

Signs of Giftedness in Early Childhood- How to Cater for Gifted Children in ECC

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Identifying The Gifted

Einstein was four years old before he could speak and seven before he could read.

Isaac Newton did poorly in grade school.

When Thomas Edison was a boy, his teachers told him he was too stupid to learn anything.

F.W.Woolworth got a job in a dry goods store when he was 21. But his employers would not let him wait on a customer because he "Didn't have enough sense."

A newspaper editor fired Walt Disney because he had "No good ideas"

Caruso's music teacher told him "You can't sing, you have no voice at all."

Leo Tolstoy flunked out of college.

Verner Von Braun flunked 9th grade algebra.

Admiral Richard E. Byrd had been retired from the navy, as, "Unfit for service" Until he flew over both poles.

Louis Pasteur was rated as mediocre in chemistry when he attended the Royal College

Abraham Lincoln entered The Black Hawk War as a captain and came out a private

Fred Waring was once rejected from high school chorus.

Winston Churchill failed the sixth grade.

Characteristics of Young Gifted Children

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Needs very little sleep

Began to talk very early or was very late in talking but then learned fast

Has a large vocabulary; uses unusual or "big" words

Talks very fluently, uses language easily and correctly

Generally reached physical milestones earlier than most

Demands attention constantly, is persistent

intensely curious is always asking "Why?"; really wants to know the answer

Is very observant of detail

Has an excellent memory

Is very independent; insists on doing things for him/herself

Loves being read to; follows story closely

Is beginning to read/is reading/has asked to be taught to read

Is quickly bored with simple or repetitive games and toys

Shows impatience with tasks that seem meaningless

Can concentrate for long periods when interested

Creates make-believe playmates, invents games, makes up lots of stories (often complicated)

Can not only count but also is beginning to grasp maths concepts

Arranges toys and other items, putting the same kinds of things together

Has a highly developed, quite sophisticated sense of humour

Learns easily – only needs to be told things once or twice

Is very sensitive, distressed by hurts experienced by other people or creatures

Is generally the leader in any group of children

Seems to prefer the company of older children or adults

Doesn't seem to fit in with other children

Can be impatient with others who don't think as fast or do things as well as she/he does

Often seems frustrated when ideas outreach ability to perform

A gifted child often

achieves milestones much earlier

has a heightened sensitivity

has a good sense of humor

has a high degree of creativity

- has a high degree of energy
- has a long attention span
- has a preference for older friends or adults
- has a sense of justice and moral sensitivity
- has a variety of interests
- has a vivid imagination
- has above average ability with numbers
- has above average language development
- has an advanced vocabulary
- has an excellent memory
- has apparent maturity in judgment
- has keen powers of observation
- has good problem solving and reasoning abilities
- has leadership qualities
- has non-conformist behaviour
- has unusual curiosity
- has unusual emotional depth and intensity
- is a rapid learner
- is able to master more complex jigsaw puzzles
- is an early and avid reader
- is persistent
- is very alert
- is very curious
- is very observant
- shows perfectionism traits

Extending and Enriching the Whole Child

The term 'holistic learning' signifies an approach to learning which is predominantly 'whole person', i.e. it seeks to engage fully all aspects of the learner - mind, body and spirit. The underlying holistic principle is that a complex organism functions most effectively when all its component parts are themselves

functioning and co-operating effectively. And this idea relates very closely to the concept of synergy, with the whole being greater than the sum of its parts.

We are looking "... not to turn a cabbage into a rose or a rose into a cabbage, but to weed and mulch so the cabbage is the healthiest and best you've ever seen and the rose is the most beautiful and the best you've ever seen."

Are the "shoes"

just right	learning experiences and activities pitched exactly right - obviously the best option
too big	if some of the concepts are beyond the child at this time - no major harm is done.
	learning is a spring shape - you revist and then extend
too small	(PAINFUL!) frustration, boredom, "playing up" or turning off or turning inward. To be avoided

Foster the CHILD's interests

Involve them in PARENTAL interests

Find a MENTOR

It is estimated that by the time they are six years of age, English-speaking children will know approximately 10,000 words (Sénéchal, 1995). The preschool years are a time of rapid growth and brain development.

Having strong vocabulary knowledge is an essential component to effective communication, and plays a critical role in reading comprehension.

Gifted children need lots of opportunities to predict and estimate and "guess". They need to be encouraged to approach situations where they don't know the answer beforehand.

