



The Art of Acceleration

Newsletter

Defining "Gifted Education" and Why All Kids Should Have Access!

Gifted education means different things to different people. For many parents, it is the belief that it is the be-all, end-all to their gifted child's needs - until experience teaches the contrary. Recently, I had the pleasure of speaking with a potential client about his idea of what my site offers by way of acceleration or in essence, gifted education. He, like several others, are under the assumption that a "program" of some sorts has been constructed. Inquiring parents are usually shocked when I explain that creating/nurturing accelerated learn-

ers has little to do with a



"program". It is more **the management of a creative mix of resources** designed to cultivate scholastic abilities.

Schools across the country, in efforts to pacify parents and legislators who called for gifted education, created cookie-cutter programs only to find that years later, these programs leave a lot to

Gifted Education isn't limited to just one program!

be desired. Understand that public schools are structured to educate masses of children with very little provisions for handling *individual* needs. Imagine the chaos that would ensue if a school system of more than 50,000 students had to address the needs of every *single* student! On the other hand, how reasonable are expectations with regard to inflexible programs that still group together all gifted children of varied cognitive abilities, social skills and emotional needs?

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Summer Amnesia: Avoid The Brain Drain

Every child knows the feeling, and what adult can forget it? When the textbooks are turned in and the classroom doors closed for the summer, there's a sweet sense of freedom.

But those weeks of fun can have real consequences for learning. Call it the summer

slide or summer amnesia: Children lose as much as two months of reading and math skills during that time, according to the Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University.

For teachers, that means a lot of lost class time as they work to rouse student brains

from a long summer's nap. In a typical classroom, the first four to six weeks are spent reviewing material students have forgotten. And for kids who fall behind, the summer slide has long-term consequences for success in school.

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Mocha Charm, Inc.



Volume 3, Issue 3

May/June 2009

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Defining "Gifted Education" and Why All Kids Should Have Access...

The question then becomes if public school gifted programs proves inadequate in meeting the specialized needs of all of its participants, what exactly is genuine gifted education?

My experience along with other parents and experts who work daily with gifted children may be inclined to agree with an explanation offered by one source:

"Gifted education (also known as **Gifted and Talented Education (GATE)**, **Talented and Gifted (TAG)**, or **G/T**) is a broad term for special practices, procedures and theories used in the education of children who have been identified as gifted or talented. Attempts to provide gifted education can be classified in several ways. Most gifted students use a combination of approaches at different times:

- Hobby
- Enrichment
- Compacting
- Self-pacing
- Acceleration
- Part-time pulling out
- Part-time summer school
- Full-time separate classes or schools
- Gifted and talented programs
- Homeschooling..." (Wikipedia)

Many of us with young children enrolled in college or with teens that have entered college earlier than expected can corroborate this account! Gifted children, with their distinctively precocious minds, demand their environment reflects all aspects of who they are intellectually, emotionally and socially. There is no ONE program that is all encompassing. Even enrollment in such prominent and rigorous programs like Stanford University and Johns Hopkins University are just a **piece of the puzzle** designed to service the needs of gifted children.

Yes...But Should All Children Have Access?

Another aspect where systemic gifted programs fall short is the practice of postponing enrollment until later grades. There is a mountain of evidence that confirms radical brain development in children during the critical time gifted programs choose to exclude them - which brings to light the need for early childhood education. Early education prepares the child for learning and allows their expanding minds the experiences that encourages robust brain development and promote achievement.

If a child's mental faculty from preschool years onward evolves to require what has been described as gifted education, talent will have been identified early setting the stage for the most ideal preparation. How *tragic* would it be for a child to intellectually and emotionally require gifted education and **not** have access? A great number of youth have found themselves in these conditions and consequently, have mentally "checked out" of anything related to education. They subsequently attain a negative attitude about learning and fail to see the need to apply themselves...breeding the underachiever.

