

Smart is Not Easy: What Research Says about Highly Capable Learners

Austina De Bonte

Consultant, Smart is Not Easy LLC
Co-President, WA Coalition for Gifted Education
Past President, NW Gifted Child Association

austina@smartisnoteasy.com

Slides - <http://tinyurl.com/smartisnoteasy2021>

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

1

Agenda

- ▶ Definitions, Laws, Asynchrony
- ▶ Twice Exceptional
- ▶ Executive Function & Neuroscience
- ▶ Emotional Characteristics
- ▶ Social Development
- ▶ Grit, growth mindset & underachievement
- ▶ Equity
- ▶ **BONUS:** Coalition for Gifted Ed legislative update

Put your **QUESTIONS** in the chat

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

2

A Note

- ▶ I hate the word “gifted”
 - ▶ Poorly understood (“Every child is gifted”)
 - ▶ Negative connotations
 - ▶ Many believe it is elitist
- ▶ But, it's the term used by researchers and most professional organizations
- ▶ Synonyms
 - ▶ Smart, very bright, high intelligence, high IQ
 - ▶ NOT (necessarily) high-achieving

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

4



Definitions
Laws
Asynchronous

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

5

WA State Law

- ▶ 2014 - Must have nomination, assessment, selection of the “most highly capable” students in grades K-12, and provide services relevant to their needs

Chapter 28A.185.020 RCW

(1) The legislature finds that, for highly capable students, **access to accelerated learning and enhanced instruction is access to a basic education.**

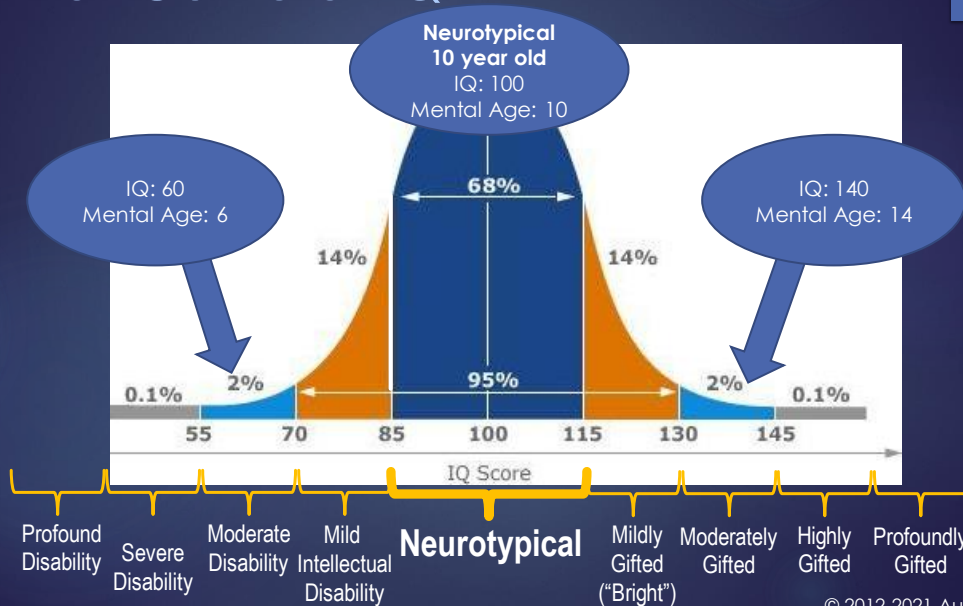
“Accelerated Learning AND Enhanced Instruction”

- ▶ 2016 - new provisions in ESSA for gifted (federal)
- ▶ 2017 – double funding; equity for low income (WA)
- ▶ 2018 – more equitable identification practices (WA)

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

6

The Bell Curve of IQ



© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

8

Asynchronous

- ▶ Different ability/maturity levels in different areas
- ▶ Example: a 5 year old
 - ▶ Doing math like an 8 year old
 - ▶ Reading like a 10 year old
 - ▶ Writing like a 6 year old
 - ▶ Emotional maturity of a 4 year old
 - ▶ Social maturity of an 8 year old
 - ▶ Social skills of a 5 year old
- ▶ Most gifted kids develop asynchronously
- ▶ Don't assume a higher level of maturity...
- ▶ MYTH: "If she can't do XX well, then she's not gifted"

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

9

Equally Likely to Be Gifted

- ▶ Girls vs. boys
 - ▶ But girls are less likely to be referred for testing
- ▶ Poor vs. rich
 - ▶ But the poor rely on public gifted programs more, "the rich have other options" --Dr. Linda Silverman
- ▶ English-speaking vs. non-native speakers
- ▶ Giftedness cuts across all socioeconomic groups, nations, ethnicities, races, cultures...

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

10

IQ runs in families

- ▶ Out of 148 sets of siblings
 - ▶ over 1/3 were within five IQ points of each other
 - ▶ over 3/5 were within 10 points
 - ▶ nearly 3/4 were within 13 points
- ▶ But second-born less likely to be identified
- ▶ Parents and grandparents too... 😊

(Silverman, 2009)

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

11



Twice Exceptional

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

12

Twice-Exceptional - 2e

- ▶ Gifted AND
 - ▶ (Stealth) Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia, Dyspraxia
 - ▶ ADHD, Autism Spectrum (ASD)
 - ▶ Sensory Processing (SPD), Auditory Processing (CAPD), Vision Processing
 - ▶ Anxiety, Depression, Mood Disorders, OCD, ...
- ▶ Surprisingly high incidence
- ▶ Compensation can mask disabilities
- ▶ Many gifted traits mimic ADHD, Autism traits
- ▶ Diagnosis is tricky! Insist on an expert

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

13

Dyslexia ("Stealth" subtype)

- ▶ In the gifted population, dyslexia:
 - ▶ Problems with spelling, punctuation, capitalization
 - ▶ Reading may be at or above grade level
 - ▶ Trouble with phonics, decoding unfamiliar words
 - ▶ Skipping or substituting words when reading
 - ▶ Comprehension with short texts (less redundancy)
- ▶ Early intervention is important – wabida.org
- ▶ May not be diagnosed until middle or high school
- ▶ Free screener – www.thepasttest.com

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

14

Vision Processing Disorders

- ▶ How the brain processes what the eyes see
 - ▶ Convergence insufficiency, teaming, tracking, 3-D
- ▶ Common: 1 in 4 kids
- ▶ May mimic dyslexia, ADHD
- ▶ Inconsistent scores on standardized tests
- ▶ Only diagnosed by a developmental optometrist
 - ▶ COVD.org for listings
- ▶ Vision therapy is available
 - ▶ Research on outcomes is inconsistent, provider quality matters (Look for FCOVD)
- ▶ Vision processing disorder is **NOT** dyslexia
 - ▶ But it can co-occur

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

15

Auditory Processing Disorders

- ▶ How the brain processes what the ears hear
- ▶ May look like ADHD, ODD, PDA, explosive behavior
- ▶ One ear "hears" a split second before the other
 - ▶ Dislike sudden noises, noisy environments, remembering multi-step directions, poor auditory memory, trouble distinguishing foreground/background conversation
 - ▶ Usually very acute hearing overall
- ▶ Only diagnosed by a CAPD specialist
 - ▶ [ABLE Kids Foundation](http://ABLEKidsFoundation.org) (Fort Collins, Colorado)
 - ▶ The only clinic in the world that makes an "ear filter"
 - ▶ One additional test – isolated words in background noise
 - ▶ Drraestout.com – low gain hearing aids (no diagnosis needed)

