

Best Practices for Parenting Gifted Children

Friends of Johnston ELP

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What do you consider to be the joys and challenges of parenting your gifted child(ren)?
Jot down some ideas individually. Share with your table. Share with the large group.

Joys	Challenges

Perfectionism

Signs of Perfectionism at Work

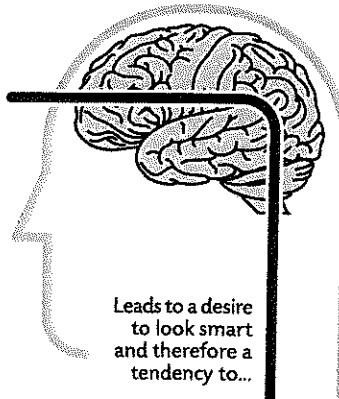
- Procrastination
- Obsessive attention to "getting it right"
- Not completing projects
- Eager to please but critical of others
- Taking things personally
- Defensive in the face of criticism
- Taking pleasure in others' failures
- "Average" is never good enough

Putting the Brakes on Perfectionism

- Show children that you value them more for who they are as people than for what they can do.
- Help children separate themselves from their products, particularly their grades.
- Help them understand that mistakes are a normal part of learning.
- Encourage them to distinguish between the more important assignments (or parts of an assignment) and the less important ones.
- Provide a structure that allows them to set realistic goals and create a plan of action.
- Help them understand that achievement happens in incremental steps over time.
- Explore the lives of great achievers: learning about the challenges many high achievers have faced helps children re-evaluate their expectations about achievement and their attitudes about themselves.
- Applaud children's efforts, especially when they take risks or overcome obstacles.
- Celebrate creativity and originality.
- Involve them in activities that aren't graded or judged.
- Help them plan for new challenges: Talk to them about their concerns, what difficulties they might encounter, and what actions they can take, even in the "worst case scenario."
- Encourage a sense of humor.
- Communicate with the child's teacher.

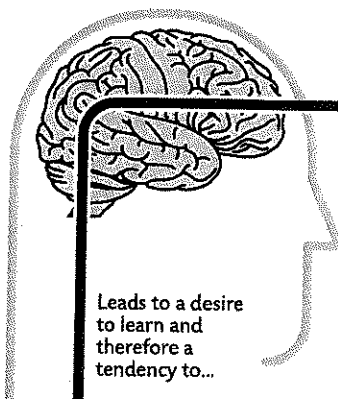
<http://www.pta.org/programs/content.cfm?ItemNumber=1769>

Fixed Mindset
Intelligence is static



Leads to a desire
to look smart
and therefore a
tendency to...

Growth Mindset
Intelligence can be developed



Leads to a desire
to learn and
therefore a
tendency to...

CHALLENGES

...avoid
challenges

...embrace
challenges

OBSTACLES

...get defensive
or give up
easily

...persist in the
face of setbacks

EFFORT

...see effort as
fruitless or worse

...see effort as
the path to mastery

CRITICISM

...ignore useful
negative feedback

...learn from
criticism

SUCCESS OF OTHERS

...feel threatened
by the success
of others

...find lessons and
inspiration in the
success of others

As a result, they may plateau early
and achieve less than their full potential.

As a result, they reach ever-higher levels of achievement.

Asynchronous or Uneven Development

In another article, you read a paragraph introduction about the important topic of uneven or asynchronous development. This topic plays a central role in the life of a gifted child and his or her family. This column provides additional explanation of the complex issue of asynchronous development.

The asynchronous or uneven development of the gifted child is often most notable to those who work closely with a gifted children. The higher the level of giftedness, the more asynchronous the development can be. When six-year-old Bobby thinks like a nine-year-old, but throws tantrums like a four-year-old, some think that his parents "just need to get better control" over these outbursts. When Mary, the nine-year-old who can intellectually understand the forces of nature, lacks the emotional capacity to deal with catastrophes such as tornadoes and hurricanes, some suggest she has "serious psychological problems" that are likely best managed with medication. These are examples of uneven development. The impact this asynchrony has on one's life can be tremendous because a gifted child's intellectual, emotional, and social developments usually progress at different rates. While some are advanced, others are immature while still others are more age-appropriate.

This uneven development may make a youngster feel out of step with his peers. Twelve-year-old Stan's best friend was his sixty-something neighbor with whom he frequently played chess. For him, this "peer" was suitable in that particular intellectual arena. Although Stan had age-peers with whom he played football, went to school, and shared "typical" childhood experiences, they did not provide the intellectual challenge that he desired and ultimately received while playing chess with his neighbor. Stan is a clear example that finding appropriate "peers" regardless of age is important.