The point is - awareness of a child's scholastic **potential** should be determined early when gifted education can make the most difference. If a child is truly of "average" learning capacity then there would be no loss of opportunity and no harm is done.

From my research, it doesn't appear that there will be a change in the schools' minimum age requirement for gifted programs any time soon as there are much bigger issues to ponder. The budget shortfalls of many school districts across the country force severe cuts in programs not deemed a high priority and gifted programs are among the first casualties. However, there is no real need for alarm for the students whose parents are proactive and vigilant! The evidence is clear - parents have been the deciding factor in the real success of the *majority* of top students across the country.

All in all, gifted education is really nothing more than altering regular educational material to make it commensurate with a child's ability. In addition, there are the other developmental endeavors that buttress the entire gifted framework of the child. The earlier the process begins in the child's learning experience the better and who better than a **parent** to spearhead the entire unfolding.

What comforting insights to keep in mind if your child is ever denied admission to a school's gifted program.

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by

Michelle Brown-Stafford

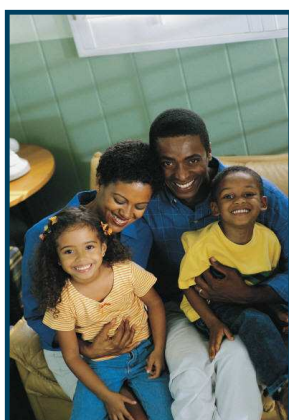
April 27, 2009

Children Could Benefit from Accelerated Education *If...*

- They learn at a much **faster** pace.
- They process material to a much **greater depth**.
- They show incredible **intensity in energy, imagination, intellectual prowess, sensitivity, and emotion** which are not typical in the general population.
- They often read **widely, quickly, and intensely** and have large vocabularies.
- They learn to read early, with better comprehension of the nuances of language. As much as half the gifted and talented population has learned to read **before** entering school.
- They commonly learn basic skills **better, more quickly, and with less practice**.
- They often pick up and **interpret nonverbal cues** and can **draw inferences** that other children need to have spelled out for them.
- They often seek the "*hows*" and "*whys*."
- They can work independently at an earlier age and can concentrate for longer periods.
- Their interests are both wildly eclectic and **intensely focused**.
- They often have seemingly **boundless** energy, which sometimes leads to a misdiagnosis of hyperactivity.
- They usually respond and relate well to *parents, teachers, and other adults*. They may prefer the company of older children and adults to that of their peers.
- They like to learn new things, are willing to examine the unusual, and are highly inquisitive.
- They tackle tasks and problems in a well-organized, goal-directed, and efficient manner.
- They exhibit an intrinsic motivation to learn, find out, or explore and are often very persistent. "*I'd rather do it myself*" is a common attitude.
- They are **elaborate thinkers**, producing new steps, ideas, responses, or other embellishments to a basic idea, situation, or problems.
- They often display intellectual playfulness and like to fantasize and imagine.

View the **entire list of characteristics** at:

http://www.ri.net/gifted_talented/character.html





How to Raise a Genius - by Nicholas Weinstock

Last summer, after much consideration, Toby Rosenberg announced to his friends and family that he had decided to change his name. "Toby," he felt, was "a little boy's name." Going forward, he would be called Karl, like his father before him. His school made note of the switch. His parents had no argument. Toby -- now Karl -- was 5 years old.

And he had a point: regardless of his age, Karl has never been a little boy. At 14 months, he began to read aloud from the posters he was pushed past in his stroller. It would be another full year before he truly conversed; but once he did, his fluent English and Polish (his mother, Anna, 40, is from Krakow) were soon joined by other languages. He trained himself to write Japanese after studying the side of a sake bottle. He taught himself the Hebrew alphabet after catching sight of the characters on a dreidel. Last year, after seeing a book in a museum shop on ancient Egypt, he compiled a dictionary of heiro-glyphics. The impression you get upon making his acquaintance is that of a bookish teenager, a middle-aged Polish diplomat and a gabby Brooklyn grandmother trapped together in the taut body of a first grader.

