

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

Austina De Bonte

Consultant, Smart is Not Easy LLC
President, WA Coalition for Gifted Education
Past President, NW Gifted Child Association
Doctoral Candidate, Bridges Graduate School

austina@smartisnoteasy.com

Slides - <http://tinyurl.com/smartisnoteasy2023>

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Agenda

- ▶ Definitions & Asynchrony
- ▶ Twice Exceptional
- ▶ Executive Function & Neuroscience
- ▶ Emotional Characteristics
- ▶ Social Development
- ▶ Grit, growth mindset & underachievement
- ▶ Equity

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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, **highly capable, HiCap**
 - ▶ NOT (necessarily) high-achieving

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Definitions
Laws
Asynchrony

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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)

New!

- ▶ **2023 – universal screening in early & late elementary (WA)**

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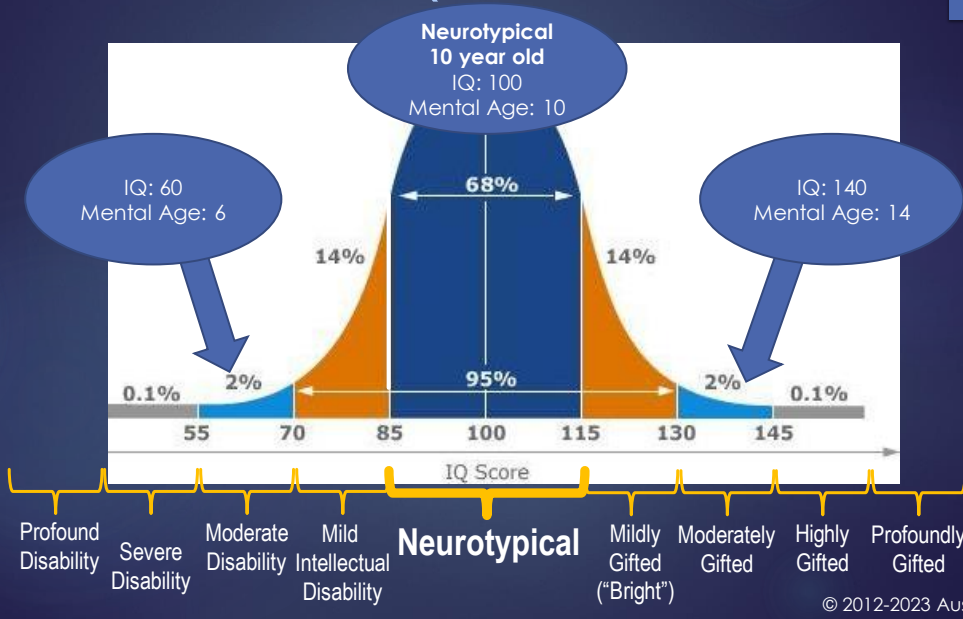
Law Updates – 2017 & 2018

“...prioritize equitable identification of low-income students”

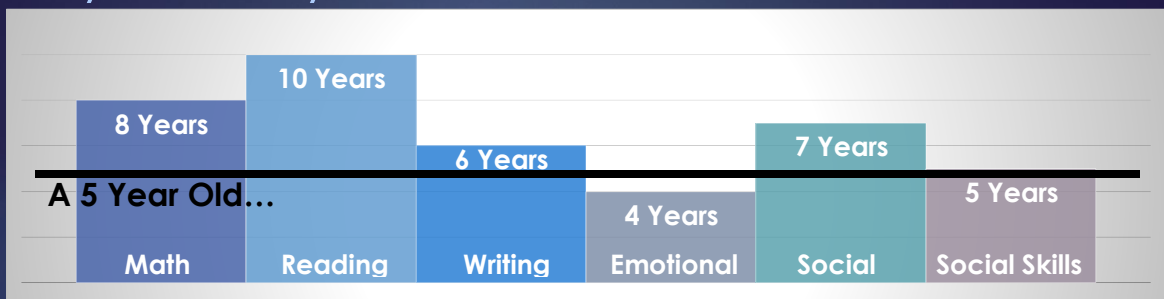
- ▶ “Using multiple objective criteria to identify highly capable students” means that **multiple pathways** for qualification are available, and that **no single criteria shall eliminate a student from identification.**
- ▶ Highly capable selection decisions are based on consideration of criteria benchmarked on **local norms**, where local norms shall not be used as a more restrictive criteria than national norms at the same percentile;
- ▶ Subjective measures such as **teacher recommendations or report card grades** shall not be used to screen out a student from assessment. These data points may be used alongside other objective criteria during selection to support identification, but **may never be used to disqualify a student from being identified;**
- ▶ To the extent practicable, **screening and assessments shall be given in the native language of the student**, or non-verbal assessments are used.

