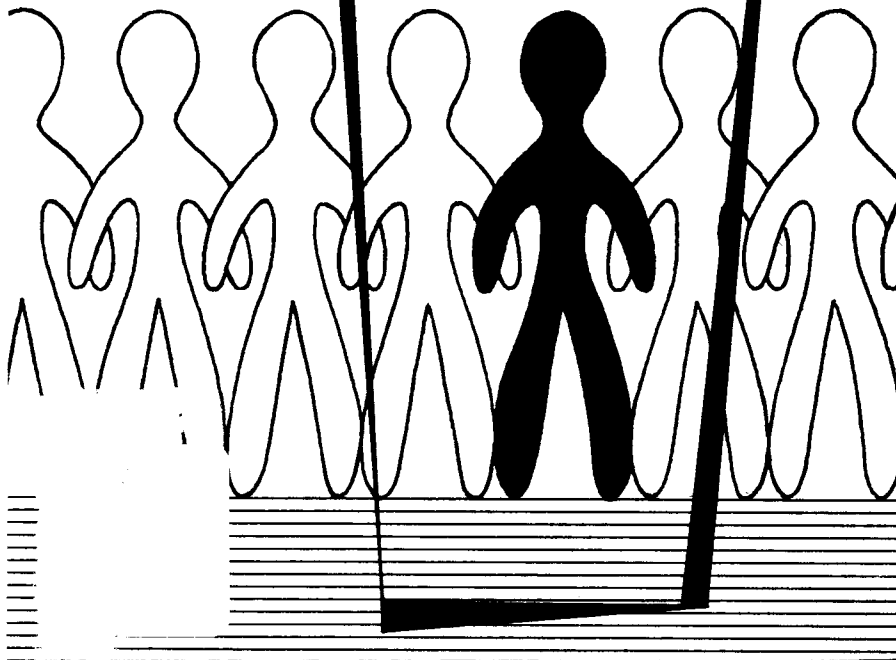


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your  
gifted  
child



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In keeping with the Children's Bureau's interest in all children, this publication centers on a long neglected group—boys and girls who have unusual abilities.

To help parents, the Bureau gathered information from a great many people who work with and know these children well. Early drafts of the manuscript were reviewed by over 100 educators, physicians, teachers, guidance people, parents of gifted children and gifted children themselves.

Although addressed mainly to parents, the Children's Bureau believes this pamphlet also will be of value to members of the professions serving children.

*Katherine B. Oettinger*

Katherine B. Oettinger  
Chief, Children's Bureau  
WELFARE ADMINISTRATION

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your  
gifted  
child



Is the unusually gifted child a fortunate boy or girl? How does it affect a child who is especially bright to live in a world set up mainly for minds that operate more slowly than his does? What is the best way to bring up someone who potentially may be smarter than you are, or who has another special gift? How can a parent help his gifted child have a chance to develop to his fullest and have a happy and productive life?

At some time, possibly every parent of a gifted child has asked himself such questions. Teachers have long been aware of the problem. But in far too many places overcrowded classrooms, lack of time, poor facilities have prevented them from doing as much as they would like to do about these children who have within them the raw materials for outstanding accomplishments.

A great many other people, though, would do nothing even if they could. They have expressed their feelings in no uncertain terms: "They can take care of themselves."

"They're already better equipped than most children to make their way in the world." "It's undemocratic to single them out for special help when nothing's 'wrong' with them." "Frills and fads." And so on and on.

Such sentiments have had a great deal to do with the fact that gifted children have received too little attention, even less than the limited consideration given to other exceptional children—the physically, mentally, and emotionally crippled.

Fortunately, things are taking a turn for the better. Throughout the nation, more and more thoughtful people are recognizing what we are losing by neglecting these children and they are trying to do something about the problem. Not only gifted children will benefit by this spreading concern. But the outcome should also help all other children to more fully realize their capabilities.

### *What does gifted mean?*

There are a great many definitions for the term. Some are broad and some precise.

One educator described a gifted child as ". . . any child whose performance in a potentially valuable line of human endeavor is consistently superior."

Another said: ". . . every child who in his age group is superior in some ability which may make him an outstanding contributor to the welfare of society."

Another said: "The top 1 percent of the juvenile population in general intelligence."

Drawing from several definitions, this pamphlet calls a child gifted when he performs much better than his age group in a way or ways that give promise of future high level achievement or contribution.

In other words, they are in the comparatively small group from which are likely to come our most creative and outstanding artists, teachers, scientists, engineers, philosophers,

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explorers, historians, economists, psychologists, jurists, poets, educators, writers, inventors, ministers, statesmen, business leaders.

*What do some people call them?*

In the past a great many terms have been used to describe the gifted child. These children have been called precocious, supernormal, brilliant, talented, brainy—quick or fast or rapid learners—quiz kids, egg heads, geniuses. Not all of the words have been used in praise. Even the more complimentary terms have sometimes been said in scorn.

And through the years, various word pictures have attached themselves to the terms. When some people hear a child referred to as gifted, bright, a prodigy, they think of a cartoon of a cute little fellow with oversized glasses, reading through a stack of big, heavy books. Others, however, think of nothing so amusing. They are likely to use such words as peculiar, odd, freakish, cracked, screwball, eccentric, neurotic, unstable, queer, abnormal.

*What are they really like?*

Study after study says: "Gifted children are not that way." A gifted child is neither the weird nor the comic-strip character so often thought of. And, from the other side of the coin, neither does he have *all* of the desirable traits and characteristics attributed to the gifted.

Comparative studies made of large numbers of gifted and average children show that gifted children are more likely to be the largest, strongest, and healthiest.

Far from being misfits, most gifted children have good mental health, get along well with people, are alert and happy.

As a group, they have more interests than a group of average children. They tend to learn more and are quicker.

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They are more discriminating, better able to keep their minds on a subject, more successful in thinking for themselves, solving problems, inventing, creating, and improving. They stick to a task they are interested in longer than the average child. They mature earlier.