"You don't know what it's like with Karl," his father says, laughing tiredly. An artist turned Web-site designer, Karl Sr., 61, spends at least an hour every afternoon in the family's one-bedroom Brooklyn apartment drafting sketches and submitting them to his son's critiques. "He stands behind me and tells me to draw things over and over to his specifications," Karl says. "Beam construction, Russian churches. If he's not on the Internet, he's here, issuing commands over my shoulder. We just want to encourage his interests and support him any way we can. Nobody in this household is trying to tell

him what to do." Which is just as it should be.

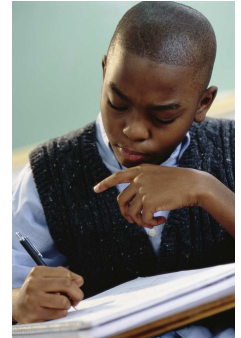
1. Don't over-structure your child's life.

Experts advise parents of hyper-intelligent children not to be too controlling. "Profoundly gifted kids are highly curious and likely to pursue all kinds of interests with great passion," says Sandra Berger, a gifted-education specialist for more than 20 years. "It's best to let the child's interests be your guide, and to follow the path created by his or her love of learning. As a parent, if you try and put yourself in that path, you're likely to get knocked around."

2. Provide as many learning opportunities as possible.

Parents should strive to introduce their children to as wide an array of subjects as they can, not only through field trips and museum tours but also by treating everyday surroundings as experiential playgrounds. It was reportedly his early rambles in the woods with his father that alerted Richard Feynman, the Nobel-prize-winning physicist, to the complexity of life. For Karl, it was drives past the Williamsburg Bridge that piqued his avid interest in truss construction.

Such interests can prove a distraction. Taking his Educational Records Bureau exam in January, Karl spent much of the allotted time lecturing the test-givers on the architectural quirks of the Chrysler Building visible through the classroom window. (The urns jutting from the 29th floor, he is fond of pointing out, were modeled after the hood ornament on the 1929 Chrysler Plymouth.) Trying to summarize the erratic score that resulted, the E.R.B. made particular -- if rather stoic -- mention of Karl's "most noteworthy . . . fund of knowledge."



Of course, even without a standardized-test score, Karl's parents know he's a genius -- and they know that they should never, ever use that term.



3. Avoid calling your child a genius.

"There are three reasons the label could only be unhelpful," says Dr. Jack Shonkoff, an expert on early childhood development. "One, it puts an enormous burden on the kid that he or she will have trouble living up to. Two, it's a setup for other people -- relatives, teachers -- to be disappointed in the kid's future performance. And three, it serves to set the child apart from other children. Extremely talented kids are pigeonholed enough as it is; the last thing they need is a label that ostracizes them further."

4. Don't expect your child to be popular.

Combating social isolation may be the greatest challenge for those raising exceptionally intelligent kids. Karl has had a typically uphill battle finding a school -- let alone a circle of friends -- that can contain him. At 3 years old, he was asked to leave his preschool program at the local Y.M.C.A. when his obvious boredom rendered him, in his teacher's opinion, a bad influence on the other children. After a search, his parents discovered the East Manhattan School for Bright and Gifted Children, only to watch the independent school close its doors this winter. Karl has since transferred to a first-grade class at a public school in Brooklyn, where he was immediately promoted to its accelerated program. But his social life is lagging far behind.

It's no surprise. Highly gifted children tend to forge friendships the way adults do -- on the basis of shared interests and coincidental pursuits, rather than falling into packs according to grade. "These kids just aren't likely to be part of a huge gang in the lunchroom," Berger says. "The very best their parents can do is to try and help the child find one good friend."