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

16

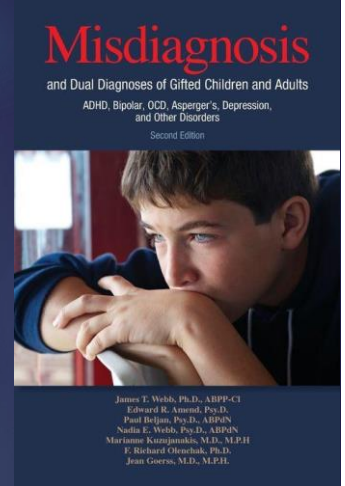
SENG Misdiagnosis Initiative

SENG = Supporting Emotional Needs of Gifted

Flavors of misdiagnosis:

- ▶ MISSED diagnosis
- ▶ WRONG diagnosis
- ▶ 2e kids not recognized as being gifted OR for their disability/challenge

<http://sengifted.org/programs/misdiagnosis-initiative/>



© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

17



Executive Function

AND A LITTLE NEUROSCIENCE

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

21

Executive Function (EF)

- ▶ “If I’m so smart, why can’t I find my keys?” – S. Wollum
 - ▶ Or homework, pencil, lunchbox, jacket...
- ▶ Organization
 - ▶ Organizing things, time, or procedures
 - ▶ Multitasking, keep track of more than one thing at a time
 - ▶ Planning, time management, breaking down projects
 - ▶ Sustaining attention through distraction
- ▶ Regulation
 - ▶ Impulse control, inhibition, self-control
 - ▶ Waiting to speak until it’s your turn
 - ▶ Mental flexibility
 - ▶ Initiating, getting started

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

22

A different developmental timetable

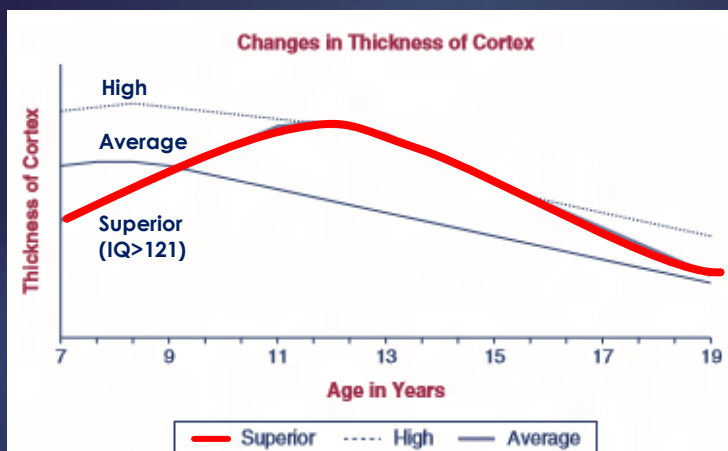


Figure 1.2 Changes in the thickness of the brain’s cortex between the ages of 7 and 19 in individuals of superior, high, and average intelligence.

Source: Adapted from Shaw et al., 2006.

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

23

Empirical evidence agrees...

“Kids who had higher IQs to begin with seemed to have an extended period in adolescence during which they retained the ability to learn at a rapid pace, just like much younger children.”

(Brant, 2013)

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

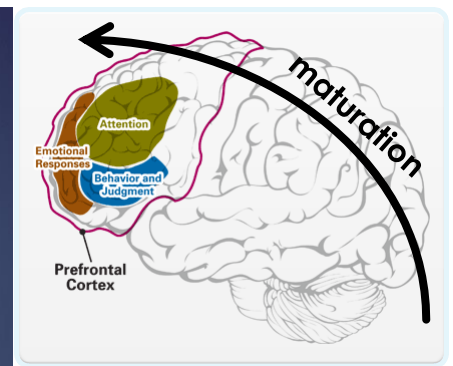
24

Brain Matures Back to Front

“This pruning process **begins in the back of the brain**. The front part of the brain, the **prefrontal cortex, is remodelled last.**”

“The **prefrontal cortex** is the decision-making part of the brain, responsible for your child’s ability to plan and think about the consequences of actions, solve problems and control impulses.”

“The most typical psychological term for functions carried out by the **prefrontal cortex area is executive function.**”



© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

26

A different developmental timetable

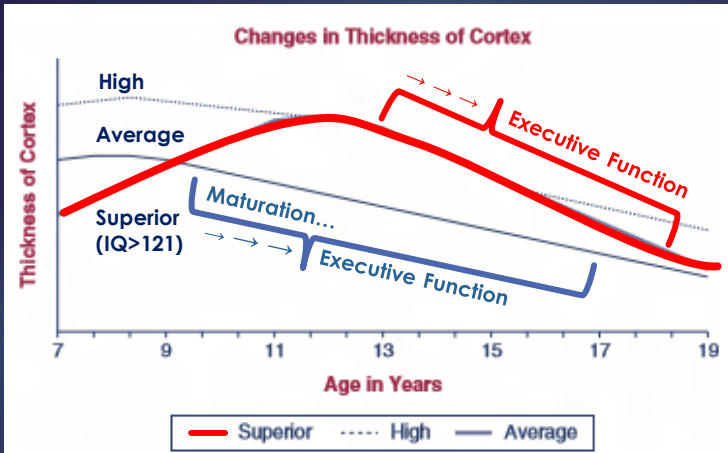


Figure 1.2 Changes in the thickness of the brain's cortex between the ages of 7 and 19 in individuals of superior, high, and average intelligence.

Source: Adapted from Shaw et al., 2006.

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

27

A different developmental timetable

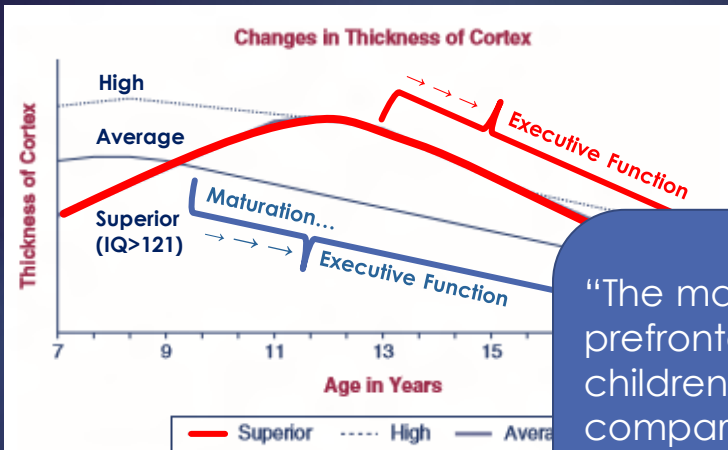


Figure 1.2 Changes in the thickness of the brain's cortex between the ages of 7 and 19 in individuals of superior, high, and average intelligence.

Source: Adapted from Shaw et al., 2006.

“The maturation of the prefrontal cortex of gifted children is often delayed, compared to other children, but then catches up unusually rapidly.”

(Willis, 2009)

28

What to do?

- ▶ Late bloomers may catch up in time
 - ▶ It might take until their 20s...
- ▶ Tough love doesn't work
 - ▶ Are grades measuring subject mastery or EF?
- ▶ Need MORE scaffolding & support for EF
 - ▶ Especially middle school & early high school
 - ▶ Similar to ADHD support

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

29

Neuroscience about High IQ

- ▶ Regional brain volume is bigger in some areas (left hemisphere, bilateral frontal cortex, phonological loop, working memory, sensory, anxiety, amygdala)
 - ▶ And smaller in others (lateral-parietal junction)
- ▶ Denser connectivity between some areas (arcuate fasciculus, corpus callosum - "information highways")
 - ▶ And sparser connectivity in others
- ▶ Development happens on a different timeline
- ▶ **High IQ brains are physically different**

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

31

Neuroscience about High IQ

- ▶ Regional brain volume is bigger in some areas (left hemisphere, bilateral frontal sensory, anxiety)
 - ▶ And smaller in o
- ▶ Denser connect corpus callosum
 - ▶ And sparser cor
- ▶ Development h
- ▶ **High IQ brains a**

(Schnack, 2014)
 (Roman, 2018)
 (Haier, 2017)
 (Nusbaum, 2017)
 (Ganjavi, 2011)
 (Hilger, 2017)
 (Koenis, 2015)
 (Haier, 2004)
 (Wilke, 2003)
 (Frangou, 2004)
 (Shaw, 2006)
 (Lewis, 2018)
 (Burgaleta, 2014)
 (Roman, 2018)



gro-gifted.org

32

The Gifted Brain is Like A Ferrari...



with a tiny steering wheel

Neuroscience Common Link:
 Lack of Inhibition!

