

Parenting Gifted Kids:
Tips for Raising Happy and Successful Children

Presented by
Dr. James R. Delisle

Is It a Cheetah?

By *Stephanie S. Tolan*

The child, who does well in school, gets good grades, wins awards, and “performs” beyond the norms for his or her age, is considered talented. The child who does not, no matter what his innate intellectual capacities or developmental level, is less and less likely to be identified, less and less likely to be served.

A cheetah metaphor can help us see the problem with achievement-oriented thinking. The cheetah is the fastest animal on earth. When we think of cheetahs we are likely to think first of their speed. It’s flashy. It is impressive. It’s unique. And it makes identification incredibly easy. Since cheetahs are the only animals that can run 70 mph, if you clock an animal running 70 mph, IT’S A CHEETAH!

Certain conditions are necessary if it is to attain its famous 70 mph top speed...it must be healthy, fit, and rested. It must have plenty of room to run. Besides that, it is best motivated to run all out when it is hungry and there are antelope to chase.

If a cheetah is confined to a 10x12 foot cage, though it may pace or fling itself against the bars in restless frustration, it won’t run 70 mph. IS IT STILL A CHEETAH?

If a cheetah has only 20 mph rabbits to chase for food, it won’t run 70 mph while hunting. If it did, it would flash past its prey and go hungry! Though it might well run on its own for exercise, recreation, fulfillment of its internal drive, when given only rabbits to eat, the hunting cheetah will run only fast enough to catch a rabbit. IS IT STILL A CHEETAH?

If a cheetah is fed Zoo Chow it may not run at all. IS IT STILL A CHEETAH?

If a cheetah is sick or if its legs have been broken, it won’t even walk. IS IT STILL A CHEETAH?

And finally, if the cheetah is only six weeks old, it can’t yet run 70 mph. IS IT, THEN, ONLY A “POTENTIAL” CHEETAH?

A school system that defines giftedness (or talent) as behavior, achievement, and performance is as compromised in its ability to recognize its highly gifted students and to give them what they need as a zoo would be to recognize and provide for its cheetahs if it looked only for speed.

From “Is it a Cheetah?” © 1996 Stephanie S. Tolan. Used with permission. The complete essay is available on the web at www.stephanietolan.com.

Giftedness is a greater awareness, a greater sensitivity, and a greater ability to understand and transform perceptions into intellectual and emotional experiences.

- Annemarie Roeper

Parenting Gifted Kids:
Tips for Raising Happy and Successful Children

Prufrock Press

James R. Delisle, Ph.D.

- 1. Understand what giftedness is...and what it is not**
- 2. Know the distinction between “better at” and “better than”**
- 3. Stop paying interest on a bill you never owed**
- 4. Take charge of your child’s education**
- 5. Appreciate that less than perfect is more than acceptable**
- 6. Live the nuanced life**
- 7. Use the past to understand the present**
- 8. Write your dreams in pencil**
- 9. Make a life, not just a living**
- 10. Understand that life is not a race to see who gets to the end the fastest**

INTENSITY

A salient descriptor that characterizes the personality of a gifted child is intensity. Intensity takes many forms that can be both strengths and weaknesses. Recognizing and understanding these intensities can help toward improving the social and emotional life of a child.

- INTENSITY OF THOUGHT
“Her mind is always whirring.”
- INTENSITY OF PURPOSE
“Once he makes up his mind to do something, he’s not satisfied until it’s accomplished.”
- INTENSITY OF EMOTION
“She internalizes anything anyone says about her.”
- INTENSITY OF SPIRIT
“He’s always looking for someone less fortunate who needs help.”
- INTENSITY OF SOUL
“She asks questions that philosophers have asked for centuries and gets upset when we can’t give her definitive answers to them.”

From J.R. Delisle, Once Upon a Mind: The stories and scholars of gifted child education, 2000.
Illustrations on subsequent pages are used with permission of Dr. James Delisle.



