Tell me about what you learned doing this? Draw a star by something you did well or liked doing.*
- 9. Be an active listener and elicit children's perceptions.** Strive to understand their messages and feelings rather than too quickly respond to their words. Insure that children know you respect them and are genuinely interested in their information. Power struggles can be deferred with a request for their view instead of a barrage of our answers. *What do you think we can do about this? How do you feel about it? Why do you think that happened?*
- 10. Follow their interests and leads in learning situations rather than pressure them with your agenda.** Our goals may not be their goals. Consult them on issues affecting them whenever you believe they understand the consequences.
- 11. Talk up to them.** Advanced vocabularies lead to higher comprehension and achievement.
- 12. Enjoy music, plays, museums, art, sports, and historical places together and discuss the experience.** These shared cultural experiences give family members warm memories to talk about over the years.
- 13. Model life-long learning habits.** Talk about current events and volunteer with your child to help others. Our actions may model more than our words.
- 14. Facilitate real-life reading, writing, science, and math experiences.** Get library cards and go to the library together. Enjoy browsing. Help children find good books and materials in the areas in which they express interest. Start at an early age to shop together with a list and a budget, write thank you notes and invitations, and plan the area and plants for a garden. One gifted sixth grader expressed sincere appreciation for geometry skills after working with his father to plot a patio space and cover.
- 15. Give books and learning games as presents, and then spend time together reading and playing those games.** Research supports that reading and playing card and board games increases vocabulary, math skills, comprehension, and critical thinking skills.

16. Recognize that gifted children need to question and respond critically. They sometimes are impatient with conventions, such as spelling, grammar, rules, and even patience for others. Talk frankly about the importance of conventions without stifling their creativity and spirit.

17. Maintain a sense of humor! As a parent, every day we can choose to laugh or cry.

AT SCHOOL...

18. Support school efforts to differentiate and provide services for advanced and gifted children. Consider attending school in-service programs on differentiation and the needs of gifted children.

19. As appropriate, supply home perspectives and feedback on your child's well-being, responses to learning, and interests. No matter what our occupations, I have always believed that our children are our greatest work.

20. Be an advocate more than an advisory.

REFERENCES

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Silverman, Linda Kreger Silverman. Web site. <http://www.gifteddevelopment.com>

*Kingore, B. (2008). 20 Tips for nurturing gifted children. GIFTED EDUCATION COMMUNICATOR. California Association for the Gifted, Summer, 2008. In Press.

Figure 4.2:
HIGH ACHIEVER, GIFTED LEARNER, CREATIVE THINKER

A High Achiever...	A Gifted Learner...	A Creative Thinker...
Remembers the answers.	Poses unforeseen questions.	Sees exceptions.
Is interested.	Is curious.	Wonders.
Is attentive.	Is selectively mentally engaged	Daydreams; may seem off task.
Generates advanced ideas.	Generates complex, abstract ideas.	Overflows with ideas, many of which will never be developed.
Works hard to achieve.	Knows without working hard.	Plays with ideas and concepts
Answers the questions in detail.	Ponders with depth and multiple perspectives.	Injects new possibilities.
Performs at the top of the group.	Is beyond the group.	Is in own group.
Responds with interest and opinions.	Exhibits feelings and opinions from multiple perspectives.	Shares bizarre, sometimes conflicting opinions.
Learns with ease.	Already knows.	Questions: What if...
Needs 6 to 8 repetitions to master.	Needs 1 to 3 repetitions to master.	Questions the need for mastery.
Comprehends at a high level.	Comprehends in-depth, complex ideas.	Abstracts beyond original ideas.
Enjoys the company of age peers.	Prefers the company of intellectual peers.	Prefers the company of creative peers but often works alone.
Understands complex, abstract humor.	Creates complex, abstract humor.	Relishes wild, off-the-wall humor.
Grasps the meaning.	Infers and connects concepts.	Makes mental leaps: Aha!
Completes assignments on time.	Initiates projects and extensions of assignments.	Initiates more projects than will ever be completed.
Is receptive.	Is intense.	Is independent and unconventional.
Is accurate and complete.	Is original and continually developing.	Is original, ever changing, and misunderstood.
Enjoys school often.	Enjoys self-directed learning.	Enjoys creating.
Absorbs information.	Manipulates information.	Improvises.
Is a technician with expertise in a field.	Is an expert, abstracts beyond the field.	Is an inventor and idea generator.
Memorizes well.	Guesses and infers well.	Creates and brainstorms well.
Is highly alert and observant.	Anticipates and relates observations.	Is intuitive.
Is pleased with own learning.	Is self-critical.	Is never finished with possibilities.
Gets A's.	May not be motivated by grades.	May not be motivated by grades.
Is able.	Is intellectual.	Is idiosyncratic.