The asynchronous development of the gifted child is often evident very early in the child's school career, if not before. Whether it is because of behavioral difficulties or precocious academic development, many parents have talked about their child's first day at preschool or kindergarten. Often, the teacher contacted them within the first week reporting that their child's behavior was unusual for one or more reasons. They may have a high energy level and have difficulty sitting still or the child's curiosity may not allow the teacher to move on to a new topic. She may continue asking questions that are unrelated to the topic, or she is told to let others answer some questions "for a change." The slow pace of school, even in the early grades, can quickly frustrate a quick learner while other children are satisfied with the pace or volume of information.

School problems can and do arise because of a gifted child's precocious and uneven development. Most gifted children learn to read earlier than other children, and some parents of elementary students have reported that their children were able to read long before entering kindergarten. Although many parents are accused of applying "parental pressure" to teach a child to read, this is often not the case because many gifted children teach themselves to read with limited input from parents. Still, parents are met with questions and comments by other parents as well as teachers. Sometimes, parents hear, "Putting this much pressure on a child so young, teaching a child to read at such a young age, can only result in negative consequences" or "She'll just be out of step with others her age." When interactions like this happen, frustration mounts for both the parent and the gifted child.

On the other hand, gifted children are sometimes expected to act their "mental age" rather than their chronological age. Their uneven development prevents this. Although they may think like a twelve-year-old, they are not always going to act like a twelve-year-old and should not be expected to do so. In fact, gifted children, as much as all other children, need time to be children. However, this does not mean that their intellectual needs are ignored. It is a difficult balance to maintain when you have the mind of an adult but the emotional capacity of a child.

As a parent of a gifted child, it is important to:

- Be aware of your gifted child's uneven development and the special needs that result. While social maturity may be age-appropriate, intellectual development may be years ahead of a child's chronological age.
- Teach your gifted child to handle frustration by modeling good coping skills and taking mistakes in stride. Identify characteristics that are unique to yourself and show your child how to accept his or hers in the same way you have accepted yours.
- Promote an environment that meets the educational, social, emotional, and intellectual needs of gifted children.
- Value your children for who they are, not for who (or what, in some cases) they are not. Provide opportunities for a child to spend time with other children of similar interests and abilities to help them feel accepted for who they are.
- Remember that all adults involved should have the same goals for your child-positive achievement, continuous academic progress, and appropriate behavior. Develop an alliance with the teacher(s), being supportive rather than adversarial or confrontational so that you can share effective home strategies and educate others about gifted children. Anticipate difficulties, meet with teachers ahead of time, and communicate regularly with the school.
- If you think that your child will benefit from some type of academic acceleration in school, talk with his or her regular classroom teacher or the gifted/talented teacher. Discuss educational options, both in and out of the regular classroom, that are available to your child. In many cases, teachers are open to ways to meet a child's need because they know all children learn at different paces. Nurturing a child's giftedness is necessary for development.

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Overexcitability and the gifted

Sharon Lind

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A small amount of definitive research and a great deal of naturalistic observation have led to the belief that intensity, sensitivity and overexcitability are primary characteristics of the highly gifted. These observations are supported by parents and teachers who notice distinct behavioral and constitutional differences between highly gifted children and their peers. The work of Kazimierz Dabrowski, (1902-1980), provides an excellent framework with which to understand these characteristics. Dabrowski, a Polish psychiatrist and psychologist, developed the Theory of Positive Disintegration as a response to the prevalent psychological theories of his time. He believed that conflict and inner suffering were necessary for advanced development- for movement towards a hierarchy of values based on altruism- for movement from "what is" to "what ought to be." Dabrowski also observed that not all people move towards an advanced level of development but that innate ability/intelligence combined with overexcitability (OE) were predictive of potential for higher-level development. It is important to emphasize that not all gifted or highly gifted individuals have overexcitabilities. However we do find more people with OEs in the gifted population than in the average population.

OVEREXCITABILITIES

Overexcitabilities are inborn intensities indicating a heightened ability to respond to stimuli. Found to a greater degree in creative and gifted individuals, overexcitabilities are expressed in increased sensitivity, awareness, and intensity, and represent a real difference in the fabric of life and quality of experience. Dabrowski identified five areas of intensity-Psychomotor, Sensual, Intellectual, Imaginational, and Emotional. A person may possess one or more of these. "One who manifests several forms of overexcitability, sees reality in a different, stronger and more multisided manner" (Dabrowski, 1972, p. 7). Experiencing the world in this unique way carries with it great joys and sometimes great frustrations. The joys and positives of being overexcitable need to be celebrated. Any frustrations or negatives can be positively dealt with and used to help facilitate the child's growth. The five OEs are described below. Each description is followed by several examples of strategies, which represent a fraction of the possible solutions to issues that may cause concern for overexcitable individuals or those who work and live with them. These should serve as a springboard for brainstorming additional strategies or interventions that will help improve the lives of overexcitable people.