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The Bell Curve of IQ



Asynchrony



- ▶ 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"

Equally Likely to Be Gifted

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

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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)

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Twice Exceptional

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Twice-Exceptional - 2e

- ▶ Gifted AND
 - ▶ (Stealth) Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia, Dyspraxia
 - ▶ ADHD, Autism
 - ▶ Sensory Processing (SPD), Auditory Processing (CAPD), Vision Processing
 - ▶ Anxiety, Depression, Mood Disorders, OCD, ...
- ▶ Surprisingly high incidence
- ▶ Compensation can mask disabilities
- ▶ Chances are a lot of gifted kids are actually 2e
- ▶ Diagnosis is tricky! Insist on an expert

Neurodiversity

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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

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Vision Processing Disorders (VPD)

- ▶ 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 (Look for FCOVD)
 - ▶ Vision therapy is available
 - ▶ Research on outcomes is inconsistent, provider quality matters
- ▶ Vision processing disorders are **NOT** dyslexia
 - ▶ But they can co-occur

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Auditory Processing Disorders (APD)

- ▶ 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 an APD specialist
 - ▶ **ABLE Kids Foundation** – diagnosis, ear filter (Fort Collins, Colorado)
 - ▶ **Drraestout.com** – low gain hearing aids (online, no diagnosis needed)

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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/>

Misdiagnosis

and Dual Diagnoses of Gifted Children and Adults

ADHD, Bipolar, OCD, Asperger's, Depression,
and Other Disorders

Second Edition



James T. Webb, Ph.D., ABPP-CI
Edward R. Amend, Psy.D.
Paul Bellini, Psy.D., ABPP-N
Nadia E. Webb, Psy.D., ABPP-N
Mariamne Kuzajanskis, M.D., M.P.H.
F. Richard Olenchak, Ph.D.
Jean Guerin, M.D., M.P.H.

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Executive Function

AND A LITTLE NEUROSCIENCE

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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

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Every Brain is
Unique -
Just Like a
Fingerprint
(Valizadeh et al., 2018)

Neurodiversity

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How are
High IQ
Neurodiverse
Brains
Different?

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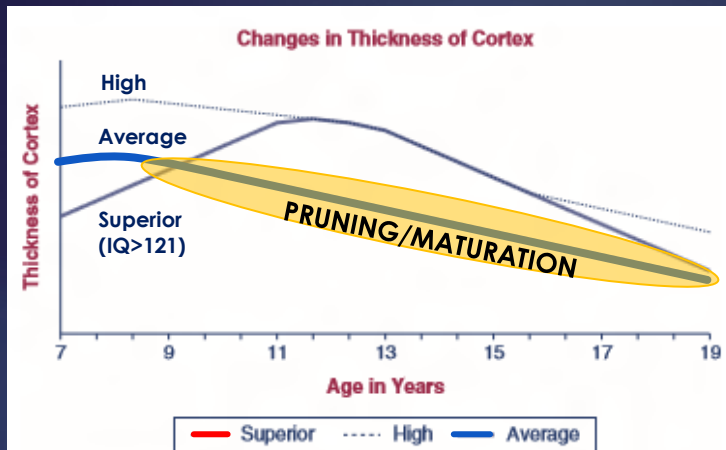


Figure 1.2 Changes in the thickness of the brain's cortex between the ages of 7 and 19 in individuals of superior, high, and average intelligence.

Source: Adapted from Shaw et al., 2006.

Physical Differences in Brain Development

(Shaw et al., 2006)

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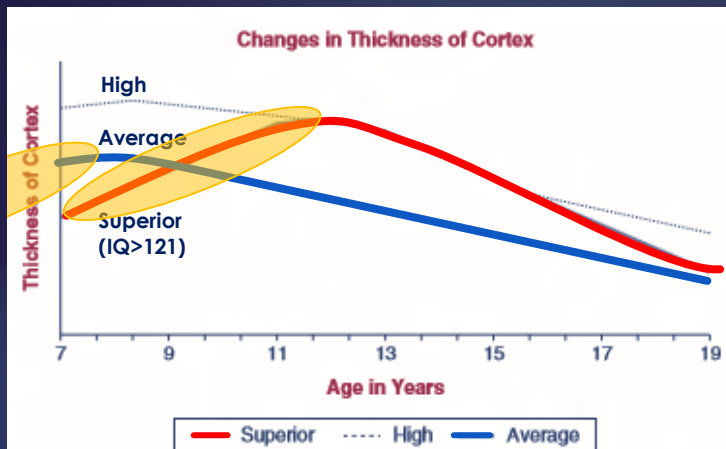