Follow-up studies show that in proportion more of them turn out well than do other children. As they grow older, they maintain their mental powers as well as their good health.

### *Are they all alike?*

Gifted children are as different from each other as they are different from other children. One may have a great many of the traits and characteristics described above. Another may have only a few. One may be highly talented along several lines. Another may be talented in one way only. A gifted child may even be handicapped in one or more ways.

These children come from every level of society and every section of the country. They are from all races and from both sides of the railroad track.

The following stories of May, David, Kathy, Charles, Lise, and Frank will help to further fill in the picture of gifted boys and girls.

### **MAY**

May Wong spent every spare moment in the school chemistry lab. When she blew up a double boiler making an experiment in the kitchen at home, Mr. Wong built her a work space in the basement. May agreed that in the future before she'd try anything on her own, she'd talk it over with her teacher. By her senior year, May had finished with honors all the chemistry the school offered, as well as

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a couple of correspondence courses recommended by her teacher. The summer before she entered college, she worked with distinction in the laboratory of the city hospital.

#### DAVID

David Bonn was 12 years old when he began getting his poems into the slick magazines. In talking with a newspaper reporter about it, Mrs. Bonn said she and her husband had always read aloud to the children—a great deal of it poetry. David had listened but didn't have too much to say when the others talked about what had been read. Then one night he read them a poem he had written. That was 4 years ago. Dave had been writing verse ever since. His English teacher had sent the poems to the magazines.

#### KATHY

In kindergarten, people thought of Kathy Peters as a born leader. In the fourth grade, her schoolmates voted her the most popular. In the sixth grade, they voted her the best citizen. One of her first acts after being elected president of the eighth grade was to successfully direct two campaigns. One—to landscape the school's entrance—was under the supervision of the agriculture teacher. In the other, the class went into the community and raised funds from the town's businessmen for bleachers for the girl's gym.

#### CHARLES

The junior high chorus teacher was pleased and the art teacher surprised when Charles Reed appeared one Monday

morning with color sketches for the sets and costumes for the May operetta. "I'll make that statue myself," Charles pointed to one of the drawings. "My dad said he'd help me." Charles' father was a pullman car porter. "He doesn't know much about drawings or making a statue," Charles said, "but he knows how to help me get what I need to do them." Having worked successfully on the operetta, Charles soon was designing sets for high school plays and was called in to help at the local playhouse.

### FRANK

Frank Rogers was superior in almost everything he undertook. He ranked highest in the school in math and French, but what he wanted to be was a baseball player. He had wanted this even when he was so small he could hardly lift a bat or hold a catcher's mit. Frank's father, a catcher in the minor league for a couple of years, had made it a point to coach and play with his son every time he had a chance. In grade school, Frank became a little-league star. He made the varsity his first year in high school. That year a scout from the big league saw him pitch two games and put his name down as somebody to watch.

### LISE

When she was 6 years old, Lise Lane was already making up tunes on the piano to express how she felt about a thing and how things impressed her. Later on when she began playing several other instruments, she composed a number of pieces for the trumpet. She was so good at that instrument that her teacher arranged for her to play with the consolidated high school band. In her last year in junior high, the band added her school march to its repertoire.



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When a sophomore in college, one of her compositions won second prize in a national contest.

### *How do we know when a child is gifted?*

This age of invention and mechanical progress hasn't as yet produced a Geiger counter that will tell us if a child is gifted. We have to date made no foolproof yardstick that will measure accurately the amount of talent he may have. We are still unable to identify with certainty those children who will make outstanding contributions when they grow up.

A child's individual ability is gauged by a combination of means: developmental records, observations of behavior, achievement, performance, records by parents, and various types of intelligence and achievement tests.

### *What do tests mean?*

Almost all of us have heard of the I.Q. or Intelligence Quotient. We've not only heard of it, but make use of the expression. In talking about an I.Q., some people seem to think that it's the most valuable way of telling how smart anyone really is. Actually, the original purpose of I.Q. tests, as developed half a century ago, was to find out how well a child could be expected to do in school—and that is still the main purpose and the chief value of the I.Q. The tests weren't expected to show what special talents that child might have nor how he might do in life.

Usually schools are, understandably, reluctant to tell parents their child's I.Q. They feel that the I.Q. by itself has little meaning and that it would be misinterpreted as often as not. The Intelligence Quotient does not tell the most important thing about a child. It's just one of many yardsticks that a school may use in measuring him.

An I.Q. is sometimes confused with the results of many

other tests which have been developed since the I.Q. was first used. For example, a teacher may give what is called an "achievement test" to an entire classroom. The results of such tests are usually reported in terms of grade levels. For example, although Dan is in the sixth grade, he may score fifth grade ability in arithmetic. Yet he may score seventh grade in the words he knows and uses correctly, and he might even score eighth grade in reading and understanding. There are also group tests which measure grade levels in use of language, spelling, and other subjects.

In other words, these tests give the teacher some idea of how well Dan's progress compares with the other children in a variety of subjects. That is very helpful information, especially in that it shows where Dan may be falling down. The cause of the trouble is a matter which the teacher has to judge in each individual case. But I.Q. tests and achievement tests can help the teacher see what may be wrong and what to "try next" in dealing with individual children. In



some cases, she may feel that further tests should be given before a decision is made.

The teacher may give tests that help her judge Dan's personality, including factors unrelated to ability. The results of these tests may show how well he is getting along with other children, and may even give some idea as to how he is likely to get along in life. Such tests may, for example, measure attitudes or emotional maturity.

For all their value, tests have limitations. They don't measure a child's future accomplishments, his possible creativity, original thinking, inventiveness, vitality, drive. They don't pick out the pioneer who'll discover new realms in art, in music, in science, as different from the person who performs exceptionally well in any of these fields. Such rare and distinctive "pioneering" abilities are hard to recognize. Only time and what these persons achieve or produce will point them out.