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

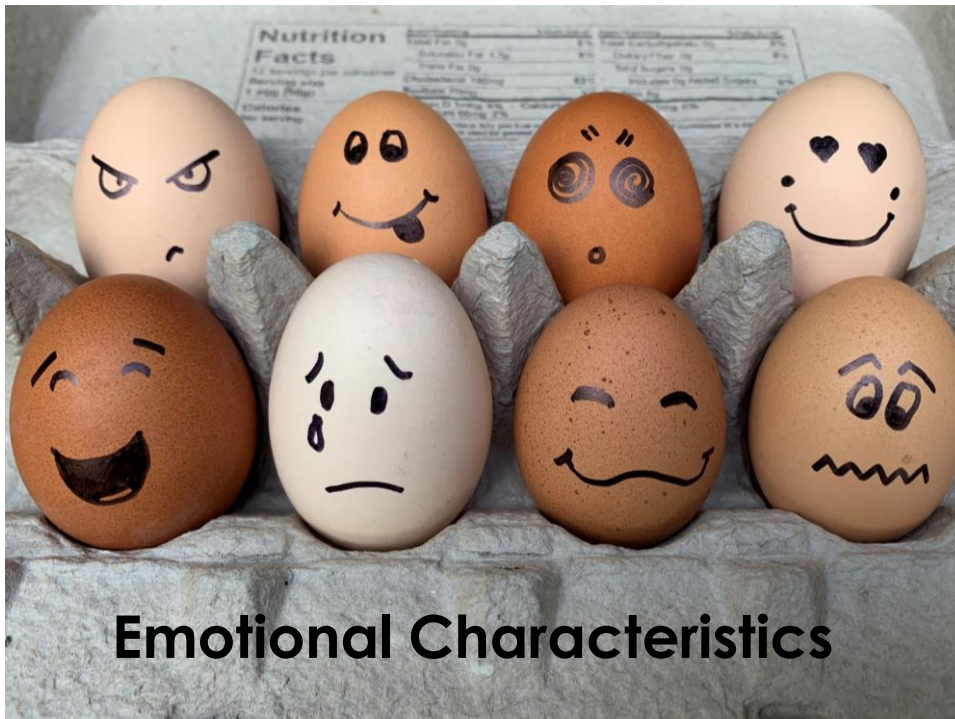
33

Executive Function (EF)

- ▶ “If I’m so smart, why can’t I find my keys?” – S. Wollum
 - ▶ Or homework, pencil, lunchbox, jacket...
- ▶ Organization
 - ▶ Organizing things, time, or procedures
 - ▶ Multitasking, keep track of more than one thing at a time
 - ▶ Planning, time management, breaking down projects
 - ▶ Sustaining attention through distraction
- ▶ Regulation
 - ▶ Impulse control, inhibition, self-control
 - ▶ Waiting to speak until it’s your turn
 - ▶ Mental flexibility
 - ▶ Initiating, getting started

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

34



© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

38

Audience Participation!

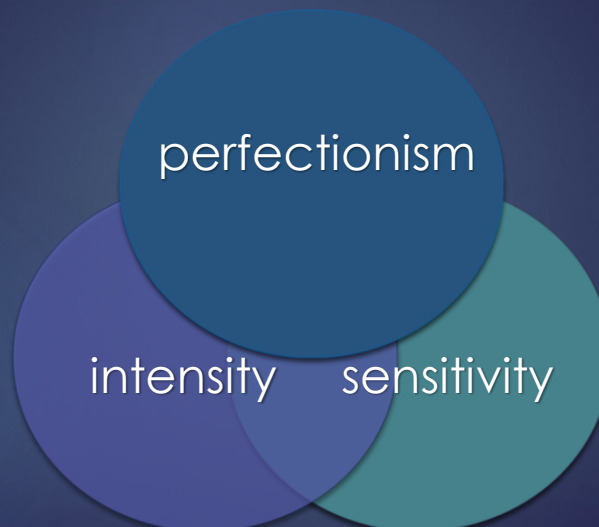
Type a characteristic of your child in CHAT

All of these characteristics can have both positive and negative aspects

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

39

3 common characteristics



SENG: Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (www.sengifted.org)

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

40

Perfectionism

- ▶ Erase a hole in the paper
- ▶ Impatient with others, aren't "doing it right"
- ▶ Meltdown at the first sign of trouble
- ▶ Can't make a decision
- ▶ Reach for impossible goals
- ▶ Hate criticism, Dwell on mistakes
- ▶ Trouble accepting compliments
- ▶ Unwilling to start, afraid to try, "I don't want to"
- ▶ "Challenge Cards" in the corner of the classroom may not work...

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

41

Sensitivity

- ▶ Too loud: fireworks, movies, toilets
- ▶ Too scary: movies, even Disney ones!
- ▶ Crying when another kid gets hurt
- ▶ Concern about the tigers going extinct
- ▶ Scratchy tags in clothing, buttons, sock seams...
- ▶ Low pain tolerance
- ▶ Bathing/swimming: water in my eyes/nose!
- ▶ Picky eater - foods touching, textures, smells
- ▶ Food sensitivities/allergies
- ▶ Big reactions to minor setbacks, discipline
- ▶ Sensory seeking - loves snuggling, soft fabrics...
 - ▶ Or, hates to be touched...

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

42

Intensity

- ▶ Tears of joy at a beautiful sunset
- ▶ So focused they don't "hear" you
- ▶ Obsessions about a topic of interest
- ▶ Difficulty with transitions
- ▶ Big focus on fairness
- ▶ Competitive: most, best, fastest, highest
- ▶ Intense nightmares, fears
- ▶ Sleep issues, hard to settle down, stay asleep
- ▶ Major meltdowns
- ▶ Mood swings: higher highs, lower lows
- ▶ Stubborn, strong-willed, inflexible

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

43

Overexcitabilities - OEs

- ▶ Dabrowski's 5 "super-stimulabilities"
 - ▶ Psychomotor
 - ▶ Sensual
 - ▶ Imaginational
 - ▶ Intellectual
 - ▶ Emotional
- ▶ Hard wired - fMRI shows "Brains on Fire" (Eide, 2004)
 - ▶ Experience a more intense reaction
 - ▶ For a longer period than normal
 - ▶ To a stimulus that may be very small
- ▶ Honor it! Coach how to cope with it, not change it

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

44

Overexcitabilities - OEs

- ▶ Dabrowski's 5 "super-stimulabilities"
 - ▶ Psychomotor
 - ▶ Sensual
 - ▶ Imaginational
 - ▶ Intellectual
 - ▶ Emotional
- ▶ Hard wired - fMRI shows "Brains on Fire" (Eide)
 - ▶ Experience a more intense reaction
 - ▶ For a longer period than normal
 - ▶ To a stimulus that may be very small
- ▶ Honor it! Coach how to cope with it, not change it