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Physical Differences in Brain Development

Timeline for brain growth & expansion

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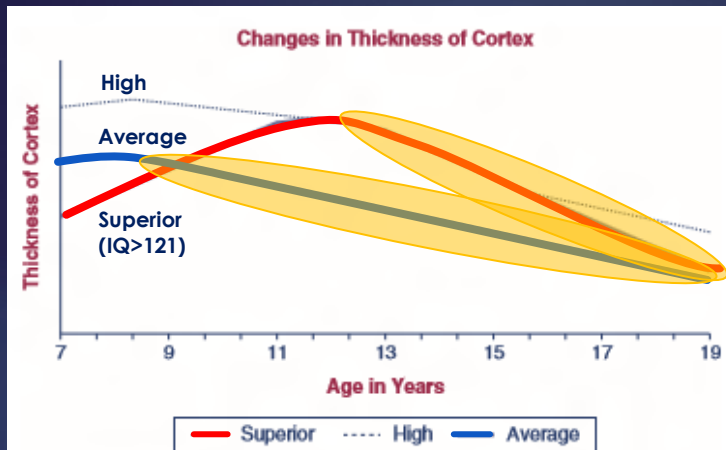


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Physical
Differences
in Brain
Development

**Timeline for
pruning &
maturation**

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A Different Researcher Says:

“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 et al., 2013)

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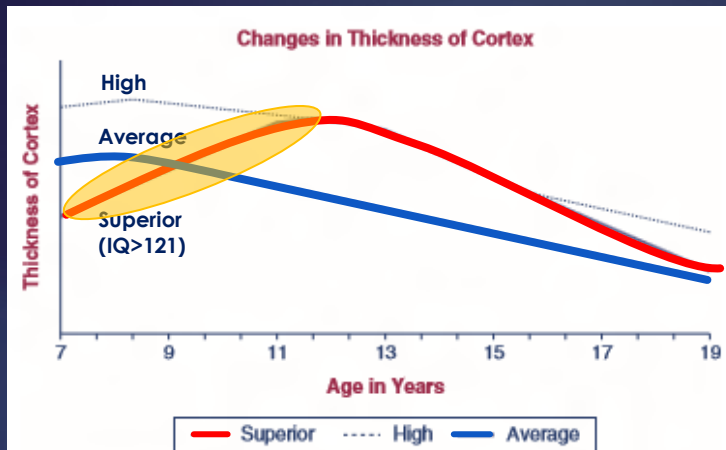


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**Timeline for
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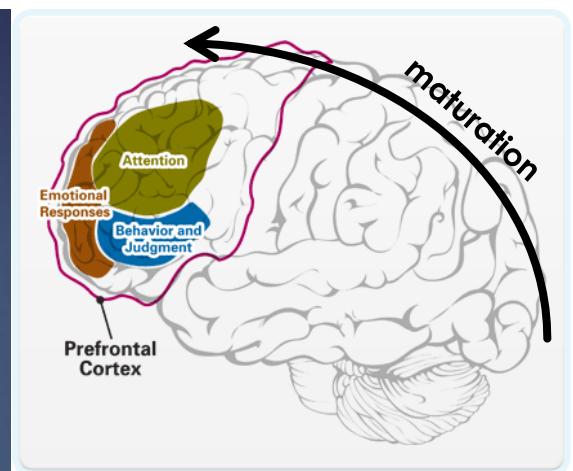
Your Brain Matures Back to Front

“Grey matter thickens in childhood but then thins in a wave that **begins at the back of the brain** and reaches the front by early adulthood”

Powell, K. (2006). How does the teenage brain work?. *Nature* **442**, 865–867.

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

“Executive Function”



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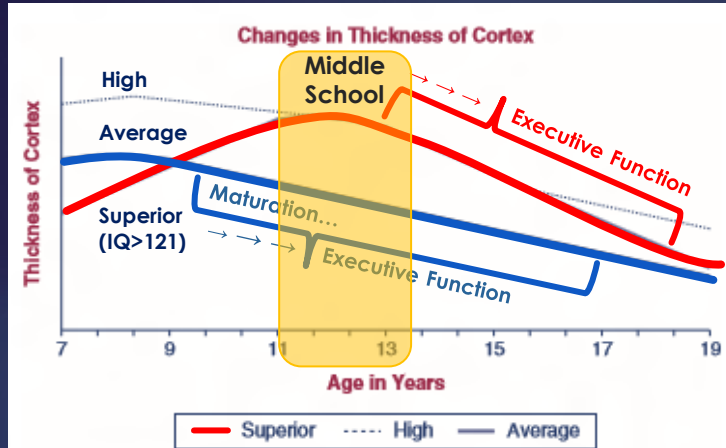