### *Can a parent tell?*

Parents are not necessarily the best judges whether their children have unusual talents. Giftedness is not easy to recognize even by people who know children best.

Although some parents have been the first to recognize that their child was gifted, some others were surprised when they were told that about their child. "I thought he was just ordinary," they often say, "no better nor worse than any other child, just average."

Some parents may feel sure that their child has unusual talents because of something he's able to do that is not unusual at all. It may be just a flair for art or music, or the like. Being able to draw well or to sing well doesn't necessarily mean a child is going to be a painter or a musician. Often parents don't know children in great enough numbers to be able to compare them with any degree of accuracy.

Experts tell parents to adopt a wait-and-see attitude, and

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not to rely on their own judgment alone. Before any child reaches school age, and certainly before age 3 to 4, it's unwise to decide that he's gifted, retarded, withdrawn, or anything else. The results of tests given to infants can't be depended upon at all, and, with pre-schoolers, only a few special tests, such as tests for hearing ability, give dependable scores. This applies to all children, girls and boys, gifted or otherwise.

Tests given to children under two years of age lean heavily on physical maturity for scores. How fast a child gets up on his feet and starts using his hands and fingers is interesting, and is sometimes important in connection with his muscular development. But it has practically no connection with general intelligence. As a child grows older, it begins to be possible to test his ability to know and use many words, to reason, to think abstractly, to imitate models, to remember. These are the things that matter so far as intelligence is concerned.

A child's physical growth may leap ahead of his mental maturity. The opposite can be the case, too. Whatever happens at one phase of a child's growth is not a good indication of what may happen at a later stage.

For these reasons, scores on tests given in early years will tell little about how bright a child will be in later life.

### *Some early signs*

Nevertheless, at a very early age, some children may show signs of having unusual ability. Few children have all of the talents we shall talk about. Most of them have only one kind.

Children who may be talented along academic lines usually begin talking at a very early age. They may know and correctly use many more words than other children of their age do. They may speak in sentences before other children do.

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They remember details exceptionally well. Some of them are interested in calendars, clocks, and numbers. They can keep their minds on a subject longer than other children. They are especially good at remembering and reporting on facts about things they have seen or heard. They have insatiable curiosity. They're the penetrating questioners and really are interested in the answers and probe deeper and deeper into a problem. They also like to work on their own problems. Often they read before starting to school, without any formal teaching, but by asking what this and that words means, in books, signs, newspapers, following the words with their eyes as their parents read, gradually building up the skill almost by themselves.

The very young child may show his interests and promises in art by beginning to draw, finger paint, model in clay, or carve in soap. He may show quite a knack for color and design. Often these traits go along with an unusual interest in art exhibits and museums, in other persons' drawing, painting, and sculpture.

Some children have an early interest in music. Not only do they love to sing but they are able to carry tunes quite well. They enjoy rhythm and melody. They may be skilled at playing some musical instrument at an extremely early age.

Talent for working well with other people is another gift. Some very young children may show this talent for leadership. It may come to light in many ways, in their ability to get along with others, their understanding and management of situations, their tactfulness, and regard for other people's feelings.

### *Inspect your attitudes*

Parents react differently when it's definitely decided that their child has rare and unusual gifts. Some are boastful. Some deny it, do everything to discourage the belief, even

try to conceal the fact. Others take a middle of the road and more healthful attitude. They are proud, yet modest and keep their child's welfare uppermost in mind.

What parents think and feel about their child has much to do with what he does with his gifts. In bringing up any child, parents need to take stock of their own feelings and attitudes about him. To be able to help John and Jane most, parents need to know their pluses and minuses. This knowledge is much more helpful than knowing if John and Jane are better in this or that than are Tom and Mary who live next door.

If Mr. and Mrs. Brown consider John's brightness as just another thing to take into consideration in his upbringing, then he's a fortunate child. But if the Brown's see John as a means of building up their own self-esteem, then he already has two strikes against him. Possibly one or both parents want to use him to compensate for their own failures and disappointments. They may be dissatisfied with their own shortcomings. They gain status by showing him off. They push him to make outstanding marks so they may bask in his glory.

Many adults who were gifted children report their unhappiness at such treatment. "I felt that they loved me for what I could do—not who I was," many of them have said.

Some parents push their children far beyond their capacities. A child so treated can become tense and anxious or refuse to study or answer questions correctly. By this means only does he think he can escape the pressure.

### *His needs are his rights*

Like all children, a gifted child's needs are his rights. First of all he must have food, clothes, shelter, physical care, and good health. Important as these are, they're in no way more important than his need to have love, to feel safe, to be wanted, to be understood, to be appreciated, to

feel success, and to be given every means of growing and developing to the fullest of his ability.

Although the gifted child may be different from most other children in some respects, certainly he's like them in all of these needs. They are the foundation on which life is built. Nothing can take their place. Deny them to any child and life becomes unfairly difficult.

The parent who is a good parent in these respects has met the first tests, the most important tests, with flying colors. What more he may do is often called enrichment. We shall talk of that later.

### *Your child's early years*

Every child's first 4 or 5 years form one of the most important spans of his life. During that time the foundations for mental and physical health are laid.

Infancy and the years before he starts school are busy times indeed. Every waking minute is taken up with learning some new and complex task. He's becoming acquainted with his parents and family, learning to walk and talk, making his first contacts with a great number of ideas and things and with the outside world.

When he's around 3 years of age, he may want to branch out. Up to this time, he's been pretty well satisfied to stay at home, playing by himself or with his brothers and sisters. Now he'll want to begin going out into the world. Maybe there's a good nursery school in your town, or a play group that meets for an hour or two each day, since a longer daily program is too tiring for some young children. If your town has either, consider enrolling your child. Being in a group of children of his age helps him become a more social human being. If no nursery school is available, or if costs are too high, try to arrange for him to be with neighborhood children. Some groups of parents organize their own nursery school.