In 1999 former educational software entrepreneurs, Jan and Bob Davidson, founded the Davidson Institute for Talent Development, a nonprofit operating foundation, out of a concern that our nation's most gifted and talented young people are largely neglected and underserved.

The mission of the Davidson Institute is to recognize, nurture and support profoundly intelligent young people and to provide opportunities for them to develop their talents to make a positive difference.

What We Do

The Davidson Institute strives to offer much-needed support to this population through services such as individualized support programs, assessment assistance, educational advocates, early college assistance, and online support communities. The Davidson Institute offers the following programs and services that support profoundly intelligent young people, their families and the educators that serve them:

- ***The Davidson Academy of Nevada*** - www.DavidsonAcademy.UNR.edu
Located on the University of Nevada, Reno campus, The Davidson Academy opened in August 2006 and is the first free public day school of its kind offering middle and high school students an individualized education that allows them to soar academically.
- ***Davidson Young Scholars*** - www.DavidsonGifted.org/YoungScholars
A FREE program offering support services for profoundly gifted students between the ages of 5 and 18 in the areas of educational advocacy, talent and interest development, child and adolescent development, and peer connections.
- ***Davidson Fellows*** - www.DavidsonGifted.org/Fellows
\$50,000, \$25,000 and \$10,000 scholarships are awarded annually to recognize outstanding students under the age of 18 who have completed significant work in science, mathematics, technology, literature, music, philosophy or outside the box. Davidson Fellows are honored for their achievement at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C.
- ***THINK Summer Institute*** - www.DavidsonGifted.org/THINK
A three-week residential summer academic experience where 13- to 16-year-olds can earn six transferable college credits at the University of Nevada, Reno.
- ***Educators Guild*** - www.DavidsonGifted.org/EdGuild
A free national service for elementary, middle and high school teachers, counselors, administrators, GT coordinators, and other education professionals who want to learn more about the unique academic needs of gifted students.
- ***Davidson Gifted Database*** - www.DavidsonGifted.org/DB/
Your gateway to gifted resources - a special section of the Davidson Institute's web site that includes a searchable database of more than 450 articles and 4,000 resources for and about gifted and talented students. Also available are an events calendar, an archived summary of news articles and a database of state and federal gifted education policies.
- ***Genius Denied: How to Stop Wasting Our Brightest Young Minds*** - www.GeniusDenied.com
A nationally renowned book, *Genius Denied* is hailed as a "manifesto for change," co-authored by Bob and Jan Davidson, with Laura Vanderkam, and published by Simon and Schuster.

More information can be found at www.DavidsonGifted.org.

17 Ways to Show You Care

- Excerpted from the Research Institute of Minneapolis

1. Hide surprises for them to find. Contribute to their collections.
2. **Clip magazine pictures and articles that interest them.**
3. Help them to become an expert at something.
4. Tell them about yourself. **Admit when you make a mistake.**
5. Tell them stories in which they are the hero.
6. Notice when they grow.
7. Help them learn something new.
8. **Be silly together.**
9. Share a secret.
10. Help them take a stand, and stand with them.
11. **Look in their eyes when you talk with them.**
12. **Tell them their feelings are ok.**
13. *Forget your worries sometimes and concentrate only on them.*
14. **Notice when they are acting different.**
15. **SEND THEM A LETTER OR POSTCARD.**
16. Give them a special nickname.
17. *Create a tradition with them, and keep it.*



How to Grow Up Creatively Gifted

1. Don't be afraid to "fall in love" with something and pursue it with intensity. (You will do best what you like to do most.)
2. Know, understand, take pride in, practice, develop, use, exploit, and enjoy your greatest strengths.
3. Learn to free yourself from the expectations of others and to walk away from the games they try to impose on you.
4. Free yourself to "play your own game" in such a way as to make good use of your gifts.
5. Find a great teacher or mentor who will help you.
6. Don't waste a lot of expensive, unproductive energy trying to be well rounded. (Don't try to do everything; do what you can do well and what you love.)
7. Learn the skills of interdependence. (Learn to depend upon one another, giving freely of your greatest strengths and most intense loves.)

