

January 1992

Strategies for parental identification and effective parenting of the gifted child

Randy Richardson
University of Northern Iowa

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Strategies for parental identification and effective parenting of the gifted child

Abstract

Major studies conducted over the past twenty years have shown that parents are important educators of their children and that not even the best schools can do the Job alone (Walberg, 1984). This is true for parents of gifted children as well. The family often has been cited as one of the most important components in the translation of talent and ability into achievement for gifted children (Olszewski, Kulieka, & Buescher, 1987). Researchers in the field of gifted education generally agree on the importance the family plays in the educational and social development of gifted children (Zorman, 1982).

STRATEGIES FOR PARENTAL IDENTIFICATION AND
EFFECTIVE PARENTING OF THE GIFTED CHILD

A Graduate Project
Submitted to the
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

Randy Richardson

July 1991

This Research Paper by: Randy Richardson
Entitled: Strategies for Parental Identification
and Effective Parenting of the Gifted Child

has been approved as meeting the research paper
requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in
Education.

July 10, 1991
Date Approved

William Waack

Director of Research

July 10, 1991
Date Approved

William Waack

Graduate Faculty Advisor

July 22, 1991
Date Approved

Marvin Heller

Graduate Faculty Reader

July 19, 1991
Date Approved

Peggy Ishler

Head, Department of
Curriculum and Instruction

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STRATEGIES FOR PARENTAL IDENTIFICATION
AND EFFECTIVE PARENTING OF THE GIFTED

Major studies conducted over the past twenty years have shown that parents are important educators of their children and that not even the best schools can do the job alone (Walberg, 1984). This is true for parents of gifted children as well. The family often has been cited as one of the most important components in the translation of talent and ability into achievement for gifted children (Olszewski, Kulieka, & Buescher, 1987). Researchers in the field of gifted education generally agree on the importance the family plays in the educational and social development of gifted children (Zorman, 1982).

While most educators agree on the importance of parents to the development of the child, surprisingly little has been done to clarify the role parents can play. As Colangelo and Dettman (1983) point out, most of the material available to parents consists of "how-to" manuals that offer

little of practical use due to the many misconceptions and stereotypes of gifted children.

Kitano and Kirby (1986) note that parents of gifted children receive little mention in professional literature. While this point is not debated, very few researchers have questioned why this has occurred. Callahan (1982) believes parents of gifted children receive little attention because people believe that (a) gifted children will succeed without help, and (b) parents of gifted children are also gifted and are therefore superior parents. While this may be true in some cases, many parents want and need help dealing with gifted children.

Statement of the Problem

Parents are often frustrated by the lack of information they have about a child who is gifted. What information is available may not even be disseminated properly by the school. Parents may feel alienated from the education of their children when, in fact, they need to feel ownership. There are three major problems parents

and families face in dealing with gifted children.

They are:

1. Parents lack the knowledge and confidence to identify giftedness in their children.

2. Parents need help identifying problems in the home environment which may become barriers to the development of their child's giftedness.

3. Parents need help in developing strategies to overcome these barriers.

The intent of this review of the literature is to identify strategies for effective parenting which will alleviate these three problems.

Definitions

For purposes of this literature review, the following definitions will be used:

Gifted children will refer to those children who may possess a multidimensional set of characteristics, which includes academic aptitude, creativity, leadership, and superior ability in the visual and performing arts.

Underachievers are those students who have high intellectual aptitude as measured by an aptitude test. Their achievement scores, however,

are less than the aptitude would predict.

LIE Scale refers to one of the scales of the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, which measures a parent's tendency to present their children in an unrealistically favorable light.

Review of the Literature

The Parent's Role in Identifying the Gifted Child

The process of identifying gifted children is a complex task. At one time the primary identifier of gifted children was the IQ test. Research now indicates that, since giftedness is multifaceted, IQ scores and other standardized tests should not be used as the only criteria for identification (Frazier, 1988). As Howard Gardner points out (Kirschenbaum, 1990), people possess seven different intelligences and may be very high in one or more without scoring high on an IQ test. There is now an increasing use of subjective measures such as nominations by peers, teachers, and parents (Colangelo & Dettmann, 1981).