When a child enters school it is helpful for his teacher to have some idea of his past life. Such information helps round out the picture, gives more understanding of him, and is valuable in planning his work. When did he first walk? Talk? What things interest him? Is he especially good at this or that? Because memories are so tricky, some parents keep a written record of the main events of the first few years of their child's life.

Learn all you can about how children grow and develop and vary one from the other, what they need, and what they don't need. The more you learn the more you will be able



to do towards starting your gifted child on the right road to a good life.

### *How should he be treated?*

Your gifted child will be much happier if he's treated with the same consideration due all boys and girls.

He takes pride in accomplishment, likes to feel that he's making a contribution to the family. He flourishes when given responsibility. When he's old enough, give him regular duties that are in keeping with his age. At first these tasks may be very simple, but as he grows older they should be harder. He likes to be on his own and works better when free of too close supervision. But he wants to know that his parents will be there to back him up and reassure him when he makes a mistake or a wrong decision.

There are a lot of "Whys?" in his life. He works along better when he knows why you want him to do a thing or why you don't. He has a mind and will of his own. But he is more reasonable than most other children. Guide him and use gentle persuasion rather than commands. Talk a problem over with him. Give him a chance to tell how he feels about it. When he speaks, listen. In that way, he often sees your way of thinking and may willingly accept your decision.

Some parents are used to their gifted child reasoning like a grownup and expects all of his other behavior to be at the same level. It's hard for them to realize that he's still a child in most other ways. As a result these parents may be overcritical. This often makes the child feel inferior and persecuted.

When firmness is needed, he wants that. He has a pretty good idea of when his parents should take a strong stand. Then he wants them to take it, to know how to say "no" and mean it.

In the life of every child there's a time for rewards and a

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time for punishment. Punishment for any child should be suitable to the occasion and of a kind and amount necessary to secure right action.

### *They have their problems*

Like all children, gifted children have their problems. Most of the time, most of them have smooth sailing. But sometimes the weather gets stormy, for some more than others.

Being aware of the nature of these problems will enable parents and others who work with these children to be on the lookout for ways to help them.

Because they are advanced, gifted children may operate differently from others. The boys and girls they would like to be friends with become aware of this soon. A gifted child's ideas are likely to be more grownup. He often uses big words that other children don't understand and talks about things that they may not know about. Their interests don't match.

Being more alert, quicker, brighter and surer than other children can have its drawbacks. Such traits usually please parents and teachers. Some few children understand, respect, and admire them. But the chances are that a great many will not.

Since a gifted child knows the right answer or sees how to get it before other children do, he tends to tell the other students what should be done and how it should be done. That doesn't always endear him to his playmates or classmates. They may award him the title of "bossy" or "the brain." Also, he may correct their mistakes. He may even correct the mistakes of his teachers and parents.

Sometimes a teacher at school, just as the parent at home, finds himself putting the gifted child too much in the spotlight as a good example. This doesn't help his standing with fellow students or with his brothers and sisters either.

As a result some gifted children may try to hide the fact that they're smarter than their age mates. This is often true of teen-agers. Gifted children are smart enough to catch on soon that being smart is being different and being different doesn't always make friends. They may deliberately make mistakes, give wrong answers, or fail to prepare assignments. Now and then one may find that leading or taking part in some form of mischief gains approval from his classmates or at least gains their attention.

Then on the other side of the coin, some adults seem to have a cruel mission to "cut down to size" very smart children. Instead of putting them in the limelight, they try to put them in their places. They may treat brightness of these children as showing off; make fun of them and embarrass them in other ways. "Be your age, Bill. You sound like you swallowed the dictionary." "Put your hand down, Mary. It's always up."

Failing to find congenial companions, some gifted children may bury themselves in reading and studying. They may gain recognition and approval in such escapes only from adults. However, they may realize that adult appreciation doesn't take the place of friendship and companionship of children their own age. As a result they may be lonely.

### *They can be very lonely*

Some parents, understandably, worry when their son or daughter fails to have friends, or spends most of the time with grownups. Such parents wonder what they can do about it.

For a while, Jean was such a child. After skipping two grades, she was equal to her new classmates in studies, but not in some other ways. "She's still just a baby most of the time," one girl said. So Jean soon found herself left out.

Her teacher talked with Jean's parents who decided to

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give more attention to that part of Jean's life that had nothing to do with studies. For the time being it was much more important to try to help Jean make up the slack in her social life than to further improve her already highly developed intellectual ability.

They decided that Jean needed help in ways in which her mental powers didn't make so much difference. They arranged for her to join a dancing class which two of her classmates attended. She became a member of a girl scout troop to which several in her class belonged. When summer came she went to camp for a few weeks. She soon had a number of close friends that she was happy with and who were happy with her.

Usually this is not the situation when a child is advanced in school. Gifted children are almost always more socially



mature than the average. They are also more able to aid in the analysis of their own problems. Jean, small for her age and shy, was one of the exceptions.

### *Making friends can be hard*

It's seldom easy for parents to help a child make friends when his group at school is his equal in mental powers only. However, a few things can be done that may help. Talk with your son's or daughter's teacher, minister, and doctor. They often are aware of a child's problem even before parents. You may get several leads from them.

Some parents have tried to find other parents who are faced with the same problem. They then pool their ideas. They look around to see what the community offers for children such as theirs.

Hobbies can open doors to new ideas and new friends for a child. Most gifted children are interested in hobbies and projects. Joining the Scouts, a 4-H club, Camp Fire Girls, the Y will give them a chance to combine social development with worthwhile activities. At the same time, they will make friends with other children who have similar interests and abilities.

Many children admire the boy or girl who is good at games and things they want to do themselves. If your child likes games but needs help in those he has tried, make an effort to see that he gets it. Give him a chance to try out different kinds. He may be poor at football and baseball but better at tennis or track. If he's interested, try to help him learn how to swim, dance, skate, wrestle, box.