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Physical
Differences
in Brain
Development

**Executive
Function
Develops Later?**

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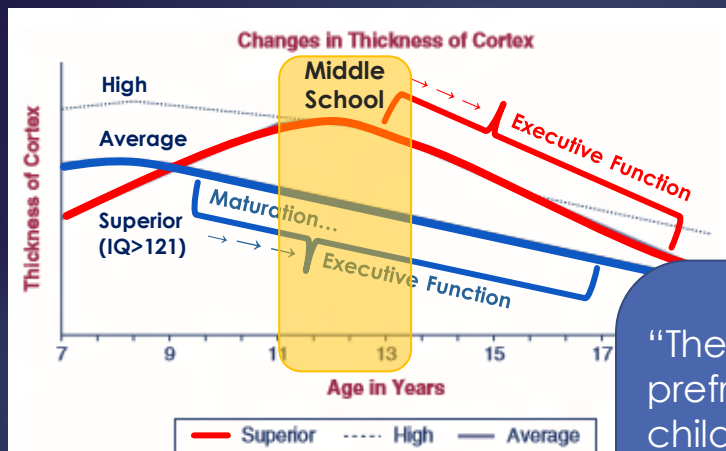


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Physical
Differences

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

(Willis, 2009)

What to do?

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

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10 Ways to Support EF

1. Make time visible (schedules, calendars, timers, tech)
2. Visible cues, charts, checklists for EVERYTHING
3. Folders, not binders
4. Keep a "master binder" of all handouts/homework/worksheets
5. Have extra pencils/markers/rulers/etc available
6. Pre-planning to break down big projects
7. Graphic organizers, sticky notes & highlighters
8. Homework reminders; flexible late/missing policies
9. Class time everyday to update the planner, organize binders/desks
10. Follow students' IEP & 504 Plans



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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**

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(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

The Gifted Brain is Like A Ferrari...



with a tiny
steering wheel

Neuroscience
Common Link:
Lack of Inhibition!

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Executive Function (EF)

- ▶ “If I’m so smart, why can’t I find my keys?” – S. Wollum
 - ▶ Or homework, pencil, lunchbox, jacket...
- ▶ Organization
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 - ▶ Impulse control, inhibition, self-control
 - ▶ Waiting to speak until it’s your turn
 - ▶ Mental flexibility
 - ▶ Initiating, getting started

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Giftedness & 2e is **Neurodiversity**

- ▶ Neurodiversity is not just about autism
- ▶ Brain with a different “operating system”
 - ▶ Ferrari vs. SUV vs. Pickup vs. Tesla
- ▶ **Careful:** neurodiverse brains are not “worse” (or “better”)
 - ▶ They are **DIFFERENT**
 - ▶ Pattern of strengths and challenges
- ▶ Many common diagnoses are better understood as neurodiversity, not disorders or deficits
 - ▶ ADHD – strengths in quick response time, acting under pressure, hyperfocus
 - ▶ Dyslexia – strengths in visual/spatial, 3d, creativity, big picture, entrepreneur
 - ▶ Autism – strengths in spotting patterns, details, sensory perception
- ▶ **Overexcitabilities** are another way to describe neurodiversity

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WHY DIAGNOSIS MATTERS

“Why do you need a label?”

Because there is comfort in knowing you are a normal zebra, not a strange horse.

Because you can't find community with other zebras if you don't know you belong.

And because it is impossible for a zebra to be happy or healthy spending its life feeling like a failed horse.”

**The important part is that the label is
ACCURATE
Find the correct root cause(s)**



Image Credit: pngall.com; Quote Credit: Instagram #omgimautisticaf

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Rewarding neurotypical learning styles teaches ALL kids that neurotypical brains are superior.

This is harmful to neurodivergent kids.



Creating a neurodiversity affirming classroom & home environment

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Behavior is communication

- ▶ When a 2e student is having a hard time,
you will see it in their behavior
- ▶ "Not won't, can't" "Kids do well **when they can**"
– Ross Greene
- ▶ "Shifting from addressing behaviors to trying to **understand** their origins and triggers means making a shift from **managing** our children to **understanding them deeply.**" – Mona Delahooke
- ▶ **"It's never about lazy."** – Austina De Bonte

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Polyvagal safety is essential

- ▶ Porges polyvagal theory
 - ▶ **Autonomic nervous system is constantly evaluating the environment for safety**
 - ▶ Co-regulation is essential
- ▶ **Create a neurodiversity-affirming classroom (& home)**
 - ▶ Relationship with teacher (& parents)
 - ▶ Environmental safety in classroom (& home)
 - ▶ Relational safety with classmates (& family)