The role of the parent in the identification process is an area often overlooked by educators. Can parents accurately identify gifted children?

If so, they can be effective aids in the identification process. Teachers need to be aware that they can be of assistance by providing parents with information that would help them become more effective identifiers of gifted children.

Parent Effectiveness

Preschool children learn more at home during their first five years than at any other time (Frazier, 1988). Since parents spend more time with preschool children, they are able to observe a great range of behaviors. Even when the child begins school, parents can observe a child's nonacademic abilities of which school personnel may not be unaware. Parents seem to have an intuitive sense about their own children; they know, without being able to explain why, that a child has an unusual ability (Alvino, 1985).

These intuitive feelings about a child's ability tend to be amazingly accurate. Jacobs (1971) found that parents were able to accurately identify gifted children 61% of the time. Teachers, by comparison, were unable to identify

over half the children determined to be gifted by intelligence tests (Fox, 1981). Khatena (1978) believed that parents may be the most potent identifier of the gifted child.

A parent's judgment about a child's giftedness may be influenced by a number of factors. It is often difficult for a parent to make a fair evaluation of a child's ability, although as Jackson and Robinson (1980) discovered, parents tend to err oftener in underestimating, rather than overestimating, their child's abilities. There tend to be more parents who have gifted children and do not know they do than there are parents who do not have gifted children, but think they do (Ginsberg & Harrison, 1977).

Other factors which influence parents include the parents' own educational level, community demographics, and intrafamily experiences (Alvino, 1985). Parents who are well educated expect their child to be bright and often overlook exceptional ability. In communities where large numbers of

well educated people congregate, a child may not stand out as superior. Having an older child who is gifted may also make parents more aware of what to look for in younger siblings (Alvino, 1985).

Virtually all research indicates the effectiveness of parents in the identification process. Much of their ability is based upon intuition, however (Alvino, 1985). It is the job of educators to help make parents even more effective by moving them from the intuitive level to one which is more cognitive. Research indicates that parents find it difficult to judge giftedness because of a lack of specific identification criteria (Hitchfield, 1973). Gifted teachers need to stress that parents are a valuable ally in identification and seek to provide them with needed criteria.

Kitano and Kirby (1986) urge schools to conduct orientation meetings for all parents at the beginning of a school year. At these meetings, the identification process, and parents'

roles in it, must be clearly stated. Specific criteria should be printed in a form understandable to all parents and distributed.

Types of Criteria

The criteria presented to parents present the greatest problem. In reviewing the literature, three types of criteria were found. They are (a) developmental, (b) leadership, and (c) intellectual. This reviewer feels that any of the three would work well for a school/parent identification program.

Developmental Criteria

Developmental criteria is best used by parents with preschool or early elementary children. Early identification of gifted children is very important. Hall and Skinner (1980) found that children may begin regressing, hiding their abilities, and developing personality changes as early as kindergarten if their talents are not identified at an early age. Many parents have no idea if their child is developing "normally." Hall and Skinner (1980) compiled a set of developmental guidelines for preschool children.

Information was obtained from a variety of resources including the Bayley Scales of Infant Development, the Gesell Developmental Schedules, and the Slosson Intelligence Test. They examined the areas of general motor ability, fine motor ability, and cognitive language. According to their findings, a child who is 30% more advanced than average may be gifted or talented. An excerpt of the developmental guide can be found in Appendix A.

Dorothy Sisk (1977) encouraged parents to keep developmental diaries. She stated that the more accurate and specific the information, the more valuable the diary will be to teachers. Rather than just checking criteria on a list, parents should record as much information as possible. For example, instead of just noting, "Bobby read at age 4," parents should note the types of books being read.

Leadership Criteria

Leadership criteria can be used with both preschool and school age children. Alvino (1985) has developed a Leadership Identification

Checklist for Parents (see Appendix B). The list contains many of the characteristics of leadership associated with gifted children. Many of the criteria for the Checklist were originally developed by Joseph Renzulli. The characteristics are relative and will vary in degree with a child's age (Alvino, 1985).