PSYCHOMOTOR OVEREXCITABILITY

Psychomotor OE is a heightened excitability of the neuromuscular system. This Psychomotor intensity includes a "capacity for being active and energetic" (Piechowski, 1991, p. 287), love of movement for its own sake, surplus of energy demonstrated by rapid speech, zealous enthusiasm, intense physical activity, and a need for action (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977; Piechowski, 1979, 1991). When feeling emotionally tense, individuals strong in Psychomotor OE may talk compulsively, act impulsively, misbehave and act out, display nervous habits, show intense drive (tending towards "workaholism"), compulsively organize, or become quite competitive. They derive great joy from their boundless physical and verbal enthusiasm and activity, but others may find them overwhelming. At home and at school, these children seem never to be still. They may talk constantly. Adults and peers want to tell them to sit down and be quiet! The Psychomotor OE child has the potential of being misdiagnosed as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

PSYCHOMOTOR STRATEGIES

- Allow time for physical or verbal activity, before, during, and after normal daily and school activities-these individuals love to "do" and need to "do." Build activity and movement into their lives.
- Be sure the physical or verbal activities are acceptable and not distracting to those around them. This may take some work, but it can be a fun project and beneficial to all.
- Provide time for spontaneity and open-ended, freewheeling activities. These tend to favor the needs of a person high in Psychomotor OE.

SENSUAL OVEREXCITABILITY

Sensual OE is expressed as a heightened experience of sensual pleasure or displeasure emanating from sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977; Piechowski, 1979, 1991). Those with Sensual OE have a far more expansive experience from their sensual input than the average person. They have an increased and early appreciation of aesthetic



pleasures such as music, language, and art, and derive endless delight from tastes, smells, textures, sounds, and sights. But because of this increased sensitivity, they may also feel over stimulated or uncomfortable with sensory input. When emotionally tense, some individuals high in Sensual OE may overeat, go on buying sprees, or seek the physical sensation of being the center of attraction (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977; Piechowski, 1979, 1991). Others may withdraw from stimulation. Sensually overexcitable children may find clothing tags, classroom noise, or smells from the cafeteria so distracting that schoolwork becomes secondary. These children may also become so absorbed in their love of a particular piece of art or music that the outside world ceases to exist.

SENSUAL STRATEGIES

- Whenever possible, create an environment which limits offensive stimuli and provides comfort.
- Provide appropriate opportunities for being in the limelight by giving unexpected attention, or facilitating creative and dramatic productions that have an audience. These individuals literally feel the recognition that comes from being in the limelight.
- Provide time to dwell in the delight of the sensual and to create a soothing environment.

INTELLECTUAL OVEREXCITABILITY

Intellectual OE is demonstrated by a marked need to seek understanding and truth, to gain knowledge, and to analyze and synthesize (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977; Piechowski, 1979, 1991). Those high in Intellectual OE have incredibly active minds. They are intensely curious, often avid readers, and usually keen observers. They are able to concentrate, engage in prolonged intellectual effort, and are tenacious in problem solving when they choose. Other characteristics may include relishing elaborate planning and having remarkably detailed visual recall. People with Intellectual OE frequently love theory, thinking about thinking, and moral thinking. This focus on moral thinking often translates into strong concerns about moral and ethical issues-fairness on the playground, lack of respect for children, or being concerned about "adult" issues such as the homeless, AIDS, or war. Intellectually overexcitable people are also quite independent of thought and sometimes appear critical of and impatient with others who cannot sustain their intellectual pace. Or they may become so excited about an idea that they interrupt at inappropriate times.

INTELLECTUAL STRATEGIES

- Show how to find the answers to questions. This respects and encourages a person's passion to analyze, synthesize, and seek understanding.
- Provide or suggest ways for those interested in moral and ethical issues to act upon their concerns-such as collecting blankets for the homeless or writing to soldiers in Kosovo. This enables them to feel that they can help, in even a small way, to solve community or worldwide problems.
- If individuals seem critical or too outspoken to others, help them to see how their intent may be perceived as cruel or disrespectful. For example saying "that is a stupid idea" may not be well received, even if the idea is truly stupid.

IMAGINATIONAL OVEREXCITABILITY

Imaginational OE reflects a heightened play of the imagination with rich association of images and impressions, frequent use of image and metaphor, facility for invention and fantasy, detailed visualization, and elaborate dreams (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977; Piechowski, 1979, 1991). Often children high in Imaginational OE mix truth with fiction, or create their own private worlds with imaginary companions and dramatizations to escape boredom. They find it difficult to stay tuned into a classroom where creativity and imagination are secondary to learning rigid academic curriculum. They may write stories or draw instead of doing seatwork or participating in class discussions, or they may have difficulty completing tasks when some incredible idea sends them off on an imaginative tangent.