Ventral Vagal
safe, connected,
calm, social

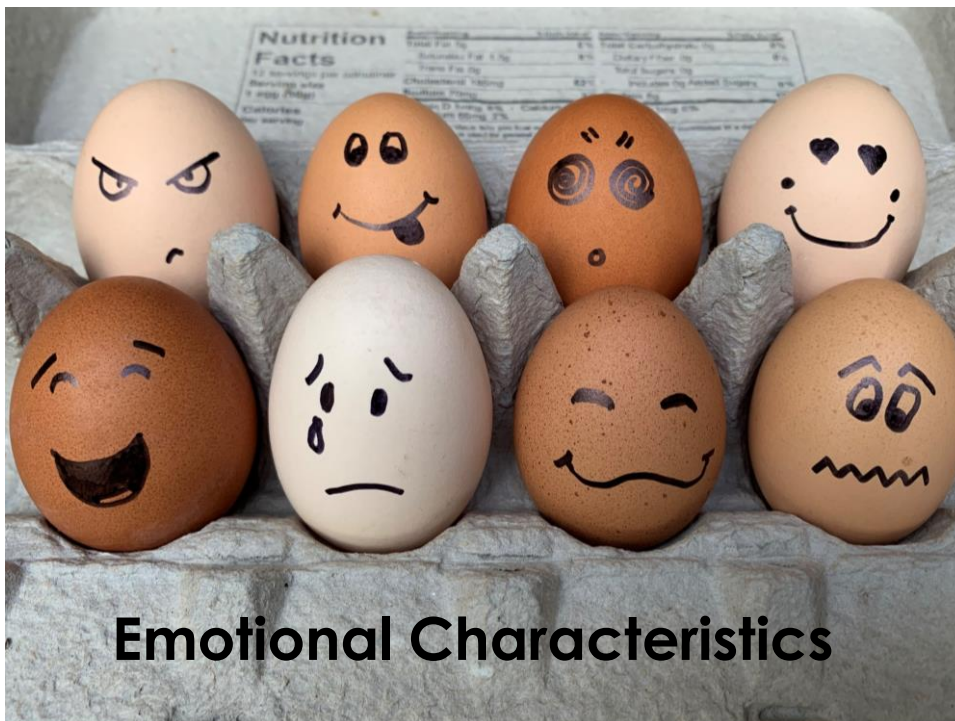
Sympathetic
fight or flight,
take action

Dorsal Vagal
shutdown,
overwhelm



Adapted from Deb Dana 2022; Porges 2011

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Emotional Characteristics

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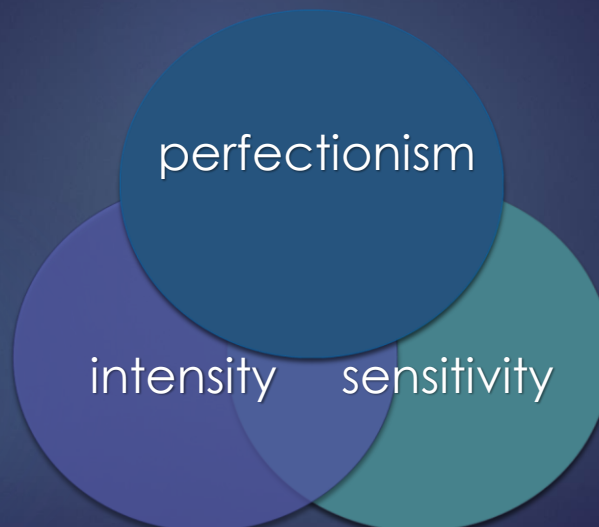
Audience Participation!

Shout out a characteristic of your child

All of these characteristics can
have both positive and
negative aspects

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3 common characteristics



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

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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...

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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...

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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

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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

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Neurodiversity

OEs may be another lens for understanding ADHD and/or Autism

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

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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

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Coaching Intense Emotions

- ▶ Is this a “baby” problem or a “giant” problem?
 - ▶ On a scale of 1 to 10, engage logical reasoning
- ▶ Food really matters
 - ▶ Protein and/or fats at every snack: “feed your brain”