Jim was gifted in science, and when he wasn't working on his idea of a rocket (he had won first prize in the area competition) he was on the sports field. He had always liked games. In school he tried out for every sport, but never even made the second string. His father, aware of Jim's problem, offered a solution. "Make yourself an ex-

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pert on rules of every sport possible." Jim did. Not only did his schoolmates ask his advice but the athletic coach also called on him at times.

If a child doesn't like sports, don't insist that he take part in them. Many a child never gets over his dislike of a sport because he was forced into trying to learn it.

A child may want to make his own way in getting friends without help from members of his family. This is especially true about junior and high school age. The efforts of some parents in seeing to it that their boy or girl makes friends are so obvious that the child is embarrassed and miserable. This may be another time when parent and child may need to have a man-to-man conference and set up some ground rules.

Just because a child is by himself doesn't always mean he's lonely. This is especially true at times with gifted children. Before leaping in to tear their child "away from himself," wise parents will find out certain information. Is he bored when he's alone? Lonesome? Miserable? If any of these unhealthy conditions exist, try to do something about it. But if not, leave him alone. He may be planning, or making some experiment—it may even be learning how a top spins, or what makes a motor run or not run, or maybe he's reading something that interests him a great deal, or is mulling over some idea. Whatever he's doing may be the germ of later accomplishment.

### *They need reassurance*

Unusually gifted children may need some help in understanding why they may be set apart. They need to know something about how the outside world may see and react to their being unlike most others.

That gifted children may need reassurance of their standing and worth may be surprising. Yet, most of them do. Far from being stuck up or conceited, usually they

are very modest. Some don't even believe that they are brighter than other children, or that they can do some things that are impossible for most other children to do. One educator said: "They need to be built up far more than they need to be taken down." When some of these children can't learn a new skill quickly, they may actually feel inferior and develop a deep sense of insecurity. They are more critical about themselves than most other children are.

Some few gifted children may be intellectual snobs—but these are rare and much of the way they act probably reflects their parents' attitudes.

Such a child needs to know that he's lucky to have a quick mind or is able to create or perform in a certain way, and he should be thankful for that. He should also learn to know that a bright mind, or any other kind of a gift, in itself is by no means the most important thing in life. It won't by itself make him a better person or a more valuable member of society.

### *They need to understand themselves*

They need to know wherein they differ, and learn to accept and understand their own individualities. They need to be helped to value variety among human beings, as they value variety among plants, animals, and the days of their lives. They need to realize that differences among people are often of ultimate value to the human race.

### *Why are so many wasted?*

With such rich endowments and possibilities for success, why is it that when so many gifted children grow up they fail to fulfill their early promises?

There are many reasons.

Because of financial trouble in the home, some promising children are forced to quit school and get a job. Once they

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quit, they never seem to get the encouragement that makes it possible for them to return to their studies. All too many of them end up in dull jobs, a great waste to themselves and a loss to everyone else.

Many gifted children fail to follow through because they are disappointed in school. With little effort they sail through the regular assignments. Then they have to slow down, spend a lot of time waiting for their classmates to catch up. For lack of something to do, they may become mischievous or restless troublemakers, a trial to classmates and teachers. They sit through endless repetition of lessons and facts they already know. They get bored. They are never challenged enough to learn how to sit down to steady work until they finish a job. They get an idea that all learning is easy. Good habits of independent work may never be developed. They become satisfied with ordinary performance. Some may not even last out high school. Some of those who do enter college find that they are spoiled for the hard and steady work required and as a result do poorly or fail.

Among the most tragic reasons why a child may lose out is indifference of parents or lack of understanding. There were Ruth and Lewis for instance.

Ruth's parents were so busy leading their own lives that they didn't have much time to give her. "Mother's (or Daddy's) in a hurry. Ask me some other time." This wasn't an unusual occurrence when the parent was very busy and hadn't the time to sit down for a question-and-answer period. Ruth's parents never seemed to have time. They never talked with her about her studies, what interested her and what didn't. Finally Ruth decided that nobody was interested in her. "They don't care," she said. "It doesn't make any difference whether or not I ever learn anything."

Lewis' family was upset when they learned that he ranked exceptionally high intellectually. "We've never had anyone like that on either side of the family," they told the teacher.



"We've heard about these brainy kids. Can read before they cut their teeth, but by the time they're grown all burnt out. We don't want that." His parents finally converted Lewis to their attitude. His grades reflected it soon.

### *Many neglected do get by*

Some parents, and teachers, too, get the idea that since Sam is bright he has all he needs to get along. All too often they say: "We don't have to worry about Sam. He'll get along all right."

True, a great many of the Sams and Susans do get along all right. Often they do so in spite of a great deal of neglect. They do well in schools, go to college, get good jobs, marry, live pleasant and even happy lives, make some contribution to their fellowmen. But still they may not be producing to their fullest.

So regardless of what some parents, teachers, and other persons may think, the gifted child needs help, guidance, and teaching, as does any child. In order to develop, the ability a child is born with has to be fed and encouraged. It must be given a chance to expand, increase, enlarge. Starting with birth, this developing process must continue through his growing up.

A talent, given a chance, will grow. But rebuff it time and time again, and it becomes stunted or dies. There's hardly a limit to how far some of these children may go when they can satisfy their curiosity, explore their powers, and give full rein to their imagination.

### *What sets them going?*

Why is it that Joe and Peg work hard to make the most of their talents while Mack and Jennie allow theirs to dwindle away? What starts Joe and Peg going and keeps them going? What sparks their drive to accomplish and suc-

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ceed? In other words, what motivates them?

Without that spark, ability can be unproductive or undiscovered. Often a child wants to do a thing so much that his drive to do it makes up for what he lacks in ability. He puts in so much effort and work that his little talent is blown up into an unusual accomplishment.