**Neuroscience:
Lack of Inhibition**

**OEs aren't an
accident; they
support higher
intelligence.**

More energetic
Imagine deeper
More curious
Hear more
See more
Feel deeper

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

45

Other common traits

- ▶ Existential angst & depression
 - ▶ "Nothing really matters"
 - ▶ Fascination with death
 - ▶ Even as young children!
- ▶ Imposter syndrome
 - ▶ Very successful people who deep down believe that they're fakes, and will be found out
- ▶ Trauma
 - ▶ High sensitivity & intensity lowers the threshold

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

47

Coaching Intense Emotions

- ▶ Is this a “baby” problem or a “giant” problem?
 - ▶ On a scale of 1 to 10, engage logical reasoning
- ▶ You might wait forever to try something new/scary/difficult/painful on their own
 - ▶ Goal setting, sticker charts, natural consequences...
 - ▶ Sometimes they need a push
 - ▶ Insist on finishing, sit with the tantrum
- ▶ Food really matters
 - ▶ Protein and fats at every snack: “feed your brain”

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

48

Taming the Worry Monster

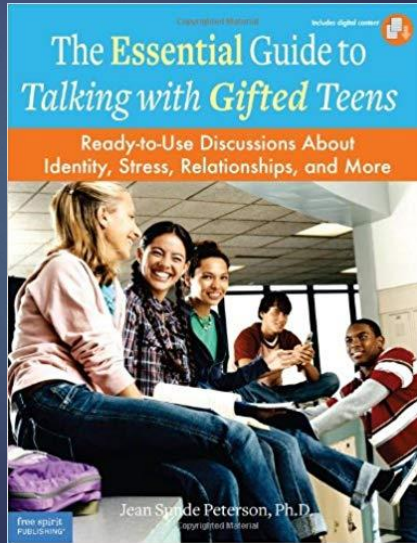
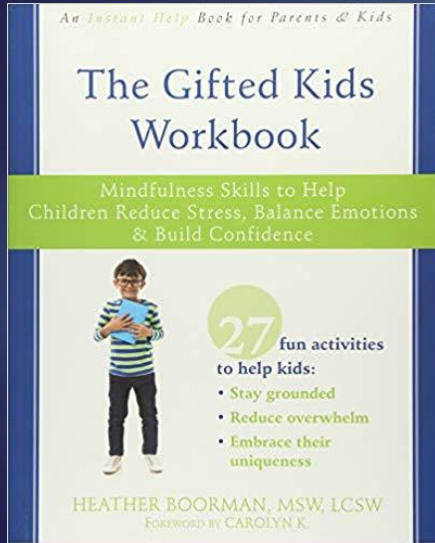
From Dr. Dan Peters, Summit Center

- ▶ Amygdala is the seat of emotion & worry
 - ▶ Tries to trick you, exaggerates, lies, “takes over”
- ▶ Big brain surrounds the tiny amygdala
- ▶ Use your big brain to keep your amygdala from taking over
 - ▶ Keep your brain fed and strong – nutrition!
 - ▶ “Boss it back!”

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

49

SEL Curriculums Now Exist!



© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

50



Social Development

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

51

Introverts vs. Extroverts

▶ Introverts

- ▶ Get energy by being **alone**
- ▶ Stereotype: quiet, shy, reserved, need processing time, think before talking, prefer 1-on-1 over groups, want a few good friends
- ▶ But, some can be very social – with a time limit

▶ Extroverts

- ▶ Get energy by being **with other people**
- ▶ Stereotype: outgoing, enjoy parties, think out loud, lots of friends

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

52

Independent vs. Conformist

▶ Independent

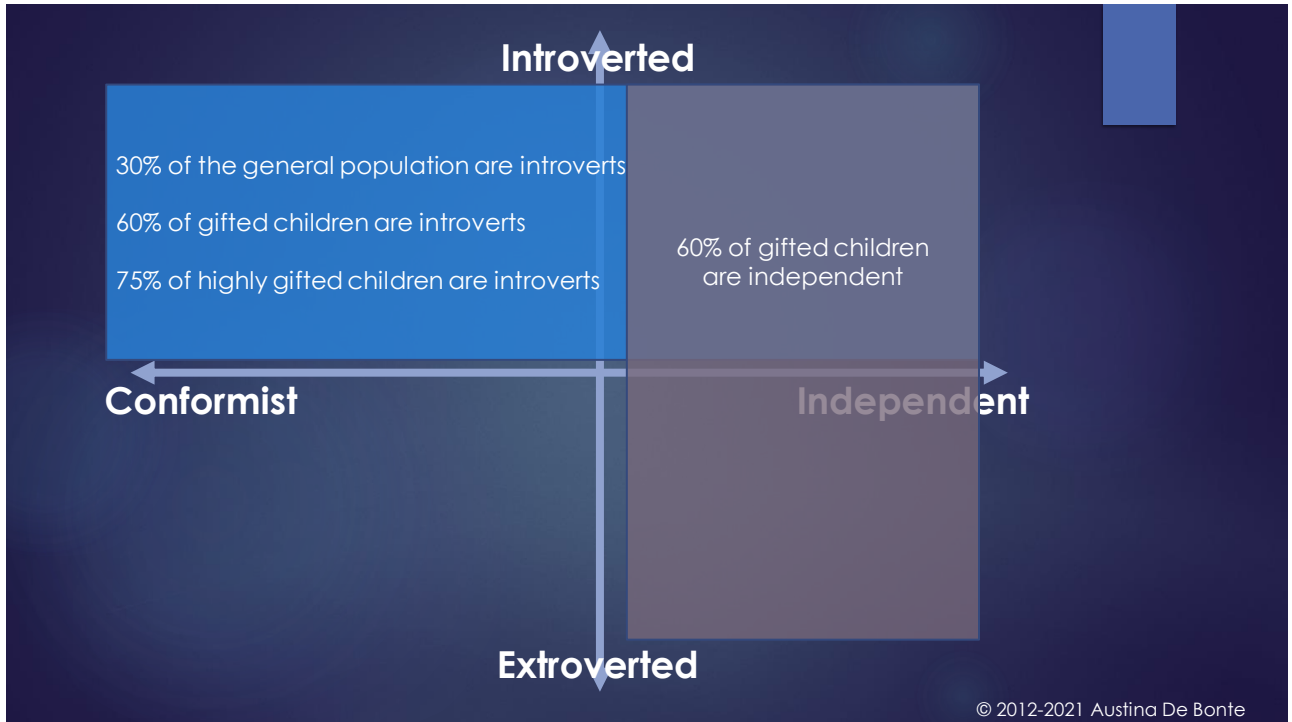
- ▶ March to their own drummer
- ▶ Personal desires aren't swayed by group opinions
- ▶ "To thine own self be true"

▶ Conformist

- ▶ Want to be with the group
- ▶ Will adjust their desires to go with the group
- ▶ Want to blend in, fit in
- ▶ Sensitive to peer pressure

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

53



54

“ When gifted children are asked what they most desire, the answer is often ‘a friend’. The children’s experience of school is completely colored by the presence or absence of friends. ”

DR. LINDA SILVERMAN
GIFTED DEVELOPMENT CENTER, COLORADO

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

55

Axioms for Social Development

1. You can't force two kids to be friends
 - ▶ Authentic social connection is vital
2. Social development requires practice
3. All humans seek belonging and to be understood

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

56

Social mismatch

- ▶ More complex vocabulary
- ▶ More involved games, stricter rules, fairness
- ▶ Interested in niche topics, ask unusual questions
- ▶ Kids realize very early
 - ▶ They are somehow *different*
- ▶ Gravitate to older kids or adults
- ▶ Feel like they have to "fake it" to make a friend
- ▶ Lonely, social isolation
 - ▶ Even if they have playmates
 - ▶ "No one understands me" "They don't get my jokes"

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

57

Social maturity

- ▶ **Stage 1: “Play partner”**
- ▶ **Stage 2: “People to chat to”**
 - ▶ *sharing of interests*
- ▶ **Stage 3: “Help and encouragement”**
 - ▶ *uni-directional*
- ▶ **Stage 4: “Intimacy/empathy”**
 - ▶ *bi-directional*
- ▶ **Stage 5: “The sure shelter”**
 - ▶ PG 6-7 year old vs. neurotypical 11-12+ year old
 - ▶ “A friend is a place you go to when you need to take off the masks. You can take off your camouflage with a friend and still feel safe.”