(Torrance, Murdock and Fletcher, 1996, *Preface*)

86 words of encouragement for children.

If there is any single bit of advice to give parents to improve child behavior, it is positive reinforcement. In order to never run short of appropriate words for this purpose, use this list.

1. You're on the right track now!
2. You're doing a good job!
3. You did a lot of work today!
4. Now you've figured it out.
5. That's RIGHT!!!
6. Now you have the hang of it!
7. That's the way!
8. You're doing fine.
9. Now you have it!
10. That's coming along nicely.
11. That's great!
12. You did it that time!
13. GREAT!
14. FANTASTIC!
15. TERRIFIC!
16. TREMENDOUS!
17. How did you do that?
18. That's better.
19. EXCELLENT!
20. That's a good (boy-girl).
21. That's the best you've ever done.
22. Keep it up!
23. That's really nice.
24. WOW!
25. Keep up the good work.
26. Much better!
27. Good for you!
28. Good thinking!
29. Exactly right!
30. SUPER!
31. Nice going.
32. You make it look easy.
33. Way to go!
34. You're doing much better today.
35. I've never seen anyone do it better.
36. Superb!
37. You're getting better every day.
38. WONDERFUL!
39. I knew you could do it.
40. Keep working on it, you're getting better.
41. You're doing beautifully.
42. You're really working hard today.
43. That's the way to do it!
44. Keep on trying!
45. You're the best!
46. Nothing can stop you now!
47. You've got it made.
48. You're very good at that.
49. You certainly did well today.
50. I'm very proud of you.
51. You're learning fast.
52. You've just about got it.
53. That's good!
54. I'm happy to see you working like that.
55. I'm proud of the way you worked today.
56. That's the right way to do it.
57. You're really learning a lot.
58. That's better than ever.
59. That's quite an improvement.
60. That kind of work makes me very happy.
61. Now you've figured it out!
62. PERFECT!
63. FINE!
64. That's IT!
65. You figured it out fast.
66. You remembered!
67. You're really improving.
68. I think you've got it now.
69. Well look at you go!
70. You've got that down pat.
71. Good work!
72. Outstanding!
73. I like that.
74. Couldn't have done it better myself.
75. Now that's what I call a fine job.
76. You did that very well.
77. Congratulations!
78. That was first class work.
79. SENSATIONAL!
80. That's the best ever.
81. You haven't missed a thing.
82. It's a pleasure to teach you when you work like that.
83. You really make my job fun.
84. You've just about mastered that!
85. One more time and you'll have it.
86. You must have been practicing.