On the other hand, just lack of opportunity and unfavorable circumstances or conditions may snuff the spark in a child's ability. Poor physical or emotional health may hold him back. He may not even realize that he's good at a job. Possibly he never had a chance to show that he could do it. Maybe he's lost interest in getting anything done. Sometimes a child's parents or the community are not interested in what he can do or wants to do. Sometimes the spark is smothered by his rebellion if his parents are pushing too much, piling too much on him, expecting too much.

Certainly for a child to make the most of his abilities he must want to do so. When he doesn't want to learn, the chances are that he won't learn. What he takes in will be very little.

It's a lucky child whose parents have been able to make him feel that learning is a very satisfying process, is worthwhile, and can even be a great deal of fun.

For example, learning is a family affair with the Taylors. They found out early that father and mother and sisters and brothers working at something together is good learning in itself. They play word games together, work puzzles, listen to the radio and watch TV, read together, listen to phonograph records, visit various places of interest. They talk together about what they've been reading, seeing, hearing, and doing. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor don't expect each child to get the same thing or the same amount out of what they do. They want them to have fun and enjoy what they are doing. They want each to be "improved" and profit by what he is doing to the extent of his interest and capacity. If Phil, the oldest boy, or Penny, two years younger,

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wants more of any project, where the other children seem to have gotten enough for the time being, a plan is made for the interested child to get more of that project.

Sometimes a parent and one of the children have a special interest in the same thing. It may be airplanes, or bugs, or Alaska, or rockets, or dramatics, or folk dancing, and call for special activities. Helping a child to get started or keep up an interest in stamps, railroads, clay modeling, or a variety of hobbies has been known to make a fan out of the parent. And sometimes it is the reverse. The parent's interest sparks the children.

If possible, let your child have the widest possible variety of contacts with creative people and institutions.

Many adults will arrange to give a child some time and attention if he wants it and if he is interested in their specialty. Meeting and getting to know such persons often gives a child a direction, a sense of purpose. Such a tie has often marked the route a child advances long after he has forgotten the person in whose footsteps he is following.

### *What about praise?*

At one time, praise was considered bad for a child. Now we feel it helps build self-confidence. Every child needs it. But it must be sincere and deserved. "That's fine" and "You have done a good job" are all too rare. There can scarcely be too much honestly earned and honestly offered praise.

The gifted child may get praise only for those things in which he's talented. Aware of this, some parents look for other things to praise that have no bearing on his gifts. These may be for qualities that are desirable and are likely to be common in all human beings.

If your gifted child has brothers and sisters, be sure that they get adequate attention and praise, too. They need such moral support just as surely as he does. Not getting

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it is bad for them—and for your gifted child. If he consistently gets much more praise than they do, his brothers and sisters and other children may see it as favoritism and may penalize him. Thus an intended reward may prove to be punishment.

Even more than praise, the gifted child wants and needs respect for what he contributes. Especially does he need this in his dealings with adults, where, quite often, his ideas and opinions are more at home than with his age mates. When he is a part of such a group of grownups, he should be listened to, his statements considered and weighed—and discarded if need be—like any other contributor.

### *When he asks questions*

With gifted children, the question-and-answer period may seem to be a continuous process. Don't brush off a sincere or genuine question your child may have. If you are unable to answer it, tell him so. He'll respect you more for this than if you mislead him or give him the runaround. Tell him that you will try to find out—or that you will help him find out—but only if you really intend to do so. Always being willing to answer or discuss questions encourages more questions and keeps his priceless curiosity alive. In this way, he grows and develops.

Sometimes instead of giving an answer you may know, urge him to try to find the answer himself. This will help him take another step on the road to independence.

### *He'll need good tools*

Every child ought to have access to the rich world of books and materials. To the gifted child, this is a necessity. Books are tools through which a child can go far in learning for himself or seeking information he wants.

Even at a very young age, the gifted child begins to show



an interest in books. At first, he won't need a great many. It's fine, however, to be able to buy books and have them around the house until he's ready for them.

But if owning them is not possible, borrow them from the library. Libraries are extending their service into all sections of the country. A short talk with the librarian will answer many of your problems about books for your young child. He learns how to learn in using the library.

As he grows older and will be doing his own reading, he'll want to have the use of books on a variety of subjects. Reference books, such as encyclopedias, atlases, dictionaries, rate high with gifted children. It's not unusual at all

to see a gifted child walking along the street, carrying under his arm a biography of some great leader, a book on science, and two comic books. He'll read fiction and comic books as well as books on science, art, travel, nature, and how to do it.

One mother suggested that all gifted children have a chance "to meet" a good second-hand bookstore early in life. She has found that often such a store is operated by a "gifted child emeritus" who has a great deal of understanding in helping children explore.

Supply the gifted child with materials. Gifted children are very good at making the most of what they have. But, to advance, he'll need the right kind of tools. So when you see material that you think will help him in his projects, find out if he really wants it. If he does, let him go with you to select it. He'll like it better if he has a part in choosing it.

Every child needs some place in the house that will be his own. If he has his own room, that's fine. If space is a problem, a card table in a corner will please him, or a bookshelf. He needs a work space for his projects and hobbies. Most of the time it may look untidy to you. A folding screen can shut off his corner from view when he's not working.

Until you know your child's special play interests, choose as wide a variety of materials as possible: paper, crayons, paste, dolls, scissors, modeling clay, finger paint, water colors, cardboard boxes, building blocks, pieces of wood, scraps of cloth, a magnet, a compass, a magnifying glass, a microscope, a flower pot or window box for growing plants, or a little garden, printing and chemistry sets.

### *Use your community*

Few communities exist that haven't something of interest to a curious young boy or girl. A grownup may look

around, see only the long familiar, and dismiss it as having nothing to offer a child. Let your youngster be the judge. Give him a chance and it may surprise you how much he—and possibly you—will learn.

When he gets to the age where he can be trusted on his own, let him explore alone—or with his brothers and sisters—some of the spots around the community.