On average, the higher the IQ, the more mature a social relationship the child is seeking

(Miraca Gross, 2002)
study of 700 children

http://www.dauidsongifted.org/db/Articles_id_10400.aspx

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

58

Social maturity

- ▶ **Stage 1: “Play partner”**
 - ▶ **Stage 2: “People to chat to”**
 - ▶ *sharing of interests*
 - ▶ **Stage 3: “Help and encouragement”**
 - ▶ *uni-directional*
 - ▶ **Stage 4: “Intimacy/empathy”**
 - ▶ *bi-directional*
- Friends who are “just like me”
- Stage 4: Intimacy/empathy
- Someone who shares your hopes and dreams.
 - Someone who understands your deepest feelings.
 - Someone who feels the same as you about things that are important.
 - Someone who would want to be with you if they were feeling lonely or unhappy.

On average, the higher the IQ, the more mature a social relationship the child is seeking

study of 700 children

http://www.dauidsongifted.org/db/Articles_id_10400.aspx

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

59

Asynchronous social development

- ▶ Desire higher maturity level relationships
- ▶ BUT, may lack practical social & friendship skills
 - ▶ Some kids need explicit instruction
 - ▶ Or, lack of practice
 - ▶ Or, just average social skills
- ▶ ALSO, there's a difference between
 - ▶ Knowing what to do ("Smile and say hello")
 - vs.
 - ▶ Actually doing it ("I don't want to")
- ▶ OR, a child may have great social skills
 - ▶ Can flex to match interests, play patterns with others
 - ▶ But still longs for "someone who really gets me"

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

60

How it plays out over time

- ▶ Biggest social maturity gap ages 4-9 (Gross, 2002)
 - ▶ Gifted kids looking for deeper relationships
 - ▶ But, other kids still pretty inclusive
 - ▶ So far, the gap is largely invisible
 - ▶ No one really understands me, "silent suffering"
- ▶ Social mismatch becomes visible in 4th-5th grade
 - ▶ Left out of parties, playdates, playground games

Why? What's so special about 4th-5th grade?

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

61

In 4th-5th grade:

- ▶ Neurotypical kids just got to Stage 4
 - ▶ More focus on shared interests
 - ▶ Friends who are “just like me,” cliques begin
 - ▶ Fewer birthday parties inviting the whole class
- ▶ Gifted kids often get left out socially
 - ▶ THROUGH NO FAULT OF THEIR OWN
- ▶ Everyone needs their clique. Even gifted kids.
 - ▶ It's an expected stage of social development

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

65

Socially sensitive

- ▶ An offhand comment from a peer can cause serious turmoil
- ▶ Intense response to perceived rejection
 - ▶ No one reached out to invite me to play the game
 - ▶ He hates me, she thinks I'm weird
 - ▶ I'll never have any friends
- ▶ Coaching
 - ▶ Is it really true? Engage logical reasoning.
 - ▶ “Playful” teasing vs. “hurtful” teasing
 - ▶ Waiting for an invitation rarely works...

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

66

Consider this scenario...

- ▶ A gifted kid enters preschool with age-appropriate social skills
- ▶ In school, feels “different” from other kids, desires deep friendship, but doesn’t find it
- ▶ After a few years, starts falling behind in social skill development due to lack of practice
- ▶ Lack of social skills makes it even harder for them to flex to find common interests with agemates.
- ▶ Loses confidence due to perceived rejection.
- ▶ Kid is visibly struggling socially, but we strongly believe that kids “need to be able to get along with all kinds of people in this world”

What should we do?

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

67

Solving this scenario

- ▶ When a kid is struggling, do you:
 - ▶ (a) Keep throwing them into the deep end of the pool
 - ▶ (b) Put them in the shallow end with a float and a teacher
- ▶ Change the environment, so that they can get skill development back on track
 - ▶ Group with similar peers: authentic connection, similarly asynchronous social development
 - ▶ Coaching & support
- ▶ **Neurotypical kids don’t need to bridge these asynchronies to develop socially**
 - ▶ ALL kids need “birds of a feather” for social skills growth
 - ▶ This is an unrealistic challenge for a gifted kid who is not also gifted socially

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

69

Solving this scenario

- ▶ When a kid is struggling, do you:
 - ▶ (a) Keep throwing them into the deep end of the pool
 - ▶ (b) Put them in the shallow end with a teacher
- ▶ Change the environment to support social development
 - ▶ Group with similar abilities
 - ▶ Coach
- ▶ **Neurotypical kids develop social skills from the beginning**
 - ▶ ALL kids need "birds of a feather" skills growth
 - ▶ This is an unrealistic challenge for a gifted kid who is not also gifted socially

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

70

A portfolio of friends

- ▶ **Find your clique SOMEWHERE and build skills**
 - ▶ **THEN branch out**
- ▶ 4H/girl scouts/boy scouts/campfire
- ▶ Sports teams, individual sports
- ▶ Classmates, Neighborhood kids
- ▶ Older kids, adults, mentors
- ▶ Clubs
 - ▶ Math Club, Science Club, Olympiads, Future Problem Solvers, First Lego League, Destination Imagination, ...
- ▶ Enrichment & summer camps for gifted
 - ▶ UW Robinson, CTY, SIG, Davidson, SATORI, Yunasa, ...
 - ▶ Big list: <http://www.nwgca.org> (Resources)

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

71

Gifted programs can help socially

- ▶ Program models that place gifted children with other similarly asynchronous gifted peers
 - ▶ Full-time classrooms
 - ▶ Cluster grouping
 - ▶ Pull-out programs

- ▶ Serving the whole child is more than just appropriate academics
 - ▶ Prioritize social & emotional development

- ▶ Is it Autism? Socially delayed? Quirky?
 - ▶ OR - Lack of appropriate social environment?

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

72



73

3 Factors in a Good School Fit

▶ **Level**

- ▶ Appropriate level of challenge
- ▶ Enrichment vs. acceleration

▶ **Pace**

- ▶ Gifted learners need 1-3 repetitions
- ▶ Neurotypical learners need 6-8+ repetitions

▶ **Peers**

- ▶ Cognitive peers to discuss, challenge each other, collaborate together, etc.
- ▶ Authentic connection for social development

From Washington Association of Educators of the Talented and Gifted (WAETAG.NET)

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

74

When the school doesn't fit...

- ▶ Constantly ask probing or off-topic questions
 - ▶ Annoy teacher & other kids
- ▶ Trouble socializing with other kids
 - ▶ Lack of common interests
 - ▶ Advanced vocabulary
- ▶ Dumb themselves down to "fit in"
 - ▶ Consciously or subconsciously
 - ▶ Gifted girls going "underground"
- ▶ Become the class clown
 - ▶ Or the dreamer, the loner, or the victim...
 - ▶ Or the A+ student!

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

75

Why not put one gifted kid in each classroom? Doesn't that help other kids?