Eight Great Gripes of Gifted Kids

When Gifted Kids Don't Have All the Answers

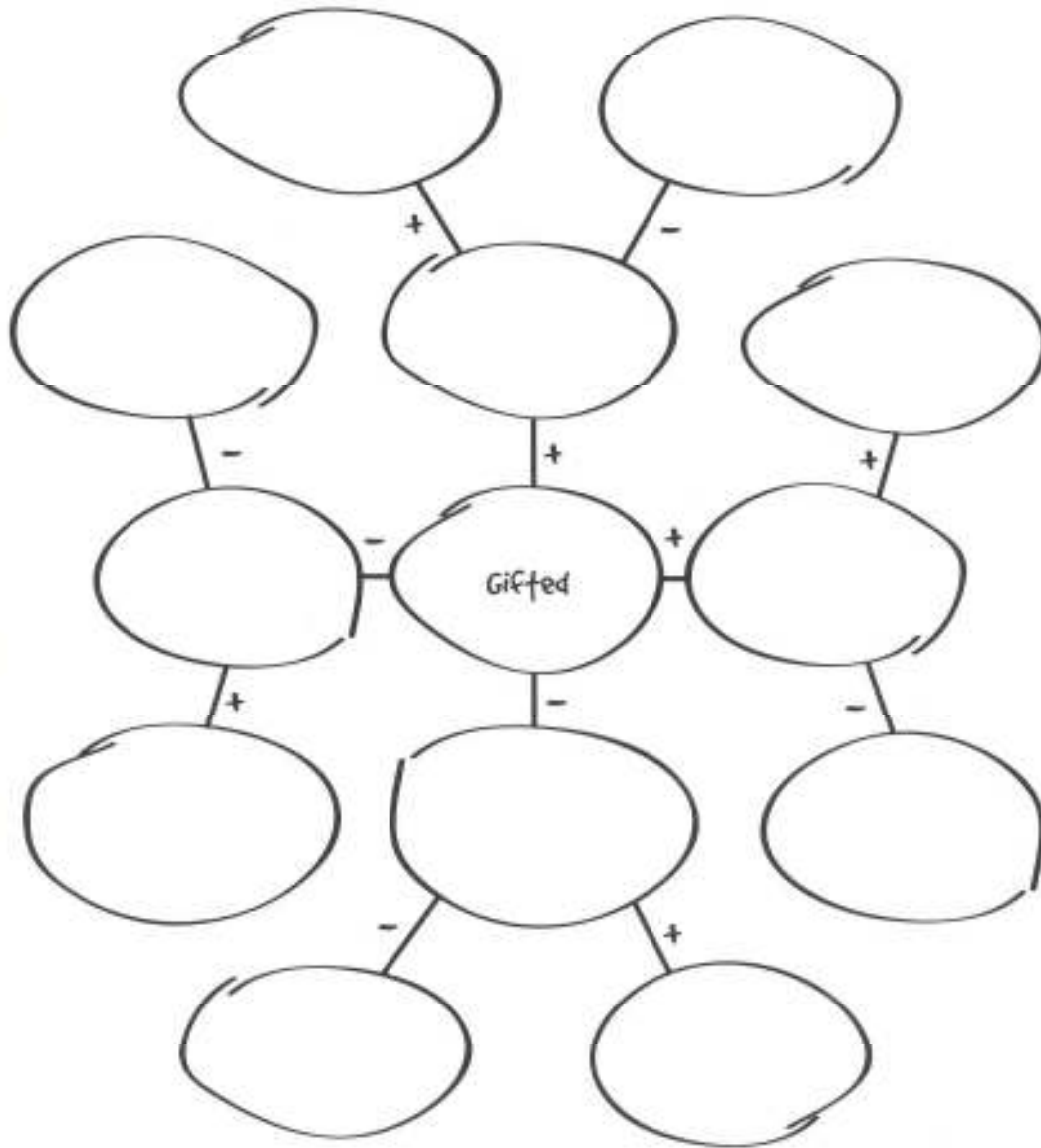
Pages 155 & 156

1. No one explains what being gifted is all about – it's kept a big secret.
2. School is too easy and too boring.
3. Parents, teachers and/or friends expect us to be perfect all the time.
4. Friends who really understand us are few and far between.
5. Kids often tease us about being smart.
6. We feel overwhelmed by the number of things we can do in life.
7. We feel different and alienated.
8. We worry about world problems and feel helpless to do anything about them.

Do you have other gripes that aren't on this list?

Everything Has Its Ups and Downs!

Name(s): _____



From *When Gifted Kids Don't Have All the Answers: How to Meet Their Social and Emotional Needs* by Jim Delisle, Ph.D., and Judy Galbraith, M.A., copyright © 2002. Free Spirit Publishing Inc., Minneapolis, MN; 800-735-7323; www.freespirit.com. This page may be reproduced for individual, classroom, or small group work only. For other uses, contact www.freespirit.com/company/permissions.cfm.