Parents need to be aware that many school districts neglect to use leadership criteria as an identifier of gifted behavior. Educators should consider this fact before making the list available to parents. As Alvino (1985) points out, parents should also be made aware of the fact that most children, no matter how gifted, will not display all characteristics.

The Leadership Identification Checklist provides information not only on leadership, but also on academic skills and personality. The Checklist consists of five columns. The first column identifies leadership traits. The remaining four columns provide spaces for parents to check the frequency of observed behaviors. The fourth and fifth columns indicate the most

frequent occurrences of a particular behavior. A large number of checks in these columns would indicate a potential for gifted behavior in the child.

Criteria for the Intellectually Gifted

The final type of criteria to be used is for those students who are intellectually gifted. Numerous studies have been done in this area and many checklists exist. Virginia Ehrlich (1982) found 46 traits commonly cited in the literature as being associated with intellectual giftedness. Of those, from 1 to 15 usually were cited by parents of the gifted. The average number of traits cited by parents was four. The brighter the child the more characteristics were cited.

Seven traits emerged from the study which tended to be strongly linked to intellectual giftedness in young children. They were vocabulary, thinking ability, capacity for symbolic thought, insight, early physical and social development, sensitivity, and ability to read (Ehrlich, 1982). The last, ability to read,

was mentioned more frequently than any other trait.

Checklists such as those developed by Ehrlich are very common and tend to be redundant in the traits that are mentioned. This review of the literature found nine checklists specifically prepared for use by parents (Achey-Cutts, 1989; Ehrlich, 1982; Frazier, 1988; Kaplan, 1978; Martinson, 1961; Nebraska Department of Education, 1989; North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 1989; Sisk, 1977; Silverman, 1986).

Forty-two distinctive traits were found on the nine checklists. Several authors used slightly different language to describe the same trait. Rather than refer to these as two separate traits, they were combined as one trait. Of the forty-two traits, three appeared on six of the nine lists. They were: intense curiosity, strong use of language (vocabulary), and ability to understand abstract relationships.

Summary

Schools use a variety of methods in identifying gifted children (Colangelo & Dettman,

1981; Frazier, 1988). Research has found that parents are effective identifiers of the gifted (Jacobs, 1971; Khatena, 1978). While parents are accurate in their identification, they often are not sure how they identified children (Alvino, 1985). Schools can help parents become more effective in identification by providing them with specific criteria as well as training them to use it (Hitchfield, 1973; Kitano & Kirby, 1986).

The literature revealed three common types of criteria to use in the identification of gifted children. Developmental criteria is best used when identifying pre-school or early elementary children. Checklists comparing such traits as general motor ability, fine motor ability, and cognitive language are useful for this purpose (Hall & Skinner, 1980). Developmental diaries can also be used to provide more specific information (Sisk, 1977).

The second common type of criteria to be used was leadership criteria (Alvino, 1985). This information can be used with both pre-school and school age children. Many school districts

neglect to include leadership criteria in the identification process. Before making this information available to parents, teachers need to be aware of whether or not it is included in the plan of their particular school.

The final type of criteria is used to identify those students who are intellectually gifted (Ehrlich, 1982). A number of checklists are available to use in identifying these students (Martinson, 1961; Sisk, 1977; Kaplan, 1978; Ehrlich, 1982; Silverman, 1986; Frazier, 1988; Achey-Cutts, 1989; Nebraska Department of Education, 1989; North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 1989). There is a great amount of duplication in the items and criteria that are used on the checklists.

Identifying Problems in the Home Environment

Parents of gifted children, like parents of all children, face a myriad of problems. While the problems may not be as numerous, they can be quite different. Studies of gifted children (Kelly & Colangelo, 1984; Terman, 1925) found them to have a smaller number of adjustment problems

than the general population. Problems exist between the parent and child as well as between gifted and non-gifted siblings. In order to best understand the problems faced by parents of the gifted, it is necessary to look first at what these families are like.