IMAGINATIONAL STRATEGIES

- Imaginational people may confuse reality and fiction because their memories and new ideas become blended in their mind. Help individuals to differentiate between their imagination and the real world by having them place a stop sign in their mental videotape, or write down or draw the factual account before they embellish it.
- Help people use their imagination to function in the real world and promote learning and productivity. For example, instead of the conventional school organized notebook, have children create their own organizational system.



EMOTIONAL OVEREXCITABILITY

Emotional OE is often the first to be noticed by parents. It is reflected in heightened, intense feelings, extremes of complex emotions, identification with others' feelings, and strong affective expression (Piechowski, 1991). Other manifestations include physical responses like stomachaches and blushing or concern with death and depression (Piechowski, 1979). Emotionally overexcitable people have a remarkable capacity for deep relationships; they show strong emotional attachments to people, places, and things (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). They have compassion, empathy, and sensitivity in relationships. Those with strong Emotional OE are acutely aware of their own feelings, of how they are growing and changing, and often carry on inner dialogs and practice self-judgment (Piechowski, 1979, 1991). Children high in Emotional OE, are often accused of "overreacting." Their compassion and concern for others, their focus on relationships, and the intensity of their feelings may interfere with everyday tasks like homework or doing the dishes.

EMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

- Accept all feelings, regardless of intensity. For people who are not highly emotional, this seems particularly odd. They feel that those high in Emotional OE are just being melodramatic. But if we accept their emotional intensity and help them work through any problems that might result, we will facilitate healthy growth.
- Teach individuals to anticipate physical and emotional responses and prepare for them. Emotionally intense people often don't know when they are becoming so overwrought that they may lose control or may have physical responses to their emotions. Help them to identify the physical warning signs of their emotional stress such as headache, sweaty palms, and stomachache. By knowing the warning signs and acting on them early, individuals will be better able to cope with emotional situations and not lose control.

GENERAL STRATEGIES

It is often quite difficult and demanding to work and live with overexcitable individuals. Those who are not so, find the behaviors unexplainable, frequently incomprehensible, and often bizarre. Overexcitable people living with other overexcitable people often have more compassion and understanding for each other, but may feel conflicts when their OEs are not to the same degree. Finding strategies for helping children and adults deal with and take advantage of these innate and enduring characteristics may seem difficult. However, resources may be gathered from varied places: Literature regarding counseling, learning styles, special education, and classroom management; parenting books; even popular business texts. Perhaps the best place to begin is with the following general strategies, applicable regardless of which OEs are present.

DISCUSS THE CONCEPT OF OVEREXCITABILITY

Share the descriptions of OEs with the family, class, or counseling group. Ask individuals if they see themselves with some of the characteristics. Point out that this article and many others like it indicates that being overexcitable is OK and it is understood and accepted.

FOCUS ON THE POSITIVES

Jointly discuss the positives of each overexcitability when you first introduce the concept, and continue to point out these merits. Benefits include being energetic, enthusiastic, sensual, aesthetic, curious, loyal, tenacious, moral, metacognitive, integrative, creative, metaphorical, dramatic, poetic, compassion-ate, empathetic, and self-aware.

CHERISH AND CELEBRATE DIVERSITY

One outcome of the pursuit of educational and societal equity has been a diminishing of the celebration of diversity and individual differences. Highly gifted individuals, because of their uniqueness, can fall prey to the public and personal belief that they are not OK. It is vital when discussing OEs that individuals realize that overexcitability is just one more description of who they are, as is being tall, or Asian, or left-handed. Since OEs are inborn traits, they cannot be unlearned! It is therefore exceedingly important that we accept our overexcitable selves, children, and friends. This acceptance provides validation and helps to free people from feelings of "weirdness" and isolation.

Another way to show acceptance is to provide opportunities for people to pursue their passions. This shows respect for their abilities and intensities and allows time for them to "wallow" in what they love, to be validated for who they are. Removing passions as consequences for inappropriate behavior has a negative effect by giving the message that your passions, the essence of who you are, are not valuable or worthy of respect.



USE AND TEACH CLEAR VERBAL AND NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

All people deserve respect and need to be listened to and responded to with grace. Overexcitable people need this understanding and patience to a greater degree because they are experiencing the world with greater intensity and need to be able to share their intensity and feelings of differentness to thrive. It is vital to learn good communication skills and to teach them to children. Good communication skills are useful on multiple levels, from improving the chances of getting what you want, to nurturing and facilitating growth in others. Regardless of one's motivation for learning these skills, the outcomes will include less stress, greater self-acceptance, greater understanding from and about others, and less daily friction at home, school, work, or in the grocery store.

