

Parenting Gifted Kids:
Tips for Raising Happy and Successful Children

Presented by
Dr. James R. Delisle

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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.

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

-Annemarie Roeper

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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 everything 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.”



*Supporting Our
Nation's Brightest
Young People*

Our Mission

The mission of the Davidson Institute for Talent Development 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.

How We Began

Founded in 1999, The Davidson Institute, a nonprofit operating foundation, was formed out of a concern that our nation's most gifted and talented young people were largely neglected and underserved. While studies indicate that thousands of children make up the profoundly gifted population, few resources exist to support these children and their families' unique needs. Profoundly gifted young people learn at an extremely rapid rate, are seldom provided an education that is appropriate to their abilities and progress through other developmental milestones differently than their peers. As a result, they face special challenges at school, at home, and in the community.

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.

Programs and Services

The [Davidson Young Scholars](#) is an individualized, family-oriented program that supports the educational and developmental needs of profoundly intelligent young people between the ages of 5 and 18. This program assists parents and students with academic support and educational advocacy, child and adolescent development, and talent development.

- [Davidson Fellows](#) scholarships recognize young people under the age of 18 for completing a significant piece of work that has the potential to make a positive contribution to society in one of the following areas: science, technology, mathematics, music, literature, philosophy, or any other graduate-level work considered outside the box. Davidson Fellow Laureates are awarded \$50,000 scholarships, and Davidson Fellows are awarded either a \$25,000 or \$10,000 scholarship. Since 2001, the Institute has awarded \$3.1 million in scholarships to 127 students.
- The [THINK Summer Institute](#) is a three-week residential summer program on the campus of the University of Nevada, Reno for 13- to 16-year-old students. These students are enrolled in university-level courses taught by University of Nevada professors and earn up to six transferable college credits.
- The [Educators Guild](#) is comprised of teachers, counselors and school administrators who are interested in connecting with colleagues to locate resources and discuss strategies for identifying and serving highly intelligent students. Members of the Educators Guild have access to electronic mailing lists and discussion forums and to the

Davidson Institute's team of professionals who are available for consulting and locating other resources.

- The [Davidson Gifted Database](#) is the gateway to gifted resources on the Internet. It offers everything parents need to know about each state's gifted policies, the latest news and research in gifted education and an events calendar of conferences throughout the nation – all available free to anyone with access to the Internet.
- [The Davidson Academy](#) is dedicated to serving profoundly gifted middle and high school level students with a personalized education plan. The Academy is a free public school licensed by the state of Nevada and is located on the University of Nevada, Reno campus. Qualified students will accelerate through required middle and high school curriculum at their own pace and then be absorbed into university courses as they satisfy the prerequisites. The Academy opened in August 2006. (www.DavidsonAcademy.UNR.edu)
- In 2004, Simon & Schuster published [Genius Denied: How to Stop Wasting our Bright Young Minds](#) co-authored by Jan and Bob Davidson, with Laura Vanderkam. This award-winning book has generated conversations throughout the nation about the importance of educating our nation's brightest students.
- **Service for Talent Development**
Services to support the talent development of profoundly gifted young people include: Assessment Assistance, Educational Advocates, Early College Assistance, and PG-Online Community for parents to connect with parents, and students to connect with each other and adult role models.
- **Service for Professionals**
Services for professionals seeking information about the profoundly gifted and their needs include presentations, in-service trainings, expert opinions, and referrals to experts in the field.
- **PG-CyberSource – www.pgcybersource.org**
A web-based searchable database of information and resources for and about profoundly gifted young people with comments and insight from the profoundly gifted kids, their parents, and the professionals who serve them.

9665 Gateway Drive, Suite B, Reno, NV 89521
Email: pgconsultant@ditd.org

Phone: (775) 852-3483 ext. 435
Fax: (775) 852-2184

20 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.
4. Learn to free yourself from the expectations of others and to walk away from
the games they try to impose on you.
5. Free yourself to "play your own game" in such a way as to make good use of
your gifts.
6. Find a great teacher or mentor who will help you.
7. 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.)
8. 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.