Family Demographics

The gifted child is most often the first born child (Barbe, 1981). Pfouts (1980) believes that first born children are more likely to be gifted because they are raised in an adult environment. This environment allows them to acquire language more easily and to have more opportunities to interact with adults. The families of gifted children also tend to be smaller (Groth, 1975). Parents of gifted children tend to be older at the time of the child's birth (Albert, 1980). This may allow the parents to become more financially secure before the arrival of children. Without the worries of a financial shortfall, parents can spend more time helping their child to achieve.

Van Tassel-Baska (1983) found that parents of

gifted children are also better educated than are parents in the general population. These parents tend to be high achievers and have high expectations for their children.

Gifted children were found to come from homes where marriages were longer-lasting and more successful (Van Tassel-Baska, 1983). This would indicate that homes where levels of familial stress are lower would be more conducive to producing children who achieve at higher levels.

Parent/Child Problems

Ross (1964) found that most parents experienced a "normal" upbringing as a child, and expect to raise normal children. He stated that, when parents are told they have a gifted child, they respond in a manner similar to parents who have been told their child has a learning disability. Greenstadt (1981) concluded that parents feel anxious and guilty about having a gifted child. What should be a happy moment often causes tremendous stress in the family. Parents feel a responsibility towards the gifted child,

but also fear they will stifle the gift (Greenstadt, 1981).

Some parents of gifted children will go as far as denying their child is gifted. Lester and Anderson (1981) discovered that these parents were unsure of their abilities as parents or were themselves overachievers. Those parents who are insecure ignore the giftedness because they feel doing something wrong may hurt the gift. Overachieving parents may simply be unaware of a child's ability because of their own high level of achievement.

Hackney (1981) interviewed a number of parents of gifted children and found that parents felt that having a gifted child in the family was not always a positive experience. Parents fear that a child who is gifted may be "different," and be socially maladjusted (Bridges, 1979). A gifted child may also cause a parent to feel inadequate (Parker, Ross, & Deutsch, 1980).

Feelings of inadequacy on the part of parents can occur for a number of reasons. Bridges (1979)

believes this occurs for two reasons. Parents feel as though they cannot offer the gifted child the emotional support that is needed or they feel they cannot offer the intellectual stimulation the child needs to develop his/her abilities.

Gifted children can bring about changes in the daily activities of the home. Children who are gifted often show unusually high levels of energy and need less sleep than other family members (Webb, Meckstroth, & Tolan, 1982). If family sleeping patterns are disrupted, it will take the family some time to adjust.

Gifted children are also likely to show signs of "overexcitability" (Kreger-Silverman, 1983). These children tend to be more sensitive to outside stimuli. Oddly enough, gifted children are sometimes diagnosed as hyperactive and placed on medication (McMann & Oliver, 1988).

Older gifted children are sometimes given extra responsibility. Their knowledge and competency may make them an organizing force within the family (McMann & Oliver, 1988). As

Hackney (1981) discovered, some parents gradually concede decision making in the family to the gifted child. This "parentification" of the child is potentially damaging and may lead to long-term depression and self-esteem problems (Wolkin, 1985).

In homes where gifted children and parents experience problems the children often suffer. In a nonsupportive environment gifted children may feel that being different and excelling academically carries too great of a risk (Whitmore, 1986). Children in these homes also develop feelings of guilt about their talents. McMann and Oliver (1988) observed that feelings of guilt in gifted children were expressed in rude and obnoxious behavior.

Some parents react much differently when told their child is gifted. For some parents, having a gifted child may mean a step up the socio-economic ladder (Colangelo & Dettman, 1983). This situation is of no concern unless the parents become unreasonable in their expectations for the

child. When faced with the high expectations of others, gifted students feel they must perform at optimum levels (McMann & Oliver, 1988).

Experiencing anything less than success often leads to bouts with depression (Lajole & Shore, 1981).