Good teachers have long known the need for young inquiring minds to touch on many things. Children in most schools consequently have an opportunity to explore the community, and thus add to their experiences.



Some projects set up by the schools to bring the community to the child are: trips to the zoo, the botanical gardens, museums, printing plants, dairies, farms, churches, courts, housing projects, all kinds of manufacturing plants, stores, concerts, quarries, docks, lakes, observatories, historical sites, the police station, firehouse, hospital, Salvation Army quarters, library, manufacturing establishments, Chamber of Commerce, a college or university.

Their children's school lacking opportunity for such trips, one group of parents organized their own project to teach the community to the children. With parents alternating as guides, each Saturday a group of neighborhood children went on a tour. Many communities set up programs independent of schools to add to the variety of opportunities for its children. A civic club may organize a choir for young people. A library may start reading or writing classes. Museums may organize art classes. An interested person may set up music appreciation projects. Churches, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, 4-H Clubs, the Y's have a variety of programs for children and young people.

If you feel that your child is being discriminated against through lack of adequate resources, don't hesitate to seek advice from the most notable people you know. Talk about your problems with the school principal, your minister, priest, or rabbi, your family doctor or lawyer. Often you will get very helpful advice.

### *Over-scheduling is a hazard*

In an effort to help their child, many parents overschedule his time. As one parent put it: "What Bill needs is some way to stretch out one day to 48 or 50 hours." Adding extra-curricular activities to a child's regular day should be done only after careful consideration. Because they want to please their parents, some children dutifully try to meet their heavy schedules. Many others, however, rebel and be-



gin to refuse to do really important things.

Sometimes the child himself has to be restrained and has to be taught to make choices among the so many things that challenge his many interests. In many cases, the reach of gifted children often exceeds their physical ability to cope.

Parents must remember that their gifted child is first of all a child and should have a chance at the joys of childhood. When his day is so crowded with planned activities and supervision, little or no time is left to think, to dream, to play, or to wander about with his own thoughts. The gifted child needs time for such things as much as any child, perhaps more.

Although most parents are thinking of the welfare of their child, there's a chance that they may want to live his entire life for him. They may dominate him completely. They may pay no attention to his likes and dislikes. They may try to pick his friends, his hobbies, what he does, his clothes, and finally his career.

The gifted child especially wants and enjoys having a part in planning his own life. Setting him apart, doing everything for him, deciding what he will and won't do, overprotecting him, is bad for him. The gifted child can usually follow through to completion on a task without constant supervision. Wise parents begin early to allow him some freedom of choice and freedom to meet life on his own.

### *Stimulation? Pressure?*

Where does encouragement end and pressure begin?

If this question could be answered, a great many other questions would be easy. Children differ, parents differ, situations differ, environments differ. Hence, each parent must answer the question for himself, about his own child. Even within the same family, the stimulation-pressure line can be at vastly different levels for each child.

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There are some cautions, however. Consider what the child wants, what interests him. Give him as much freedom of choice as possible within the reasonable restraints of family life. Rather than be accused of pressuring, some parents give their child a variety of materials and opportunities and wait for him to make the first move. Even the very young gifted child likes to have some say about what he should do.

### *Your child's first schooling*

Any child is lucky if his school has a good library of books and music, if it has motion picture projectors and money for renting or buying films, if there is room for classes to be divided into interest groups during some of the school day or week, if there are up-to-date globes of the world, encyclopedias, microscopes, and chemistry labs, and other tools that will help a curious young mind find answers.

Also, a child is lucky if he's in a school where teachers have the time to give him special help and guidance in his reading, special advanced instruction in such interests as creative writing, literature, science, and dramatics, and special thought to his contribution to the school itself and its services.

With 30 or 40 or even more students in a class, most teachers have all they can do to keep the average boy and girl stimulated and at work. If there is any more time, it usually goes to helping the weakest to get along better. The gifted children by necessity get only crumbs of time and special attention.

### *Parent-teacher partnership*

Your child's teacher and school will be able to do more for him when they have your confidence and cooperation. When parents and teachers work together a child has a much bet-

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ter chance of reaching full development. When they are partners, there's much more likelihood that deeply hidden talent will be brought to light.

Wise parents will try to know their children's teachers personally, will work through parent-teacher associations or school council's to improve school facilities and increase the competent school personnel. They know that such efforts wherever added will be assets to the gifted child.

Parents will seek to understand more about the whys and hows of modern education methods. Some parent-teacher associations have observed "parents-go-to-school days" in which parents go through a school day. In some communities, regular school is dismissed so parents may go to school to learn what their children are being taught. In other communities, where such an ambitious program is not possible, a school day has been condensed into an evening. The aim of such a program is to increase the understanding and appreciation of what the schools are trying to do.

Being a good school patron is a part of being the right kind of parent. There are many ways in which parents with insight and imagination can work to improve the schools. Wise parents for the good of their child will not make a nuisance of themselves, will not demand special privileges, nor take too much of a teacher's already crowded time in complaining over conditions that the teacher personally has no power to overcome.

Instead, the good school patron can work through the parent-teacher association and other citizen groups to ease schedules, to reduce the number of students in crowded classes, to give the teachers more time for important guidance and attention to individual students, to increase school budgets to provide for more and better school equipment or to give more room for students to work and learn.

Such work to improve and strengthen your school will benefit not only your gifted child but also his less able brothers and sisters and schoolmates. In fact, teachers have

found that any effort to improve the education of the gifted is felt throughout the entire school.

### *Some parents band together*

Many parents of gifted children feel that talking over their own problems with other parents who have similar problems helps them find answers. In greater and greater numbers, parents over the country are joining together for this purpose. A great many of these groups have become affiliated with the National Association for Gifted Children, 409 Clinton Springs Avenue, Cincinnati 17, Ohio.

Although organized by a group of psychologists and school administrators, the National Association has always been open to individual parents or groups of parents or lay persons who are interested in the problems of the gifted. Through the parents' page of its magazine *The Gifted Child Quarterly*, the National Association makes it possible for its members to communicate with each other regarding problems and resources for gifted children.