When learning communication skills be sure to include both verbal-listening, responding, questioning, telephoning, problem solving (Faber and Mazlish, 1980), and nonverbal-rhythm and use of time, interpersonal distance and touch, gestures and postures, facial expressions, tone of voice, and style of dress (Nowicki, 1992). Verbal and nonverbal strategies improve interpersonal communication and provide the skills individuals need to fit in when they wish to, to change the system if necessary, and to treat others with caring and respect.

TEACH STRESS MANAGEMENT FROM TODDLERHOOD ON

Everyone deals with stress on a daily basis. But overexcitable individuals have increased stress reactions because of their increased reception of and reaction to external input. There are many programs and books about stress reduction. The key components are to (1) learn to identify your stress symptoms: headache, backache, pencil tapping, pacing, etc. (2) develop strategies for coping with stress: talk about your feelings, do relaxation exercises, change your diet, exercise, meditate, ask for help, develop organizational and time management skills and (3) develop strategies to prevent stress: make time for fun; develop a cadre of people to help, advise, humor you; practice tolerance of your own and others' imperfections.

CREATE A COMFORTING ENVIRONMENT WHENEVER POSSIBLE

Intense people need to know how to make their environment more comfortable in order to create places for retreat or safety. For example: find places to work or think which are not distracting, work in a quiet or calm environment, listen to music, look at a lovely picture, carry a comforting item, move while working, or wear clothing which does not scratch or cling. Learning to finesse one's environment to meet one's needs takes experimentation and cooperation from others, but the outcome will be a greater sense of well being and improved productivity.

HELP TO RAISE AWARENESS OF ONE'S BEHAVIORS AND THEIR IMPACT ON OTHERS

Paradoxically, overexcitable people are often insensitive and unaware of how their behaviors affect others. They may assume that everyone will just understand why they interrupt to share an important idea, or tune out when creating a short story in their head during dinner. It is vital to teach children and adults to be responsible for their behaviors, to become more aware of how their behaviors affect others, and to understand that their needs are not more important than those of others. The key is to realize that you can show children and adults how they are perceived, you can teach them strategies to fit in, but they must choose to change.

REMEMBER THE JOY

Often when overexcitability is discussed examples and concerns are mostly negative. Remember that being overexcitable also brings with it great joy, astonishment, beauty, compassion, and creativity. Perhaps the most important thing is to acknowledge and relish the uniqueness of an overexcitable child or adult.

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Dabrowski, K & Piechowski, M.M. (1977). Theory of levels of emotional development (Vols.1 & 2). Oceanside, NY: Dabor Science. (Out of print)
Faber, A. & Mazlish, E. (1980). How to talk so kids will listen, and listen so kids will talk. New York: Avon.

Executive skill	Definition	Examples	Executive skill	Definition	Examples
Response inhibition	The capacity to think before you act—this ability to resist the urge to say or do something allows your child the time to evaluate a situation and how his or her behavior might impact it.	A young child can wait for a short period without being disruptive. An adolescent can accept a referee's call without an argument.	Time management	The capacity to estimate how much time one has, how to allocate it, and how to stay within time limits and deadlines. It also involves a sense that time is important.	A young child can complete a short job within a time limit set by an adult. A teenager can establish a schedule to meet task deadlines.
Working memory	The ability to hold information in memory while performing complex tasks. It incorporates the ability to draw on past learning or experience to apply to the situation at hand or to project into the future.	A young child can hold in mind and follow one- or two-step directions. The middle school child can remember the expectations of multiple teachers.	Goal-directed persistence	The capacity to have a goal, follow through to the completion of the goal, and not be put off by or distracted by competing interests.	A first grader can complete a job to get to recess. A teenager can earn and save money over time to buy something of importance.
Emotional control	The ability to manage emotions to achieve goals, complete tasks, or control and direct behavior.	A young child with this skill can recover from a disappointment in a short time. A teenager can manage the anxiety of a game or test and still perform.	Flexibility	The ability to revise plans in the face of obstacles, setbacks, new information, or mistakes. It relates to an adaptability to changing conditions.	A young child can adjust to a change in plans without major distress. A teenager can accept an alternative such as a different job when the first choice is not available.
Sustained attention	The capacity to keep paying attention to a situation or task in spite of distractibility, fatigue, or boredom.	Completing a 5-minute chore with occasional supervision is an example of sustained attention in the younger child. A teenager can pay attention to homework, with short breaks, for 1 to 2 hours.	Metacognition	The ability to stand back and take a bird's-eye view of yourself in a situation, to observe how you problem solve. It also includes self-monitoring and self-evaluative skills (e.g., asking yourself, "How am I doing?" or "How did I do?").	A young child can change behavior in response to feedback from an adult. A teenager can monitor and critique her performance and improve it by observing others who are more skilled.
Task initiation	The ability to begin projects without undue procrastination, in an efficient or timely fashion.	A young child is able to start a chore or assignment right after instructions are given. A teenager does not wait until the last minute to begin a project.			
Planning/prioritization	The ability to create a roadmap to reach a goal or to complete a task. It also involves being able to make decisions about what's important to focus on and what's not important.	A young child, with coaching, can think of options to settle a peer conflict. A teenager can formulate a plan to get a job.			
Organization	The ability to create and maintain systems to keep track of information or materials.	A young child can, with a reminder, put toys in a designated place. A teenager can organize and locate sports equipment.			