Much research has been done concerning the relationship between difficulties in the family and a child's level of achievement (Dowdall & Colangelo, 1982). Gifted children are especially vulnerable to underachievement (Rimm, 1985). While there is still debate as to the reasons for underachievement, research has identified two causes. Karnes, et al. (1971) found that underachievers frequently experience rejection and hostility from parents. A later study by Colangelo and Dettman (1983) found nearly opposite results. Their study discovered that underachievement is caused by too much pressure from parents. While the two studies obviously disagree, it appears that extremes in behavior by parents can cause damage to a child's level of achievement.

Problems in Sibling Relationships

While problems between parents and gifted children may be great, a study by Ballering and Koch (1984) suggests that giftedness produces greater effects on sibling relationships. The presence of a gifted child in a family can seriously alter relationships between siblings. Hitchfield (1973) found that parents of gifted children often "overinvest" in the child. Parents interviewed by him could describe more personality traits of their gifted child than they could of their other children. When this happens, the child is often "triangulated" with the parents and may act as a buffer or detour between parents and other family members (Zuccone & Amerikaner, 1986).

Cornell's (1983) study of twelve families with a gifted first-born child and a regular classroom second-born child points out other significant problems. The study found that children felt giftedness was an "either/or" concept. In other words a student was either gifted or non-gifted. Cornell (1983) also

discovered that the non-gifted siblings were less outgoing, more easily upset, more restrained, and more impatient.

A 1986 study by Cornell and Grossberg tested 27 siblings, 12 of whom were in a gifted program and 15 of whom were in the regular classroom. They found that the regular classroom children had lower self-esteem and slightly higher levels of anxiety. One interesting finding of this study was that siblings of gifted children had higher LIE scale scores on both measures of self-report. The LIE scale provides a measure of children's tendencies to present themselves in an unrealistically favorable light. Reynolds and Paget (1983) point out, however, that such a difference may not mean a person is dishonest, as much as it is a measure of socialization.

A study by Ballering and Koch (1983) attempted to observe the emotional relationships of gifted and non-gifted siblings. The study was conducted in a school where there was no identified gifted population. Researchers asked

for volunteer families to participate in the study. Children were identified as gifted through the use of the WISC-R. There were 22 gifted and 25 non-gifted siblings in the experiment. The researchers found that gifted siblings were more likely to feel negatively about their relationships with non-gifted siblings.

Sunderlin (1981) completed three case studies of siblings and found similar conclusions. In each of the case studies differences in intelligence between children created tensions in the relationship. Pfouts (1980) found similar results in studies of families with two male children. She did find greater levels of problems existed when the younger sibling was gifted and the older child was not.

Siblings of gifted children often feel a lack of equality in their treatment by parents. Fine and Pitts (1980) found that non-gifted siblings often become the family "scapegoat." The gifted child becomes the "conformist" and his or her behavior, regardless of what it is, becomes

"correct." Any family problems then are blamed on the "incorrect" behavior of the non-gifted child.

Summary

Research indicates that gifted children have a smaller number of adjustment problems than the remainder of the population (Kelly & Colangelo, 1984; Terman, 1925). Problems are likely to appear, however, between the parent and the gifted child (Greenstadt, 1981; Hackney, 1981; Ross, 1964), as well as between the gifted child and non-gifted siblings (Ballering & Koch, 1983; Pfouts, 1980; Sunderlin, 1981).

Parents of gifted children may feel a great deal of anxiety in the home (Greenstadt, 1981). Some parents even feel that having a gifted child is not a positive experience (Hackney, 1981). A child's giftedness can cause disruptions in normal home life (Webb, Meckstroth, & Tolan, 1982). The reaction of parents to a gifted child also causes problems. Parents may deny that their child is gifted or apply tremendous pressure to achieve.

Both reactions often lead to underachievement (Colangelo & Dettman, 1983; Karnes, 1971; Rimm, 1985).

Problems between gifted children and their non-gifted siblings also are common. Non-gifted siblings feel they do not receive "equal" treatment from parents (Fine & Pitts, 1980). Gifted children are also more likely to feel negatively about their relationships with non-gifted siblings (Ballering & Koch, 1983).