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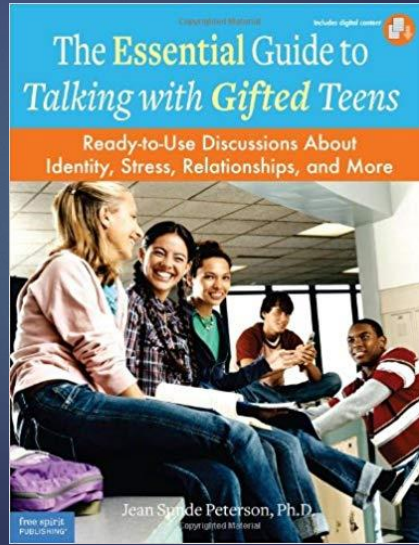
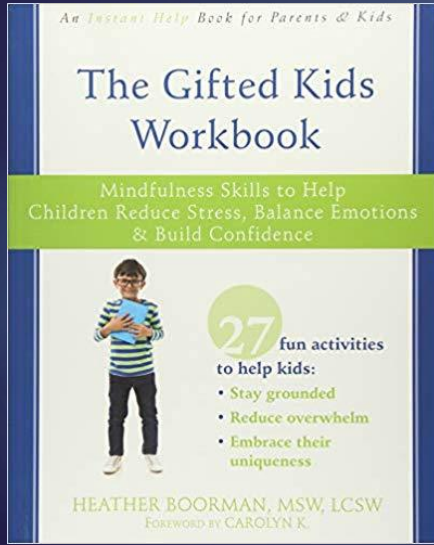
Taming the Worry Monster

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!”

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SEL Curriculums Now Exist!



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Social Development

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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

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Independent vs. Conformist

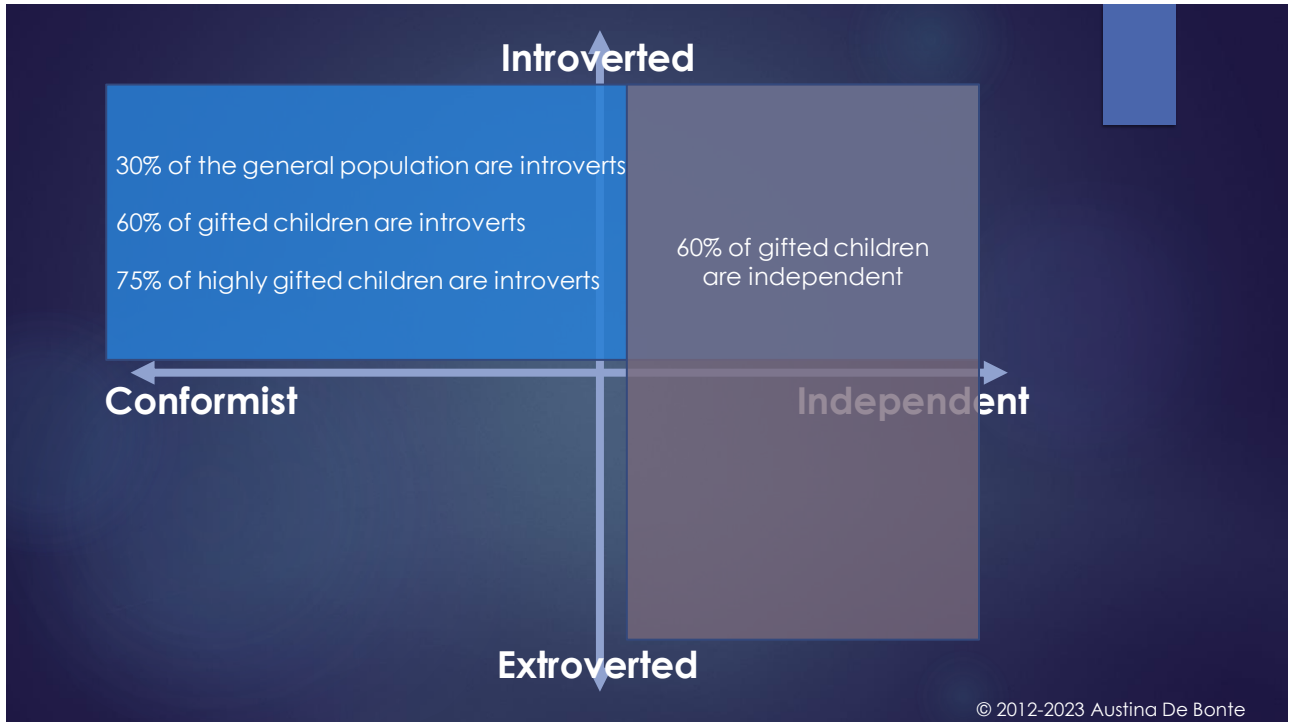
▶ Independent

- ▶ 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

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“

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

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

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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** – but WHY?
- ▶ 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”

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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

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Social maturity

- ▶ **Stage 1: “Play partner”**
- ▶ **Stage 2: “People to chat to”**
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 - ▶ *uni-directional*
- ▶ **Stage 4: “Intimacy/empathy”**
 - ▶ *bi-directional*

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

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.

study of 700 children

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

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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"

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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?