5. Don't sacrifice educational advancement to give your child a "normal" upbringing.

Holding children back from upper-level grades and early college not only won't help them socially, it will also frustrate them -- and their teachers. "These kids will exhaust the resources of any normal classroom," Berger says. "Six-, seven- and eight-year-olds who are interested in aerospace technology shouldn't be stuck in homeroom."

Karl's far-flung pursuits could exhaust just about anyone. Having dabbled at the piano since he was 3, he recently requested a violin, and his parents have managed to borrow one. The family's apartment is cluttered with Karl's drawings of the Titanic reimagined as a medieval galleon, with his floor sculpture of Moscow's St. Basil's Cathedral reconfigured as an ancient Irish church and with the whirling presence of Karl himself.

Spinning to present his well-illustrated, self-assigned report on the Statue of Liberty, he announces: "The architect was Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi; Auguste -- I mean -- did you hear that? A-goose. I said goose!" He bursts into giggles, and for the moment, at least, Karl Jr. is completely happy and 6 years old.

NYTimes.com; April 8, 2001

Nicholas Weinstock is the author of the novel "As Long as She Needs Me."

Hey Mom and Dad-- Pencil Some Silliness into Your Schedule!

We all enjoy having fun with our children. So why when we finally get home at the end of a grueling day, do we suddenly transform into the stern and dour ‘eat your vegetables’ and ‘get ready for bath time’ toddler police? Sure, it’s easy to get bogged down in the stress of adulthood; but is it wholly unrealistic to pencil in a little time for silliness with our children every day?

The answer is a resounding “no” and here’s why: even when you feel as though your brain is reduced to little more than a quivering, overworked blob of mush, you can still spark your silly cells. All you need is a little encouragement...and the crew from Flippy and Friends might be just the right helpers. This new children’s book series places giggles galore at your fingertips. Flippy and Friends provide the story, the vivid pictures, and the sing-song rhymes that toddlers love so much. You? Well, you provide the voice. The rest of the silliness just kind of unfolds with the story.

Brooke Shields, award winning actress & mother agrees. She said, "Flippy books are the only books my oldest daughter makes me put on her bedside table when she goes to sleep. She just loves her Flippy books...and I had to get two copies because the girls don't want to share them! Now I read my book...and Flippy to my youngest daughter every night...and keep copies on my bedside table in case they come into our bed!"

“Flippy is an amazing tadpole who can literally become anything he wants to be...And that’s the message of our books,” says Dawn Kelsey, Communication Studies Instructor at California State University and co-author of the new book Flippy Goes on a Road Trippy. “When my husband and I wrote the first Flippy book, we were just being silly—and having so much fun!

Kelsey’s husband, professional actor John Mese, explains that Flippy was actually created during a cross-country road trip. “And it was on that same road trip home that I introduced Dawn to our partner and illustrator Chanler Holden who has added even more levels of laughter and silliness to the books,” said, Mese.

Mese points to his teaching improvisation classes in college while earning his masters degree, as a valuable lesson for not being too serious. “I would recommend taking an improvisation class to every adult,” says Mese. “It teaches adults to loosen up, and to play. Kids aren’t afraid to be silly, but grown-ups; sometimes we need a little help.”

Illustrator Holden, mother of three, goes on to add, “Getting silly with your kids shouldn’t be hard work. What I like most about the books is they bring you back to your own child-like sense of playfulness.”

That sense of fun and playfulness is the driving factor behind all of the adventures in Flippy Goes on a Road Trippy, (*Moss Covered Gumbo Barn*, www.flippyandfriends.com).

The title is your first hint that the book is full of rhyming text that’s irresistible to toddlers. The pictures are vibrant and children will surely spot some wonderful new detail with each subsequent reading. Best of all, in just a matter of minutes, the stress of your day will melt away as you and your child giggle and laugh your way through Flippy’s happy-go-lucky adventure. And after all...isn’t laughing with your child pretty much the best part...of any day?