- ▶ Gifted kids are NOT role models
- ▶ When other kids look at the natural abilities of gifted students, they only get discouraged that there's no way they could possibly "catch up."
- ▶ When gifted learners are removed from the classroom, other bright kids step up and become more meaningful classroom leaders.

(Fiedler et al, 2010, Delisle & Galbraith, 2003; Winebrenner and Devlin, 2001; Shunk, 1998; Allan, 1991; Kulik & Kulik, 1989)

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

76

Why not put one gifted kid in each classroom? Doesn't that help other kids?

- ▶ Gifted kids are NOT role models
- ▶ When other kids look at the natural abilities of gifted students, they only get discouraged that there's no way they could possibly "catch up."
- ▶ When gifted learners are removed from the classroom, other bright kids step up and become more meaningful classroom leaders.

We also don't want other students to think that **"being a great student"** means they ought to be able to achieve at a high level **without any visible effort**

(Fiedler et al, 2010, Delisle & Galbraith, 2003; Winebrenner and Devlin, 2001; Shunk, 1998; Allan, 1991; Kulik & Kulik, 1989)

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

77

Gifted programs help kids emotionally

It's not uncommon for a gifted kid to cry in class over a frustration

... in a typical classroom, this can be socially limiting

... in a gifted classroom, this is no big deal

Grouping gifted kids helps normalize their emotional challenges, OEs, perfectionism

... in a typical classroom, they feel different, misunderstood, teased for being hyper-sensitive, differences can become pathologized

... in a gifted classroom, common experience creates a supportive, accepting environment

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

79

Won't kids get arrogant if they are put in a gifted program?

When kids are among academic peers they are no longer the smartest kid in the room

- ▶ Learn humility
- ▶ Get challenged by peers
- ▶ Develop true self-confidence, self-reliance

Kids realized they were different in preschool or kindergarten...they already know.

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

80

Is it OK for school to be easy?

If a gifted child is allowed to “skate” through regular classrooms where they pick up the new ideas seemingly without trying, they may never learn how to tackle a genuinely hard problem.

Eventually, they find themselves in middle school geometry, or high school Spanish, and may be faced for the very first time with a topic that is not intuitive for them—and may have no experience, no strategies, no emotional coping skills to tackle it.

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

81

Identity Crisis: Smart ≠ Easy

- ▶ “Things have always been easy for me, because I am so smart.”
- ▶ “Uh oh, this new thing isn’t easy.”
- ▶ “Maybe I’m not smart anymore...”
- ▶ Some kids dig deep and adjust, but others...

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

82

It can go really bad

- ▶ High School dropouts...
- ▶ Suicide...
- ▶ School shooters...
- ▶ Prisons...

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

83

Underachievement is common

- ▶ Has its roots in 1st, 2nd, 3rd grade
 - ▶ But often isn't visible until middle or high school
- ▶ Kids may never have to develop:
 - ▶ How to handle a real challenge
 - ▶ Persistence, perseverance, "grit"
 - ▶ Emotional coping skills
 - ▶ Study skills, time management skills
- ▶ 2e disabilities may be hidden until the material gets challenging
- ▶ **Underachievement – very difficult to reverse**
<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/underachievement.htm>

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

84

Underachievement is common

- ▶ Has its
- ▶ But
- ▶ Kids r
- ▶ Ho
- ▶ Per
- ▶ Em
- ▶ Stu
- ▶ 2e di
- ▶ **Unde**
- ▶ <http://>

“When they start to underachieve, the natural response for self-preservation is to actually stop caring. They're like: "I don't care about school anymore, this is stupid, this is boring." You'd rather be disengaged and do bad, than **TRY** and do bad.

Typically, over time we start to see elements of anxiety and depression that kick in.”
- Dr. Dan Peters, Summit Center

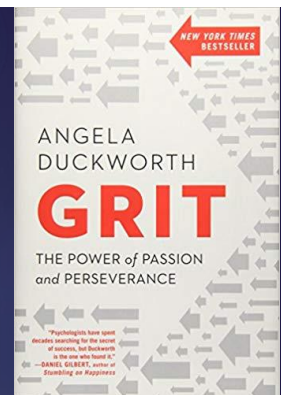
© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

85

Grit >> IQ

- ▶ Duckworth studied success at:
 - ▶ West Point Military Academy
 - ▶ National Spelling Bee
 - ▶ High school juniors, 8th graders
- ▶ “It wasn't social intelligence. It wasn't good looks, physical health, and it wasn't IQ. It was *grit*.”
- ▶ “Self-discipline predicted academic performance more robustly than did IQ.”
- ▶ **“In our data, grit is usually unrelated or even inversely related to measures of talent.”**

Duckworth grit scale
<http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/images/12-item%20Grit%20Scale.05312011.pdf>



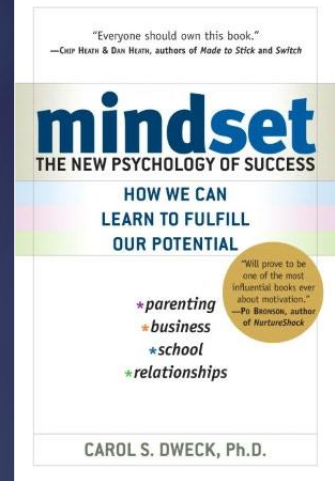
© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

86

Mindset, Carol Dweck

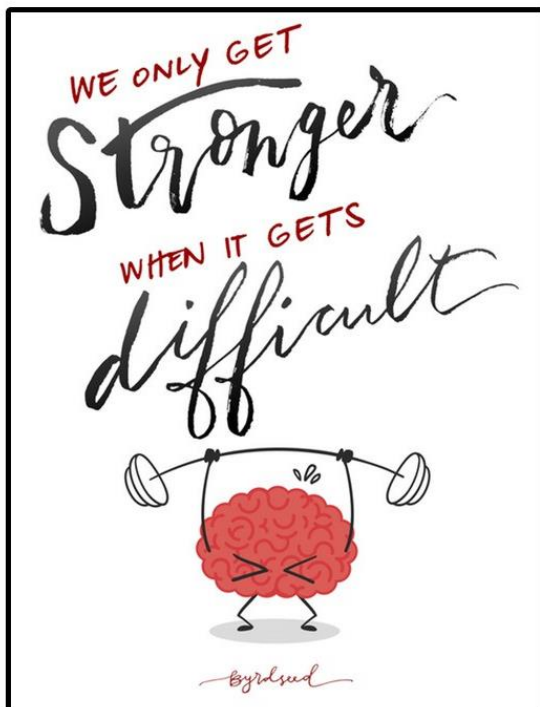
"The Perils and Promises of Praise"

- ▶ "Effort Effect"
 - ▶ Kids who were told they were smart didn't try as hard next time
 - ▶ Kids who were praised for effort did better
- ▶ Takeaways
 - ▶ Don't praise kids for being smart
 - ▶ Praise real effort and progress (not results)
 - ▶ "Keep on trying..."
 - ▶ "Practice really works!"



© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

87



"The brain is like a muscle. It needs a workout to get stronger."

Posters &
Lesson Plans
byrdseed.com

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

88

IQ Alone Does Not Predict Success

- ▶ Two longitudinal studies
 - ▶ Terman Study (1921-1993)
 - ▶ Study for Mathematically Precocious Youth (1972 – ongoing)
- ▶ Overrepresented with affluent white males
 - ▶ Underrep: non-white, low-income, twice exceptional, girls
- ▶ On average, high IQ individuals were more successful (degrees, pay, occupation, creativity, ...)
- ▶ BUT look at the median... More than 60% of men, and 80% of women had a salary of LESS than \$100,000 (SMPY, 2004)
 - ▶ A few individuals were “exceptionally successful”
 - ▶ Most were not

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

89

IQ Alone Does Not Predict Success

- ▶ Two longitudinal studies
 - ▶ Terman Study (1921-1993)
 - ▶ Study for Mathematically Precocious Youth (1972 – ongoing)
- ▶ Overrepresented with affluent white males
 - ▶ Underrep: non-white, low-income, twice exceptional, girls
- ▶ On average, high IQ individuals were more successful (degrees, pay, occupation, creativity, ...)
- ▶ BUT look at the median... More than 60% of men, and 80% of women had a salary of LESS than \$100,000 (SMPY, 2004)
 - ▶ A fe
 - ▶ Mos

What Predicted Success?