Strategies for Parents to Use in Avoiding Family Barriers to Giftedness

One of the best ways to discuss how to avoid barriers to the development of a child's giftedness is to look at successful families. By looking closely at the parenting practices in these families, parents can get realistic, constructive, ideas. Satir (1984) theorized that families of gifted children are most successful when they raise children with high self-esteem, openness to intimate relationships, and a commitment to developing abilities to the fullest.

Studies by Buescher (1987) at the Center for Talent Development examined groups of adolescent boys and girls. The children had similar Scholastic Aptitude Test scores at age 12, but showed varying levels of achievement in programs in which they later participated. Using self-reporting instruments, differences were found in both self-esteem and family environment.

A study by Kulleke and Olszewski (1987) compared family environment to such factors as self esteem, social acceptance, and SAT scores. Gifted females showed a strong relationship among the variables, while males showed almost none. Girls developed more positive self-concepts when the family did not overemphasize academic achievement. The families communicated values of success and achievement through modeling and cultural pursuits. The families blended a nurturing environment with individual expression.

Successful families give gifted children the environment they need to develop their talents fully. It is important to examine more closely

how these families interact with the schools. Parental support of children and schools is of tremendous importance. Successful parents are strongly supportive of the schools and actively involved in them (Ginsberg & Harrison, 1977).

Parental Support

Parent support and understanding is crucial to the gifted program. It is widely accepted that parents need to be involved educationally with the child at home (Hall, 1981). Parents can help students develop a positive attitude toward learning as well as a sense of self-confidence. Modeling these desired behaviors at home increases their occurrence in children (Ginsberg & Harrison, 1977).

It is very important that parents play a positive role at home. Many gifted students are perfectionists. They feel that their worthiness and acceptance are determined by their competence and performance. This feeling often comes about because of inappropriate expectations of others, including "high achieving, pushy parents" (Adderholt-Elliott, 1988).

Unreasonable demands by parents have been frequently cited as causes of underachievement. In contrast, children whose parents set reasonable goals, while giving them freedom, encouragement, and independence, develop their giftedness in a positive way (Fine, 1977). Page (1983) found that in homes where parents had a positive attitude toward teachers and school, children's achievement was greater. As in other areas, communication between parents and schools is very important. Exchanging information creates an atmosphere beneficial to all gifted programs.

Active Involvement by Parents

Some parents prefer to be more than just supportive and wish to be actively involved in gifted programs. These parents can be used effectively in a variety of ways. Reis and Renzulli (1984) encourage the use of "Enrichment Teams." These teams consist of administrators, the resource teacher, classroom teachers, parents, and, in some cases, students. Enrichment teams act as advisory boards, seeking out learning experiences for children. The Cypress-Fairbanks

School District (Texas) conducted surveys of students' parents to find those parents who had special skills or knowledge and who were willing to share it with students (Lupkowski, 1984).

Marland (1981) encourages parents to start with a quiet, constructive conversation with school administrators. Parents should offer their services as volunteers. They should, however, realize that their role is to help school leadership do what it feels is best. Marland suggests parents work in four areas:

1. Assembling like-minded parents to support the program.
2. Lobbying for legislation to support gifted education.
3. Recruiting volunteers.
4. Raising funds to supplement those provided by schools.

Parents also can be actively involved at home. While it is not a good idea to have parents become surrogate teachers at home, parents can provide supplementary activities at home that are

beneficial to students. Teachers can provide parents with a variety of appropriate activities that can be used at home. It is important that these activities be purposeful, and not simply "busy work" (Fredericks, 1989). Children and parents should be provided with projects and assignments that have direct relevance to classroom subjects and everyday activities.

In-service Programs

All strategies discussed to this point focus on communication between schools and parents. Educators realize this is much easier said than done. Parents, teachers, and administrators must be trained to communicate effectively. For any new program, a carefully organized in-service training program must be provided for all persons who will be involved (Reis & Renzulli, 1984).