EXECUTIVE SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHILDREN— PRESCHOOL/KINDERGARTEN VERSION

Read each item below and then rate that item based on how well it describes your child. Then add the three scores in each section. Find the three highest and three lowest scores.

Strongly agree	5
Agree	4
Neutral	3
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	1



	Score
1. Acts appropriately in some situations where danger is obvious (e.g., avoiding hot stove).	_____
2. Can share toys without grabbing.	_____
3. Can wait for a short period of time when instructed by an adult.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
4. Runs simple errands (e.g., gets shoes from bedroom when asked).	_____
5. Remembers instructions just given.	_____
6. Follows two steps of a routine with only one prompt per step.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
7. Can recover fairly quickly from a disappointment or change in plans.	_____
8. Is able to use nonphysical solutions when another child takes toy away.	_____
9. Can play in a group without becoming overly excited.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
10. Can complete a 5-minute chore (may need supervision).	_____
11. Can sit through preschool "circle time" (15-20 minutes).	_____
12. Can listen to one to two stories at a sitting.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
13. Will follow an adult directive right after it is given.	_____
14. Will stop playing to follow an adult instruction when directed.	_____
15. Is able to start getting ready for bed at set time with one reminder.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
16. Can finish one task or activity before beginning another.	_____
17. Is able to follow a brief routine or plan developed by someone else (with model or demo).	_____
18. Can complete a simple art project with more than one step.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____

(cont.)

Executive Skills Questionnaire—Preschool/Kindergarten Version (cont.)

19. Hangs up coat in appropriate place (may need one reminder). _____
20. Puts toys in proper locations (with reminders). _____
21. Clears off place setting after eating (may need one reminder). _____
- TOTAL SCORE: _____
22. Can complete daily routines without dawdling (with some cues/ reminders). _____
23. Can speed up and finish something more quickly when given a reason to do so. _____
24. Can finish a small chore within time limits (e.g., make bed before turning on TV). _____
- TOTAL SCORE: _____
25. Will direct other children in play or pretend play activities. _____
26. Will seek assistance in conflict resolution for a desired item. _____
27. Will try more than one solution to get to a simple goal. _____
- TOTAL SCORE: _____
28. Is able to adjust to change in plans or routines (may need warning). _____
29. Recovers quickly from minor disappointments. _____
30. Is willing to share toys with others. _____
- TOTAL SCORE: _____
31. Can make minor adjustment in construction project or puzzle when first attempt fails. _____
32. Can find novel (but simple) use of a tool to solve a problem. _____
33. Makes suggestions to another child for how to fix something. _____
- TOTAL SCORE: _____

KEY			
Items	Executive skill	Items	Executive skill
1-3	Response inhibition	4-6	Working memory
7-9	Emotional control	10-12	Sustained attention
13-15	Task initiation	16-18	Planning/prioritization
19-21	Organization	22-24	Time management
25-27	Goal-directed persistence	28-30	Flexibility
31-33	Metacognition		

**Your child's executive skill strengths
(highest scores)**

**Your child's executive skill weaknesses
(lowest scores)**

EXECUTIVE SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

Read each item and then rate how well you think it describes you. Then add the three scores in each section.

Strongly disagree	1
Disagree	2
Tend to disagree	3
Neutral	4
Tend to agree	5
Agree	6
Strongly agree	7

Your score

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|-------|
| 1. I don't jump to conclusions. | | _____ |
| 2. I think before I speak. | | _____ |
| 3. I don't take action without having all the facts. | | _____ |
| | YOUR TOTAL SCORE: | _____ |
| 4. I have a good memory for facts, dates, and details. | | _____ |
| 5. I am very good at remembering the things I have committed to do. | | _____ |
| 6. I seldom need reminders to complete tasks. | | _____ |
| | YOUR TOTAL SCORE: | _____ |
| 7. My emotions seldom get in the way when performing on the job. | | _____ |
| 8. Little things do not affect me emotionally or distract me from the task at hand. | | _____ |
| 9. I can defer my personal feelings until after a task has been completed. | | _____ |
| | YOUR TOTAL SCORE: | _____ |
| 10. No matter what the task, I believe in getting started as soon as possible. | | _____ |
| 11. Procrastination is usually not a problem for me. | | _____ |
| 12. I seldom leave tasks to the last minute. | | _____ |
| | YOUR TOTAL SCORE: | _____ |
| 13. I find it easy to stay focused on my work. | | _____ |
| 14. Once I start an assignment, I work diligently until it's completed. | | _____ |
| 15. Even when interrupted, I find it easy to get back and complete the job at hand. | | _____ |
| | YOUR TOTAL SCORE: | _____ |
| 16. When I plan out my day, I identify priorities and stick to them. | | _____ |
| 17. When I have a lot to do, I can easily focus on the most important things. | | _____ |

(cont.)