About Dawn Kelsey - Dawn Kelsey earned her BA and MA in Communication Studies at California State University, Long Beach where she currently teaches courses in communication studies, including storytelling. Kelsey and her husband, actor John Mese, are co-authors of the Flippy and Friends series of children’s books.

Summer Amnesia: Avoid The Brain Drain (continued)

Show Them How

Avoiding a pronounced summer slide isn't hard, but it does require focus. The key is to keep your child's brain switched on without making him feel like he's still in school.

Step one is to display your own love of knowledge. Whether we adults realize it or not, kids both younger and older model their parents' behavior. So make sure your kids see you learning. Talk about current events with them. Share stories from a book you're reading. If you have a hobby, let them join in. Challenge your children to think and examine, just as you do.

Do It Daily

Given the opportunity, kids love to learn. It's school that they think is a drag. So find ways to teach them, without their knowing it, in your everyday life. Ask your child to add up how much you'll save with coupons during a trip to the grocery

store. Have him measure ingredients for a recipe. Or ask him to read the newspaper to you while you cook or clean. Track the temperature every day. Look up weather reports for distant cities where you have relatives. Find different types of trees when you go to the park. Be creative, and keep an eye out for the chance to stimulate young minds.

Visit the Library

Your local library is sure to have a summer reading program. The librarian can offer many other book suggestions that match your child's reading ability and interests. It's important that children continue to read during the summer even if they prefer newspapers or magazines over books. And reading aloud to your child is beneficial right into the teen years.

Seek Out Learning



Summer is an ideal time to strengthen skill sets and seek out new things

Summer has a lot more to offer than extended hours playing computer games or watching TV. Take a trip to a museum, historical site, aquarium, zoo, or public garden. Lots of camps offer education-related opportunities that go beyond standard classroom learning. Some colleges, school districts, and non-profit organizations do the same. Ask for suggestions at your child's school or the district office.

With a little effort, you can make your child's summer stimulating as well as fun. You'll keep him on the learning curve and ready to move ahead once school starts again.

Craig Bystrynski is Editor-in-Chief for PTO Today, an organization serving parent-teacher groups in schools across America. Contact him at: craigb@ptotoday.com.

Stress - Supporting Gifted Children!

Stress is a part of everyday life and all children need to deal with and manage their stresses. Children must learn to master challenges, meet goals and deadlines, and behave responsibly- and all of this learning is accompanied by a fair amount of stress.

Certain types of stress however

can help children grow, find their life's purpose and excel. Some stresses that are a little subtle to detect may be:

- Expectations that are too high.
- Overly intense parents.
- A concern for the world
- Disconnected parents.
- Too many activities.

- Lack of fit!
- Boredom.
- Needless rigidity at home or in the classroom.
- Loneliness

In the next newsletter, we'll explore these issues further and examine what parents can do to assist children in managing

Mocha-charm.com is an online community dedicated to all things related to **accelerated learning**. Its mission is to assist parents in working with their children to discover academic gifts and talents that may be obscured due to lack of awareness.

Spearheaded by the parent of an 11 year-old college student, **Mocha Charm.com** emanated from parents who met regularly at a local Starbucks to discuss their children 's educational needs over a comforting cup of mocha. The spirit of success behind those meetings evolved into an online support community for parents who are open to acceleration be it low intensity or radical! Parents exchange resources and procure the needed academic resources for their children to assist in exceptional academic performance.

Whether your children attends a traditional school or homeschool, your family can fully benefit from the accelerated methods offered.

The **Art of Acceleration** Project Presents the following resources:

- Acceleration E-Book series
- Acceleration Meetings
- Acceleration Tele-classes
- Webinars
- Phone Conferences for Parents
- Free Newsletter
- Free Weekly EZines
- Free Weekly E-mail distribution of interactive web sites
- Leads to other valuable educational resources
- Articles
- Internet Radio Show (2009/2010 School Year)
- Video series (Fall 2009)
- Audio books (Fall 2009)

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