- What will happen next?
- What do you think?
- What would happen if?
- Should we add more?
- Why?
- Why IS it an insect?
- Are there more red ones or green ones?
- Do you want to wear the red one or the green one?
- Shall we have tomato or egg sandwiches?
- Should we go to the park or the beach?
- Will it float or sink?
- Which car will go the furthest?
- What colour car will be the first we see?
- What happened when?
- Shall we try it together?

When looking at what is best for an individual child we need to ask a few questions.

What are the child's interests (and passions)? How can these be fostered?
(What difference do your hobbies make in your life? Are they the same "now" as "then"?)

Who are the child's closest friends? (or if no "special" or "close" friends - who is the child most comfortable with?)

We all, as adults have close friends, friends, acquaintances, and those we either never associate with (either by actively avoiding - or by never being in the same circle).

Why should a child be expected to be friends with, be constantly around - children they have absolutely NOTHING in common with - just because they happened to be born about the same time?

Are there any "quirks" (or quirky behaviour) that are going to impede this child "fitting in" comfortably? (We all have quirks - some are less attractive to other people.)

Is there anything I can do to **enable** this child. (eg. Teaching manners, taking turns, sharing, about "personal space" etc.) People are more inclined to go out of their way to help someone they like. People are far less inclined to help someone (child or adult) they "just don't like".

Once you have worked out the "plan of action" perhaps joining the "Friends of the Zoo", joining NZAGC, applying for a place in the "One Day School" programme, asking the school to consider moving the child from class A to class B (or moving the child from School A to School B - or home schooling), switching from guitar lessons to drum lessons, taking "a term off", inviting a particular family for "play dates" more (or less) regularly - then relax. You've thought it through, made a decision - be comfortable with it - and see what happens.

You will still need to monitor the situation - but I know from experience that even when the plan "turns to custard" - you will still have gained brownie points, from the child, for "trying" and for "listening".

Information that may interest teachers and parents of gifted children

<http://www.preschooleducation.com>

Every child is born with creative potential, but this potential may be stifled if care is not taken to nurture and stimulate creativity. Creativity shows one's uniqueness. It is the individual saying: "I can be; I can do." Isn't this what we want for our children? Creativity is the ability to see things in a new and unusual light, to see problems that no one else may even realize exist, and then come up with new, unusual, and effective solutions to these problems.

WAYS TO STRENGTHEN A CHILD'S CREATIVITY

Relax the controls. Adults who constantly exert supervision and control diminish the spontaneity and self-confidence that are essential to the creative spirit.

Inspire perseverance. All the creative energy in the world is useless if the product is not seen through to completion. Show appreciation for a child's efforts. Suppress the impulse to accomplish tasks for children.

Tolerate the "offbeat." Let children know that it is not always critical to have the "correct" answer to the problem - that novel, innovative, and unique approaches are valued as well.

Provide a creative atmosphere. Creative materials should be available to the young child for his use. Some of the basic equipment includes books, records, drawing materials, objects to make sounds with, clay, and blocks. Toys for imagining: Supply preschoolers with unstructured toys and materials. Provide the child with toys that can become a variety of things. Be careful about discouraging daydreaming. Daydreaming is really an imagery process. Some of what goes on in the name of daydreaming is really problem solving.

Planning and problem-solving. Encourage creative problem solving in a variety of ways. Teach a youngster to look at alternatives, evaluate them, and then decide how to carry them out successfully.

Offer - but do not pressure. Resist the temptation to overcrowd children with organized activities in an attempt to cultivate their creativity. Allow the child time to be alone to develop the creativity that is innate in all of us.

CREATIVE GAMES

OBJECT CREATION

Have the children create a "machine" piece by piece. Some players become parts that move and make noise, while other players operate the machine. Others can then guess what it is. Try making a lawnmower with people as wheels, body, and handle, and have another player push it. Everyone can join in the sound effects as it tackles the lawn. More good objects to role play: eggbeater, record player, garbage disposal, toaster, pencil sharpener, and water fountain.

CONTINUING STORY

Someone starts a story and each person adds a part.

CREATIVE DRAMATIC PLAY

One of the best ways children have to express themselves is through creative dramatic play. Here they feel free to express their inner feelings. It occurs daily in the lives of young children, as they constantly imitate the people, animals, and machines in their world. It helps them understand and deal with the world. Stimulate this spontaneous kind of drama by providing simple props and encouragement.