Executive Skills Questionnaire for Parents (cont.)

18. I typically break big tasks down into subtasks and timelines.

YOUR TOTAL SCORE: _____

19. I am an organized person.

20. It is natural for me to keep my work area neat and organized.

21. I am good at maintaining systems for organizing my work.

YOUR TOTAL SCORE: _____

22. At the end of the day, I've usually finished what I set out to do.

23. I am good at estimating how long it takes to do something.

24. I am usually on time for appointments and activities.

YOUR TOTAL SCORE: _____

25. I think of myself as being driven to meet my goals.

26. I easily give up immediate pleasures to work on long-term goals.

27. I believe in setting and achieving high levels of performance.

YOUR TOTAL SCORE: _____

28. I routinely evaluate my performance and devise methods for personal improvement.

29. I am able to step back from a situation to make objective decisions.

30. I "read" situations well and can adjust my behavior based on the reactions of others.

YOUR TOTAL SCORE: _____

31. I take unexpected events in stride.

32. I easily adjust to changes in plans and priorities.

33. I consider myself flexible and adaptive to change.

YOUR TOTAL SCORE: _____

KEY

Items	Executive skill	Items	Executive skill
1-3	Response inhibition	4-6	Working memory
7-9	Emotional control	10-12	Task initiation
13-15	Sustained attention	16-18	Planning/prioritization
19-21	Organization	22-24	Time management
25-27	Goal-directed persistence	28-30	Metacognition
31-33	Flexibility		

**Your executive skill strengths
(highest scores)**

**Your executive skill weaknesses
(lowest scores)**

executive skills addressed: Task initiation (Chapter 15), sustained attention (Chapter 14), working memory (Chapter 12), organization (Chapter 17).

Notes: Specifics we've included are for ages 7–10, but this routine is very easy to customize for younger and older children just by changing the sophistication of the tasks.

Sit down with your child and together make a list of the steps involved in cleaning his or her bedroom. They might look like this:

- Put dirty clothes in laundry
- Put clean clothes in dresser/closet
- Put toys away on toy shelves or in boxes/bins
- Put books on bookshelves
- Clean off desk surface
- Throw away trash
- Return things to other rooms (dirty dishes to kitchen, towels to bathroom, etc.)

Turn the list into a checklist (a sample based on the list above follows; use it as is or as a model with your own tasks in the left column).

Decide when the chore will be done.

Decide what kinds of cues and reminders the child will get before and during the task.

Decide how much help the child will get in the beginning (the long-term goal should be for the child to clean the room alone).

Decide how the quality of the task will be judged.

Put the routine in place with the agreed-upon cues, reminders, and help.

Timing the Supervision

Cue your child to begin and supervise throughout the routine, providing frequent praise and encouragement as well as constructive feedback.

Cue your child to begin, make sure he or she starts each step, and then go away and come back for the next step.

Cue your child to begin, then check on him or her intermittently (every two steps, then every three steps, etc.).

Cue your child to begin and have him or her check in with you at the end.

Modifications/Adjustments

1. Add a reinforcer if needed. This could either be giving the child something to look forward to doing when the chore is completed, or giving the child points for completing each step, with rewards selected from a reward menu. Rewarding your child for completing each step with no more than one or two reminders or prompts is another way to organize a reward system.
2. If even with your constant presence, cueing, and praise, the child can't follow the routine, begin by working alongside your child, sharing each task.
3. If even that is too much, consider using a backward chaining approach—you clean the entire room except for one small piece and have the child do that piece with supervision and praise. Gradually add in more pieces for the child to do until the child is doing the entire job.
4. Make the room easier to clean—use storage bins that the child can “dump” toys into and label each bin.
5. Take a photograph of what a “clean room” looks like, so when your child completes the task, you can ask him or her to rate his or her performance by comparing his or her work to the photo.
6. For younger children, use pictures of each step rather than words; reduce the number of steps; assume the child will need help rather than expecting him or her to work alone.