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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

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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...

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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?

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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
 - ▶ Diversity is an unrealistic challenge for a gifted kid who is not also gifted socially

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Solving this scenario

- ▶ When a kid is struggling, do you:
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- ▶ **Change the environment** to support skill development back on track
 - ▶ Group with similar peers
 - ▶ Coach
- ▶ **Neurotypical peers** to develop social skills
 - ▶ ALL kids need "birds of a feather" for skills growth
 - ▶ Diversity is an unrealistic challenge for a gifted kid who is not also gifted socially

Even better, prevent this scenario by providing an environment with similar peers from the beginning

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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)

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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
 - ▶ Walk-to-math, walk-to-reading
- ▶ 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?

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Grit

**Growth
Mindset**

**School
Fit**

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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)

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When the school doesn't fit...

- ▶ Constantly ask probing or off-topic questions
 - ▶ Annoy teacher & other kids
- ▶ Trouble socializing with other kids
- ▶ 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!

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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)

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- ▶ 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)

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Gifted programs help kids socially

"Gifted children have better social adjustment in classes with children like themselves.

The brighter the child, the lower his or her social self-concept is likely to be in the regular classroom.

Social self-concept improves when children are placed with true peers in special classes."

(Silverman, 2009)

Caveat: As long as you place kids early...

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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

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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.

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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.

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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...

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It can go really bad

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

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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>

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“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.”

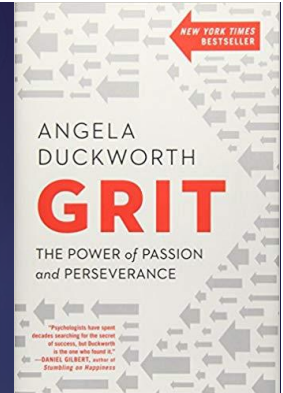
- Dr. Dan Peters, Summit Center

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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>

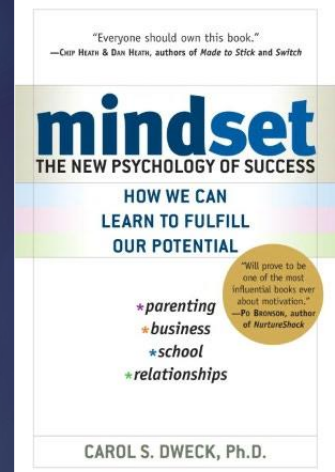


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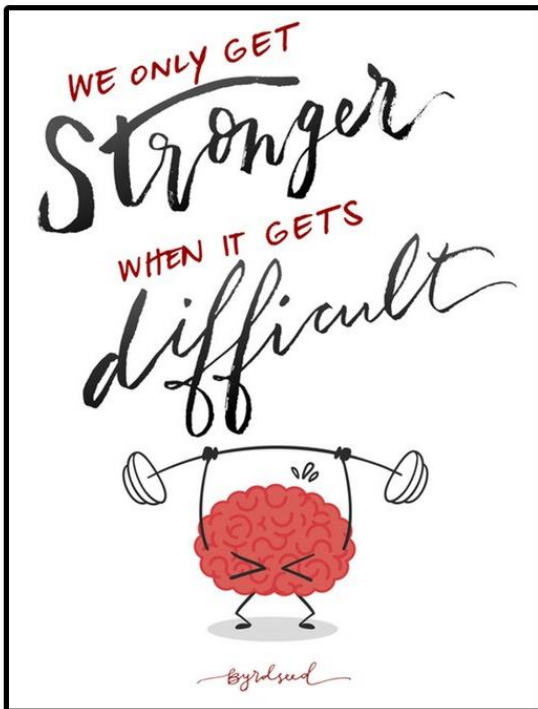
Mindset, Carol Dweck

“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!”
 - ▶ Help kids make the **connection between effort and results**



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

Posters &
Lesson Plans
byrdseed.com

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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” and raised the average
 - ▶ Most gifted individuals lead typical adult lives

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IQ Alone Does Not Predict “Success”

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 - ▶ Terman Study (1921-1993)
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 - ▶ A few
 - ▶ Most

What Predicted Success?

The most successful individuals had **support & acceleration**

average

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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

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Build Up Persistence & Grit

- ▶ Provide experiences with **genuine** challenge and 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, Future Problem Solvers, 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...