Animal Cracker Game - Child chooses one cracker; looks at it; then eats it.

Then the child becomes that animal for 1-2 minutes.

Read a story and then act it out.

Puppets

CREATIVE MOVEMENT

A child can develop and express his or her personality in his own way - pretending to be animals, snowflakes, fairies, giants, snails, mice, etc.

Role playing family happenings, everyday activities such as a visit to the doctor, store or bank, day care situations, etc., stimulates creative thinking and is a good way to help children see the viewpoints of others, help them explore their own feelings, and handle their emotions.

The following are some creative play activities that require the use of large muscles and help in the development of those muscles:

Follow the Leader - The leader child moves freely about. He or she may imitate animals, hop, skip, or whatever. The others must follow the leader and act as the leader does.

Guess What I Am? - Without saying a word, a child tries to act out the movements of some object. Suggestions include an airplane making a landing, a rooster strutting around the barnyard, a cement truck dumping its load, a clock telling the time of day. The child may think up things to do, or the teacher may whisper suggestions.

Building with Sand, Mud and Clay - Children use large muscles to build sand mounds with moats around them. Sand pies and sand forts can be built in a sandbox, on a sand table, or at the beach. Children use mud to make large structures. Clay is also used to create structures and shapes.

CREATIVE QUESTIONING

Ask open-ended questions: Show the child a picture, then ask questions to stimulate and create a thinking atmosphere, for example: What are the people in the picture doing? What are the people saying? What would happen if ...?

Ask children to use their senses: Young children may often have their creative talents stretched by asking them to use their senses in an unusual way.

* Have children close their eyes and then guess what you have placed in their hands - a piece of foam rubber, a small rock, etc.

- * Have children close their eyes and guess at what they hear - use such sounds as shuffling cards, jingling coins, rubbing sandpaper, ripping paper, etc.

Ask children about changes: One way to help children to think more creatively is to ask them to change things to make them the way they would like them to be, for example:

- * What would taste better if it were sweeter?
- * What would be nicer if it were smaller?
- * What would be more fun if it were faster?
- * What would be better if it were quieter?
- * What would be happier if it were bigger?
- * What could be more exciting if it went backwards?

Ask questions with lots of answers. Any time you ask a child a question which requires a variety of answers, you are aiding creative thinking skills. Here are some examples using the concept of water:

- * What are some of the uses of water?
- * What floats in water?
- * How does water help us?
- * Why is cold water cold?
- * What always stays underwater?
- * What are the different colors that water can be?

Other concepts: fire, sand, cars, smoke, ice

Ask "What would happen if..." questions. These questions are fun to ask and allow the children to really use their imaginations. Here are some:

- * What would happen if all the trees in the world were blue?
- * What would happen if all the cars were gone?
- * What would happen if everybody wore the same clothes?
- * What would happen if you could fly?
- * What would happen if no one cleaned the house?

Ask "In how many different ways..." questions. These questions also extend a child's creative thinking.

- * In how many different ways could a spoon be used?
- * In how many different ways could a button be used?
- * In how many different ways could a string be used?

Ask open-ended questions including during daily routines

Listen for and observe their interests.

Create a setting that sparks their curiosity.

Open-ended questions don't have specific answers; they don't have a right or a wrong, and that is their purpose. Open-ended questions are used to spark the child's imagination.

For example "Tell me about your picture?" That way, children will have to use their own words and ideas to describe what they are doing or what they are seeing.

Open-ended questions get children busy with ideas and language.

It's extremely important to listen to children and observe their activities so that you can learn from their interests.

Under five is a great time for a child-initiated curriculum, giving children many choices. Anything that is hands-on, like blocks or things they can actually use with their hands, keeps them engaged. Have writing materials out which include pencils, pens, markers and lots of paper – things they can take and use on

their own. Make sure you have areas that will allow children to explore all the materials they have within their reach.

If we know the children enjoy doing certain things, we can try to incorporate them into their activities.

Because children can get bored with the same task or activity, try to present them with a book or toy that may not be new, but that has been in "hiding".

Ask a lot of open-ended questions and try to make learning fun. Books are a great resource because they are structured around open-ended questions, like, "What's the weather like outside? What did you do today?"

Children are always creative when they are telling a story.

At the end of the day, encourage your children to tell you what they did. Review their "learning" with them.