### *More schools plan for gifted*

Each year more and more schools over the country are giving special consideration to the gifted child. They are working to recognize and draw out special talents and develop them fully. All these schools are taking into account the fast rate at which a gifted child learns and his wide range of interests. However, schools have different ideas as to what ways are most effective in reaching their goals.

Three of the most common ways schools are providing for the gifted are acceleration, enrichment, and ability grouping. These may be used alone or in combination.

Acceleration, which allows a child to advance at a faster pace than the average child, may take different forms. A child may be allowed to advance a grade, usually with safe-

guards against skipping any necessary material. Or he (or maybe a whole class of his equals) may be allowed to complete a grade more quickly than the school schedule usually permits. Or 3 years of work may be combined into 2. Or a child may be allowed to enter school a year earlier than is the general rule.

Enrichment of a program makes it possible to keep a gifted child in the same class with his age mates by giving him subjects or material in addition to the usual studies. These additions not only add to his development, but they also keep him profitably occupied while he waits for his classmates to catch up. This eliminates some problems of friendship and social adjustment. The enrichment may include story writing, dramatics, debates, research problems, science projects, study of literature and biography, current events, individual instruction, social recitations, trips, teacher-pupil conferences, a foreign language. It is a poor kind of enrichment that requires a gifted child to complete 10 problems while the rest of the class complete only 4, or lets him dust erasers, or do any other such task just to keep him busy.

Special grouping may take a number of forms. In some schools, the exceptionally able are brought together for just one period a week. In a seminar, they discuss their voluntary reading and choose books for the next week. In other places, they are brought together for a part of each day to discuss subjects of current interest and study and to do many kinds of creative work. In large schools, gifted children may form a special section. In some large cities, they are brought together in special schools.

### *How about college?*

Why is it that so many of our brightest boys and girls don't go to college?

There is no simple answer to this question which is a great

deal more complicated than many people realize.

Although this problem needs more study some facts are known. We can safely say that one of the big factors is lack of money. But more than that is often involved.

How a family feels about its children going to college determines in large measure whether children will attend or not.

Children of college graduates are more likely to attend college than children of parents who didn't go to college. If a college education is the accepted thing, then the child usually goes. If not, he may not go. How a child's companions feel has much influence on his going or not going.

City children who can live at home while attending college are more likely to go than those who live in rural areas. Boys are more likely to go to college than girls.

### *Make plans early*

When a child is nearly ready to finish high school, it's much too late to be making decisions about whether or not he'll go to college. Such a decision, many educators feel, should be in the making as soon as there is fairly sound evidence that he can adequately accomplish college courses if he tries. Surely by the time the child is in the eighth grade the decision should be made and his studies planned accordingly.

With such long-range planning, the gifted high school senior is less likely to find that his grades aren't good enough for college acceptance, or that the high school courses he has taken are not the ones that he must have to do effective college work or even for him to be accepted in some colleges.

The cost of a college education is another thing that needs to be looked into a long time before a boy or girl is ready for higher education. Going to college takes a great deal of money. When 2 or 3 from one family may be in college at one time, few families can finance it without sacrificing

heavily. The average yearly cost of a college education in a State school is about \$1,500. The cost in a private college is about \$2,000. This covers tuition and fees, board and room, clothes, transportation, books, and recreation.

However, each year a college education is becoming increasingly possible for an increasing number of young people through part-time employment, scholarships, and student loan funds.

Some students think of a fellowship "handout" or nothing. Available student loan funds often are unused. Some parents urge their children to make use of such resources, feeling that we borrow for so many things, why not borrow if necessary for the important investment of a college education.

Talk with the principal of your child's school. He may be able to give you specific information about obtaining scholarships or loan funds. Or write to the college your child is interested in attending about possibilities.

### *The gifted child's ideal*

A great many articles about gifted children have talked about the kind of teacher who is best for a gifted child. Children themselves have been asked. From their answers you can get a fairly clear idea of the kind of person they want to be their teacher.

They want a friendly, alert, understanding person, fair and helpful. They want consistency in their discipline. They want a person who is strong and healthy and has a sense of humor. They want someone who will let them assume some responsibility. They want someone who will give them challenging assignments and demand that they be completed; who will allow them to be different and not resent it if they know more about a subject than the teacher himself. They want to like and respect the person who teaches them and to regard him as an example.

Self-appraising parents will want to take a look at this picture, too, knowing they are, after all, their child's first, most important, and most continuing teacher.

Don't despair. Few of us—parents, teachers, or anyone else for that matter—have all of the qualities that it takes to be the ideal parent of a gifted child. Possibly, every such parent has often thought: "This is too big a job for me. I'm not up to it. I don't have what it takes. I can't give him what he needs."





At those low-ebb moments, before you question your adequacy, consider the meaning of this important fact: this child didn't just happen. What he is, you have given to him or helped him fashion.

And another fact that you should never forget. Maybe you can't match his brightness with brightness. There are others whose job that is anyway. Those things you, father and mother, can give him are unique and precious: happy good mornings and safe good nights, an occasional lap to rest on, pancakes for breakfast, an arm to hold him steady and close, an outstretched hand, and the thousand other daily acts—some forgotten and some forever in memory—that only parents can give us.

And remember this, also: for all of the lacks that you may feel, you have one ingredient that he needs greatly, something he doesn't have and won't have for a long time. That is your experience.

Life can become very thrilling for both of you as your child grows, as you work along with him—helping and guiding when necessary, but standing aside when that is called for, too. High and joyful possibilities open before both of you.

Great satisfaction can come from seeking a wide range of contacts with the physical, mental, and spiritual worlds. Even greater satisfaction can come from helping a promising flame become its brightest. You, indeed, are fortunate. Be glad for the rich, full yielding and rewarding years that lie ahead for you and your gifted child.

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