BEDROOM-CLEANING CHECKLIST

Task	Number of reminders Tally marks (////)	Done (✓)
Put dirty clothes in laundry		
Put clean clothes in dresser/closet		
Put toys away (toy shelves, toy box)		
Put books on bookshelves		
Tidy desk		
Throw away trash		
Return things to other rooms (e.g., dishes, cups, towels, sports stuff)		
Other:		
Other:		

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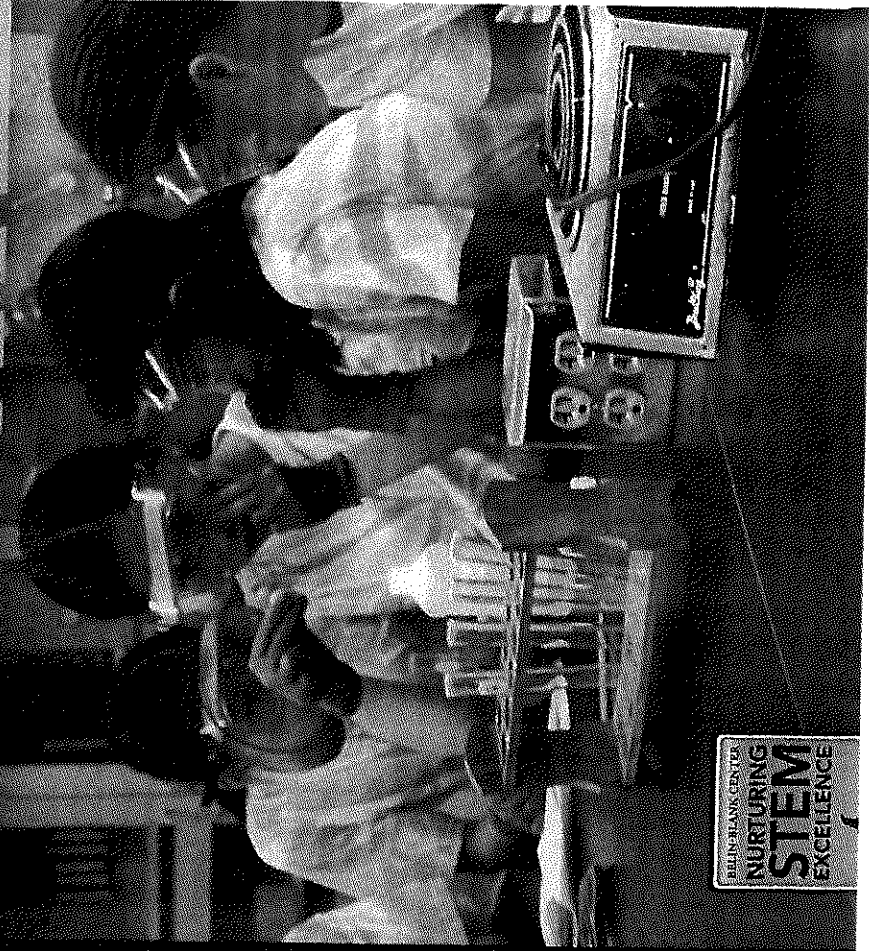
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PROGRAMS IN

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students each summer in specialized residential programs and another 400 in commuter programs. We also provide Advanced Placement coursework in STEM courses through the Iowa Online Advanced Placement Academy. Described below are the main STEM opportunities available to students and educators through the Belin-Blank Center's comprehensive programming.

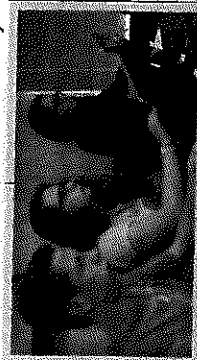
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT supports educators' awareness of the STEM potential of many gifted learners. Examples of workshops include:

2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
BLAST!										
Robotics, Mathematics, Computer Programming, Science, Engineering										

WEEKEND INSTITUTE FOR GIFTED STUDENTS (WINGS)
Math, Computer Science, Engineering

CHALLENGE SATURDAYS
Robotics, Mathematics, Computer Programming, Science, Engineering, Innovation and Invention

INVENT IOWA
Year-long inventiveness program and an annual one-day state competition



JUNIOR SCHOLARS INSTITUTE
Robotics, Mathematics, Computer Programming, Science, Engineering

STEM EXCELLENCE AND LEADERSHIP
Math and science programming for rural students



BLANK SUMMER INSTITUTE
Mathematics, Science, Innovation and Invention



NATIONAL SCHOLARS INSTITUTE
Science, Engineering, Computer Programming

INNOVATION INSTITUTE
Computer Programming and Business Entrepreneurship

IOWA ONLINE ADVANCED PLACEMENT ACADEMY
AP STEM courses available online



SECONDARY STUDENT TRAINING PROGRAM
Students conduct research with professors in University of Iowa laboratories

BELIN-BLANK STEM ACADEMY
Early entrance to college program

JUNIOR SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES SYMPOSIUM