

PRAEDITUS

Latin praeditus adj. 1 cl. meaning gifted

A publication of Allen ISD Gifted and Talented Services

Overexcitabilities in Gifted Children

Polish psychologist Kazimierz Dabrowski identified five areas in which gifted children exhibit intense behaviors, also known as “overexcitabilities”. They are psychomotor, sensual, emotional, intellectual, emotional and imaginal. Gifted kids tend to have multiple intensities but one is usually dominant.

Psychomotor is characterized by high levels of energy. These kids may be misdiagnosed as ADHD but they are capable of focusing given sufficient mental stimulation. Looks like rapid speech, impulsiveness, compulsive talking, nervous habits, sleeplessness.

Sensual is characterized by heightened awareness of the five senses. Looks like sensitive to smells, taste and textures of food, tactile sensitivity, appreciation of beauty, need for comfort.

Intellectual is characterized by the need for answers to deep questions. Looks like curiosity, avid reading, love of problem solving, analytical and theoretical thinking.

Imaginational is signaled by intensity of free play of the imagination. Looks like vivid dreams, magical thinking, love of fantasy and drama, good sense of humor.

Emotional manifests as exceptional emotional sensitivity. Looks like anxiety, extremes of emotion, concern for others, heightened sense of injustice, need for security.

Knowledge is power. Knowing your child's overexcitabilities can help you manage them and aid in your child's growth.



Teaching Children: Fact or Fiction

What can be done to help children be judicious consumers of information. Misinformation is rampant and trust in the media is low.

Much of the reason this is happening is that in traditional media, the newspaper, radio or television station editors traditionally serve as gatekeepers for content. In general, they label fact, opinion and advertising clearly. However, lines are blurring and talk shows look a lot like news shows. On social media, the process of vetting stories is gone, replaced by an automated system that looks at “likes” and “shares” in determining what raises the profile of a story. There is currently no method to screen for accuracy or credibility.

Teachers are educating kids on how to distinguish credible from non-credible stories. Parents can do the same by helping their kids understand that verifying what you read is important.

Common Sense Media, a non-profit organization reports that teens and tweens spend an average of 9 hours a day consuming digital media (including social media, video games and internet browsing). Only 44% of kids ages 10-18 could tell a fake news story from a real one. 31% admitted sharing a news story on social media that they later learned was untrue.*

The Port Huron Times Herald offered the following suggestions for vetting news.

- **Check the sources in a news story-** Ideally, there should be more than one source. Unnamed sources should prompt some level of skepticism, even if you usually trust the source.
- **Corrections are a good thing-** Everyone makes mistakes. Reliable media publish retractions and corrections.
- **Read from a variety of publications-** Don't let one news source be your only news source. Seeking out a variety of sources will help you see more perspectives, analysis and let you corroborate what you are reading.

It is vital that children learn to distinguish fact from fiction in order for them to be responsible citizens. Let's all do our part!

* 2017 report Common Sense Media



Moral Component of Giftedness

Early leaders in the field of giftedness recognized the moral component of being gifted. Lewis Terman, a pioneer in educational psychology noted that high cognitive abilities in the gifted were associated with emotional stability, social adjustment and moral character.

Gifted kids get the idea of right and wrong, they have a strong sense of injustice and want to make things right.

In fact, while writing this article one of my peers came to show me a “protest letter” written by one of my students about the use of electronic devices at school. It was a well-written letter and she had a point.

So here’s the issue. It’s one thing to write a polite letter of protest, it’s another to tell your boss that he’s a jerk because of a bad decision that he made. (The list of talented people who have done this is extensive, if you think about it).

Our job as parents and teachers is to teach children several skills:

- First, how to look at issues from multiple perspectives (since gray areas are tough for GT kids). By seeing other perspectives they will learn to temper strong opinions.
- Second, how to express an opinion in a way that is tactful and gives the receiver an opportunity to save face while addressing the issue.
- Finally, how to choose the right time and place to share your comments. Lots of GT kids have minimal filters and believe that if they have a problem then you should too.

Providing these life skills will help our kids navigate moral issues.



Rigor: Why Challenging Work Matters

One of the challenges of teaching gifted kids is getting them to slow down and dig deeper into a subject. While they might spend hours researching something deeply; more often than not, they want to move through projects or assignments quickly or after a superficial review of information, they feel they are subject matter experts!

Which brings us to the topic of rigor. In her book, *Rigor is NOT a Four-Letter Word*, author Barbara Blackburn describes rigor as

- Quality of thinking, not quantity
- High expectations and effort
- Deep immersion in a subject including time with experts
- Projects carried out with depth and care
- Developing the capacity to understand complex, ambiguous and emotionally challenging content

Allen ISD’s gifted and talented services are designed to be rigorous. We go deep into subjects and our standards are high for quality work. Even with a rigorous curriculum, a teacher that has high standards and parents that expect the best from their kids, it is a daily struggle to get kids to focus on quality work. Why?

It is easier not to go deep into a subject. It is faster to take short cuts. It is simpler to think superficially. So what is the solution? We need to continue to remind our children that determination and grit matter.

In a climatic moment from the science fiction movie, *Gattaca* (1997), a gifted man and his brother (who is not gifted) have a swimming race to a buoy. The gifted man is surprised when his brother beats him. “How could you do that he asks,” to which the non-gifted sibling replies, “I saved nothing for the trip back to shore.” Maybe if our kids learned that success means giving it all, rigor would be more attractive.

We love suggestions for articles! Is there a question you have about gifted kids? Please send requests for articles to [Præditus Feedback](#)