State associations sponsor a number of gifted conferences annually. These, however, are mostly available to teachers and administrators. Meriweather and Karnes (1988) call attention to a special conference designed for parents of gifted children. Since 1984 the Center for Gifted

Studies on the campus of the University of Southern Mississippi has sponsored the Parenting the Gifted Child Conference. This one day conference, held on a Saturday to allow parental involvement, features nationally known speakers and small group sessions. Teachers and administrators frequently serve as leaders of these sessions. The idea can be easily replicated, but should be modified to allow parents and teachers to have equal roles. The CONTAG conference at the University of Northern Iowa follows a similar format, but it is spread over several days and allows parents to participate as equals. This longer length allows for in depth work, but it is held on weekdays making it difficult for some parents to attend.

Summary

Parenting practices can play a major role in the development of a child's giftedness (Fine, 1977; Ginsberg & Harrison, 1977; Kullieke & Olszewski, 1987; Page, 1983; Satir, 1984). Parents who encourage the development of

self-esteem and who do not overemphasize achievement appear to be the most successful.

Some parents like to be actively involved in a school's gifted program. It is very important for parents to accept their roles when working at school. This can be accomplished by developing more effective communication through the use of in-service training (Reis & Renzulli, 1984). Special conferences for parents and educators are also useful for this purpose (Merriweather & Karnes, 1988).

This review of literature discussed three problems faced by parents and families in dealing with gifted programs. Strategies were identified for each of these areas that might be of use to frustrated parents. A number of conclusions can be drawn from this study.

Conclusions

Parents are often confused by the role they are expected to fulfill in the life of a gifted child. They are rarely mentioned in the professional literature. Schools often treat them

as threatening outsiders. Yet, as the research indicates, parents are very important to the continued health of gifted education.

Parents can make important contributions in the identification of gifted children. They are among the most accurate identifiers of the gifted. This ability, however, appears to be largely intuitive. Parents often lack confidence in their abilities when working with educators. Providing parents with a set of specific criteria to use in the identification process would help parents gain confidence in their ability.

The type of criteria needed by parents is less clear. It is important that the criteria provided parents matches that which is included in the goals of the gifted program. It is also important that the criteria being used matches the population being identified. For example, developmental criteria works well with younger children, but would be less effective with older children.

Identifying problems in the home environment that create barriers to the development of a

child's giftedness presents special problems to educators. Teachers may be told that what happens at home is none of the school's business. If these home problems impair the social and educational development of the child, however, it becomes a school problem.

Educators of the gifted must develop effective methods of dealing with problems in the home environment. They need to be seen as a source of expert advice rather than as a righteous invader who tells parents how to raise their children. This is a narrow line upon which the educator of the gifted must carefully tread.

Identifying problems in the home after they occur is too late. Parents will resent educators who "pry" into their lives. The best approach is to make parents aware of what problems may occur. Parents can be taught what behaviors to monitor and how to deal successfully with those problems should they occur.

Gifted educators must learn to communicate effectively with parents. In-service training

programs that incorporate all participants of gifted programs are a necessity. An identification process in which parents, provided with locally developed, specific criteria, work with teachers is a must. These in-service meetings should be held on a regular basis and parents should be strongly urged to attend.

School counselors should also be asked to participate in the gifted program. Many parents see the counselor as the "problem-solver" and would be more likely to turn to that person if a problem arises. Parents and educators need to share information to reach a better understanding of children.

Schools must realize that parents are effective allies in working with gifted children. Many teachers dread meeting with parents and treat it as something to be avoided. Parents must realize they can be advocates for their children, but they need to follow the lead of education professionals. The role of parents is to supplement, not lead. Cooperation by parents and

schools will lead to more effective programs; identification of gifted students will become easier, and solving problems that present barriers to the development of giftedness will help give us all of the resources of a child's ability.

Implications for Future Research

The effect of parental involvement in the gifted program is an area which needs more study. The difficulty in developing empirical research in this field is that it requires a great amount of time. Implementing an effective parent program could take at least a full year, and it may take several years before any observable significant changes occur on the children involved.