The most successful individuals had
support & acceleration

Austina De Bonte

90

Smart kids at a disadvantage

- ▶ When not challenged in school, kids have little personal experience with effort -> results
- ▶ Less likely to develop
 - ▶ Grit & perseverance
 - ▶ Tolerance for failure
 - ▶ Growth mindset
 - ▶ Time management
 - ▶ Study skills
- ▶ It's hard to truly challenge a gifted kid
 - ▶ They are capable of a LOT more than they let on
 - ▶ Perfectionism leads them to stay away from challenges that they aren't sure they can tackle

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

91

Build Up Persistence & Grit

- ▶ Provide experiences with **genuine** challenge
 - ▶ Teach grit & growth mindset **in that context**
 - ▶ Advanced school programs
 - ▶ Musical instruments, especially private instruction
 - ▶ Foreign language
 - ▶ Sports teams, individual sports
 - ▶ Martial arts, swimming, fencing, tennis...
 - ▶ Independent study projects
 - ▶ Contests, First Lego League, Destination Imagination, etc.
- ▶ Discuss perfectionism openly
- ▶ Let kids struggle and fail (within reason)
- ▶ Insist on persevering through challenge
 - ▶ Do not let kids give up
 - ▶ Not just academics – extracurriculars, sports...

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

92

“

I was never challenged in school until college, and I almost lost an academic scholarship my first semester because I had never learned how to study or work hard!

”

My whole concept of self was shaken when I finally "failed" at something.

- WA PUBLIC SCHOOL ALUMNUS

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

93

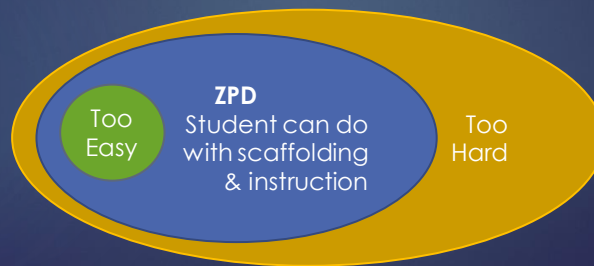
Equity

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

96

“Equity” does not mean giving the same education to every kid

- ▶ Different kids are in different places
- ▶ Every kid should learn something new at school every day
 - ▶ Vygostky's Zone of Proximal Development
 - ▶ Not too easy, not too hard



© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

97

Not MORE work, DIFFERENT work

- ▶ Not extra classwork on top of the “regular” stuff
- ▶ Make sure the kid doesn't feel punished by giving them more work than others
- ▶ Piles of homework is NOT the goal
- ▶ Don't hold to higher standard without accompanying instruction
- ▶ Not a pressure cooker, just enough challenge to build grit

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

98



SEE ME!

GIFTED CHILDREN IN POVERTY AND FROM MINORITY GROUPS ARE 2.5 TIMES LESS LIKELY TO BE IDENTIFIED FOR, AND IN, GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS. CHILDREN DESERVE FAIR IDENTIFICATION STRATEGIES.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR
Gifted Children

© 2012-2020 Austina De Bonte

99

BONUS: The Coalition's Plan for 2021

- ▶ Proposed Bill
 - ▶ Universal Screening (in or before 2nd, in or before 6th grade)
 - ▶ Accountability: HiCap demographics by district
 - ▶ Pre-service teacher training
- ▶ Lots of legislator meetings
- ▶ OSPI conversations about Fiscal Note
- ▶ New leadership
 - ▶ Co-Presidents Austina De Bonte & Reby Parsley
 - ▶ Treasurer Barbara Poyneer & Secretary Marcia Holland

© 2012-2020 Austina De Bonte

100

How Can YOU Support the Coalition?

- ▶ You already did just by registering! THANK YOU
- ▶ **Tell 5 people about us!**
 - ▶ Join our mailing list: tinyurl.com/joinWacoalition
- ▶ Donate
 - ▶ tinyurl.com/donateWacoalition
- ▶ Volunteer! info@wacoalition.com
 - ▶ We need to reboot our website!
 - ▶ More people on our board of directors
 - ▶ Volunteers to testify at hearings

This is a troubling time. This is the year to stay engaged and in close contact with us.

Share this important information with your school district.

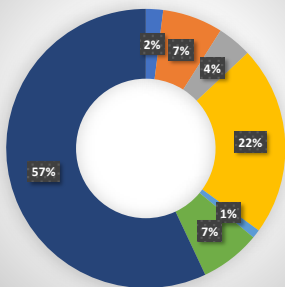
© 2012-2020 Austina De Bonte

101

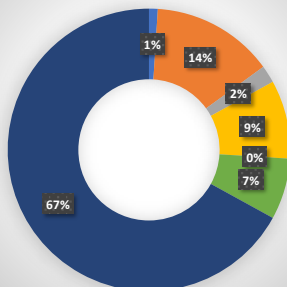
WA State Over The Past 5 Years: Little Change

- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latino of any race(s)
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- Two or more races
- White

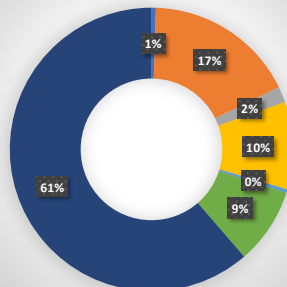
Overall Enrollment 2014-15



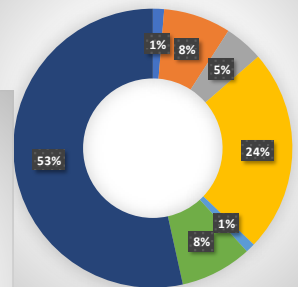
HiCap Enrollment 2014-15



HiCap Enrollment 2018-19



Overall Enrollment 2018-19

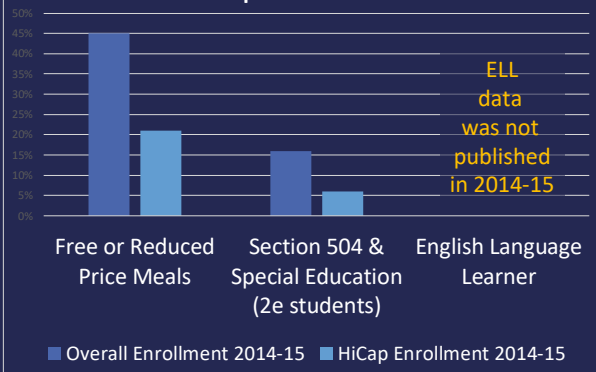


© 2012-2020 Austina De Bonte

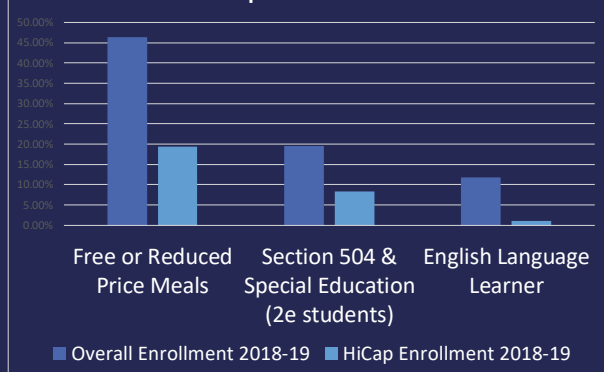
102

These Categories Haven't Changed Either

2014-15 Overall Enrollment vs. HiCap Enrollment



2018-19 Overall Enrollment vs. HiCap Enrollment



103

Updated HiCap Laws (2017, 2018)