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Reminder:

Adults don't have to be great at everything



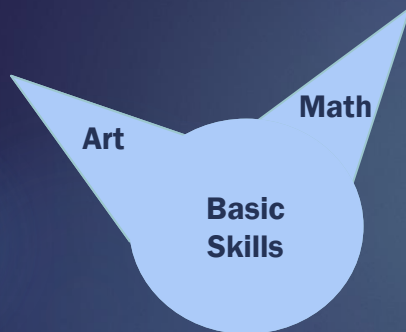
Adult careers will focus on **STRENGTHS**

Adults find “niche” environments that support or avoid their weaknesses

(Armstrong, 2012)

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Spiky Strengths



Well-Rounded



Colleges are looking for “spiky” applicants!

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School Best Practices for Gifted & 2e

- ▶ **Challenge**...acceleration, depth, complexity
- ▶ **Individualized**...for special needs, strengths, interests
- ▶ **Accommodations**...provided universally
- ▶ **Grading**...by learning objectives, not executive function
- ▶ **Flexibility**...to show mastery in many ways

- ▶ Create a neurodiversity-affirming classroom
- ▶ Use a strength-based approach, build a “niche”
- ▶ **Help kids develop a Spiky Strength**

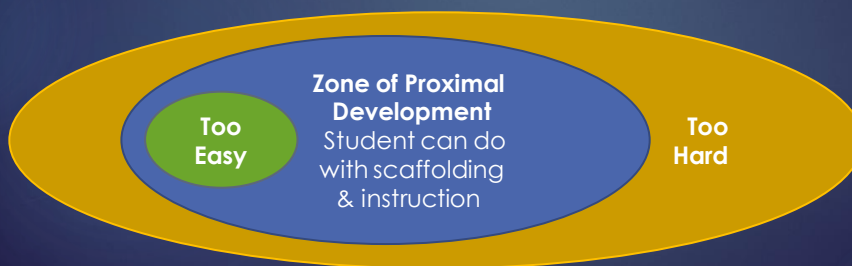
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Equity

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“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 (ZPD)
 - ▶ Not too easy, not too hard



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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 standards without accompanying instruction

- ▶ Not a pressure cooker, just enough challenge to **build grit**
- ▶ **Essential context: an environment of safety & connection**

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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

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

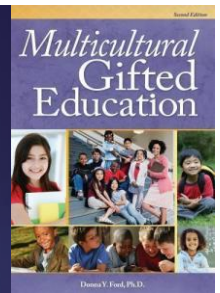
The rich have other options.”

– Dr. Linda Silverman

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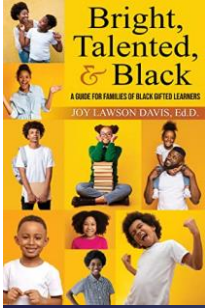
Dr. Donna Y. Ford



“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.”

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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.”

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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

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What Now?

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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 with knowledge
- ▶ We were talking about our kids
 - ▶ ... but we were also likely talking about YOU
 - ▶ ... and your spouse, siblings, parents, extended family

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Remember that these are kids

- ▶ They need DOWNTIME
- ▶ Don't overschedule with every stimulating experience you can think of
- ▶ Follow the child's lead, don't push
- ▶ Be selective with therapy, it's a long term journey
- ▶ Not all gifted kids are born to be scientists and mathematicians; they may take a different path

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Do I test my kid?

- ▶ Early identification & support is important
 - ▶ Social development
 - ▶ Emotional development
 - ▶ Academic development
- ▶ Private IQ testing with a neuropsychologist
 - ▶ Listings on [nwgca.org/resources.html](https://www.nwgca.org/resources.html)
- ▶ Test ceilings are low before age 6
 - ▶ The score may go up substantially with the WISC (age 6-16)
- ▶ Any chance of 2e?
 - ▶ A sibling who doesn't "look" gifted?
 - ▶ Testing is the place to start

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So what do I tell my kid?

- ▶ Talk to them about being gifted
 - ▶ It's a fact, not a value judgment
 - ▶ They already sensed they were somehow different in preschool or kindergarten
 - ▶ Their brain works differently than for other kids
 - ▶ They are more sensitive (they aren't dreaming it)
 - ▶ They learn at a different rate, and sometimes with a different style
 - ▶ Talk about the many faces of perfectionism
- ▶ DO NOT praise them for being smart
 - ▶ Praise & reinforce effort, perseverance, progress

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Bottom line...

**Mismatch with
the environment**

Smart is NOT Easy

Emotionally – Socially – Academically

Grit – Executive Function

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Why do we serve HiCap kids?

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

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

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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 (info@wacoalition.com)

- ▶ National Association for Gifted Children (nagc.org)
- ▶ Supporting the Emotional Needs of Gifted (sengifted.org)

- ▶ I do parent consults and PD (smartisnoteasy.com)

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Thank You!

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

Slides - <http://tinyurl.com/smartisnoteasy2023>

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