Two specific areas appear to need the most attention. The first is an examination of the relationship between underachievement and the child/parent relationship. There are conflicting results in research in that area. Underachievement is something that occurs in every school and is a source of frustration for parents and educators.

An in-depth study might reveal information of practical use and end the debate as to the causes of underachievement.

The other area which needs further research deals with the relationship between social class and parent involvement. Most of the studies that were reviewed came from middle to upper-middle class schools. We need to study what is being done in some of the disadvantaged areas of our country and to evaluate the effectiveness of those programs.

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TABLE 1: DEVELOPMENTAL GUIDELINES

General Motor Ability

	Normal Months	30% More Advanced
Lifts chin up when lying stomach down	1	0.7
Holds up both head and chest	2	1.4
Rolls over	3	2.1
Sits up with support	4	2.8
Sits alone	7	4.9
Stands with help	8	5.6
Stands holding on	9	6.3
Creeps	11	7.7
Stands alone well	11	7.7
Walks alone	12.5	8.75
Walks, creeping is discarded	15	10.5
Creeps up stairs	15	10.5
Walks up stairs	18	12.6
Sets self in chair	18	12.6
Turns pages of book	18	12.6
Walks down stairs one hand held	21	14.7
Walks up stairs holds rail	21	14.7
Runs well no falling	24	16.8
Walks up and down stairs alone	24	16.8
Walks on tiptoe	30	21.0
Jumps with both feet	30	21.0
Alternates feet when walking up stairs	36	25.2
Jumps from bottom step	36	25.2
Rides tricycle using pedals	36	25.2
Skips on one foot only	48	33.6
Throws ball	48	33.6
Skips alternating feet	60	42.0

Fine Motor Ability

	Normal Months	30% More Advanced
Grasps handle of spoon but lets go quickly	1	0.7
Vertical eye coordination	1	0.7
Plays with rattle	3	2.1
Manipulates a ball, is interested in detail	6	4.2
Pulls string adaptively	7	4.9
Shows hand preference	8	5.6
Holds object between fingers and thumb	9	6.3
Holds crayon adaptively	11	7.7
Pushes car alone	11	7.7
Scribbles spontaneously	13	9.1
Drawing imitates stroke	15	10.5
Folds paper once imitatively	21	14.7
Drawing imitates V stroke and circular stroke	24	16.8
Imitates V and H strokes	30	21.0
Imitates bridge with blocks	36	25.2
Draws person with two parts	48	33.6
Draws unmistakable person with body	60	42.0
Copies triangle	60	42.0
Draws person with neck, hands, clothes	72	50.4

Cognitive Language

	Normal Months	30% More Advanced
Social smile at people	1.5	1.05
Vocalizes four times or more	1.6	1.12

Note. From "Somewhere to Turn: Strategies for Parents of Gifted and Talented" by Eleanor Hall and Nancy Skinner, 1980.

	Seldom or never	Occasionally	Considerably	Almost always
• Shows understanding, empathy, and sensitivity to others' needs; expresses ethical or humanitarian concerns.	—	—	—	—
• Is acknowledged by peers as a role model; sets and demands high standards for self and others.	—	—	—	—
<i>Other Cognitive/Academic Skills</i>				
• Sets goals and priorities; can plan and strategize, organize, and coordinate activities.	—	—	—	—
• Solves problems creatively; often called on by peers or teachers for ideas and suggestions.	—	—	—	—
• Shows good judgment, decision-making capacity; able to anticipate consequences of actions.	—	—	—	—
<i>Other "Personality" Characteristics</i>				
• Is charismatic, magnetic, spontaneous, insightful; others seem to gravitate toward him or her.	—	—	—	—
• Shows independence, nonconformity of thinking; willingness to take risks.	—	—	—	—
• Is task-oriented in certain situations; shows discipline, persistence, and commitment in contexts and areas of high interest.	—	—	—	—

Note. From "Parent's Guide to Raising a Gifted Child" by James Alvino, 1985.