- “prioritize **equitable identification of low-income students**” (2017)
- “...**multiple pathways** for qualification...no single criteria shall eliminate a student from identification.” (2018)
- “...decisions are based on...**local norms**, where local norms shall not be used as a more restrictive criteria than national norms...” (2018)
- “**Subjective measures** such as teacher recommendations or report card grades shall **not** be used to screen out a student from assessment...” (2018)
- “...assessments shall be given in the **native language** of the student, or **non-verbal**...” (2018)

But, It's Not Enough

© 2012-2020 Austina De Bonte

104

Broward County, Florida

- ▶ Universally screened all 2nd graders in 2005-06 and 2006-07
- ▶ Low-income students and English Language Learners identified as gifted

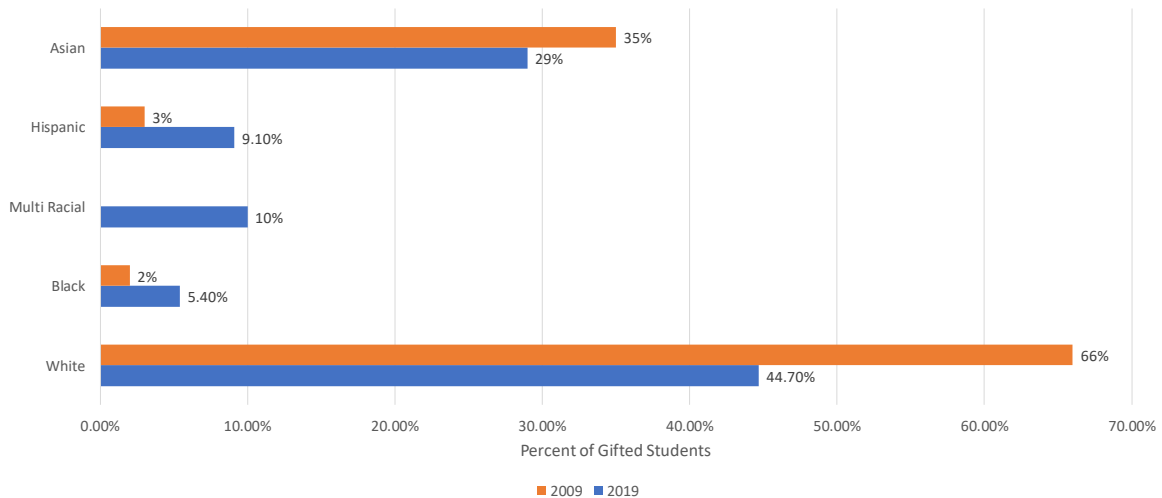
increased by 180%

WITHOUT changing qualification criteria

Note: Florida already had “Plan B” qualification criteria for low-income students in place per state law (local norms).

© 2012-2020 Austina De Bonte

110



Kent slides courtesy of Reby Parsely

Kent - 10 Year Shift in Gifted Demographics

115

Results!

	504 Plan	IEP	2e (504+IEP)	Low Income	ELL	Total
Newly Identified in 2016 (referrals only)	20	5	25	3	1	29
Newly Identified in 2017 (district data review)	39	19	58	6	19	83
Newly Identified in 2018 (univ screen K-8)	24	21	45	4	6	55
Newly Identified in 2019 (univ screen K-5, local norms)	129	99	228	99	73	400
Newly Identified in 2020 (screen K/1/5, local norms, 1 st grade no achievement)	50	60	110	52	173	335
Newly Identified in 2021 (screen K/1/5, local norms 1 st grade no achievement)	62	62	124	74	241	439

11x increase over 4 years

7x increase in 1 year

Online!

Students identified for HiCap (math, reading, or dual) who accepted HiCap placement.



SMART ≠ easy

123

Zoom in on First Grade

	504 Plan	IEP	Low-income	ELL
Percentage of 1 st Graders who qualified for HiCap in 2021	4.4%	4.5%	3.8%	26.0%
All 1 st Graders in the district	4.3%	10.0%	12.2%	24.5%

English Language Learner students are well identified

2e (twice exceptional)

Low-income

Great progress
 ...but still much work to do
 We're not there yet for low-income students or 2e (twice exceptional) students



SMART ≠ easy

125

“When provisions are denied to the gifted on the basis that they are “elitist,” it is the poor who suffer the most.

The rich have other options.”

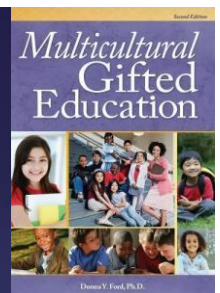
– Dr. Linda Silverman

© 2012-2020 Austina De Bonte

132



Dr. Donna Y. Ford

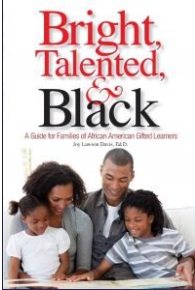


“We cannot close the achievement gap or address the **overrepresentation** in special education of our subgroups -

until we address their **underrepresentation** in highly capable programs.”

© 2012-2020 Austina De Bonte

133



Dr. Joy Lawson Davis



“New efforts to bring equity to programs by dismantling them will **hurt** the very children that they are intended to help the most.

Gifted children of color and from poverty need gifted education services.”

© 2012-2020 Austina De Bonte

134

HiCap is not a prize, it's a **WHOLE CHILD** intervention

We have a moral duty to identify **EVERY** HiCap student

Our most vulnerable populations need it the most

This is a social justice issue

© 2012-2020 Austina De Bonte

135

What Now?

© 2012-2020 Austina De Bonte

136

What you might be feeling

- ▶ Grief...that your child is not “normal”
- ▶ Guilt...that you should have done something differently in the past
- ▶ GRATITUDE that you came today and heard this information, so that you can move forward
- ▶ We were talking about our kids
 - ▶ ... but we were also likely talking about you and your spouse

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

137

Bottom line...

**Mismatch with
the environment**

Smart is NOT Easy
Emotionally – Socially – Academically
Grit – Executive Function

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

144

Why do we serve HiCap kids?

- ▶ They are a special needs population
- ▶ Without intervention they are at risk
- ▶ Nurturing the WHOLE CHILD
- ▶ GOAL: Functioning citizens in our community

- ▶ NOT:
 - ▶ To create eminent leaders (Einstein, Steve Jobs, ...)
 - ▶ To send more kids to Harvard, Stanford, MIT...
 - ▶ To nurture child prodigies
 - ▶ To increase our international math ranking
 - ▶ To improve the US economy

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

145

Resources

- ▶ Your state gifted associations
 - ▶ NW Gifted Child Association (nwgca.org)
 - ▶ WA Association for the Educators of the Talented and Gifted (waetag.com)
 - ▶ WA Coalition for Gifted Education (wacoalition.com)
- ▶ National Assoc. for Gifted Children (nagc.org)
- ▶ Supporting the Emotional Needs of Gifted (sengifted.org)
- ▶ I do parent consults and PD (smartisnoteasy.com)

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

146

Put your QUESTIONS in the chat

Thank You!

Austina De Bonte
austina@smartisnoteasy.com
www.smartisnoteasy.com

Slides - <http://tinyurl.com/smartisnoteasy2021>

© 2012-2021 Austina De Bonte

150