

Contents

	Preface	v
		1
Words, Words: What Do They Mean?		1
		2
Identifying Gifted/Talented Children		17
		3
Trials and Tribulations of Being Gifted		37
		4
Schooling: When, Where, Why?		59
		5
School Days: What to Expect		75

	6	
Parents' Roles in Educating Gifted/Talented Children		103
	7	
Teachers' Roles in Educating Gifted/Talented Children		115
	8	
Careers for the Gifted and Talented		129
	9	
Tests: Intelligence, Achievement, Aptitude		149
	10	
The Law and Gifted Children		161
	11	
Sources of Information		173
Appendix: The Gifted and Talented Children's Education Act of 1978		185
References		191
Index of Eminent Personalities		197
General Index		198

Mrs. Barnes has been waiting patiently for this day. Her son Danny is such a problem, and she must speak to the teacher about him. At last, Open School Week has arrived, and she will have ten minutes of the teacher's undivided attention. These parent interviews are being held in the regular classroom, where parents can look at the bulletin boards and browse through the students' notebooks and special projects while they wait their turn to talk to the teacher.

Danny's teacher, Myra Mason, seems to be very well organized but definitely harassed and overworked. She wants to do a good job, but too many factors seem to converge and interfere with her efforts. The district sets policies that are hard to understand; the principal makes heavy demands and runs a "tight ship"; the class is large and the children have such varied needs. In spite of her industry and devotion, Myra Mason is a little overwhelmed by the pressure she faces. She speaks knowingly, but in a hurried fashion, and resorts to the jargon of the profession to say a lot in a little time.

"Mrs. Barnes, your son Danny is an absolute genius. His mental age is over fourteen years, and his IQ is above 160 on the WISC. Of course, he didn't do as well on the performance part of the test as he did on the verbal, but his score was outstanding on both parts. Too bad he's such an underachiever. We were thinking of putting him into the enriched program rather than the accelerated, but, really, his class performance is so low! Even though he is very creative and a divergent thinker, he cannot be considered for the accelerated class unless we can make him stop daydreaming in class. Of course, it is hard when you have such a heterogeneous group. These gifted children do ask for so much attention. . . . [Pause for a quick breath!] What do you think?"

This sudden question catches Mrs. Barnes off balance and she blurts out, "About what?"

Actually, she's been trying to sort out all the words whose meanings, somehow, do not coincide with her own understanding of them. Is this a good report about her boy or isn't it? If he's a "genius," why can't he do the work? If he was so outstanding in the "performance" section of the WISC (whatever that may be), why is his "performance" in school so low? If the teacher thinks he's so "creative," why isn't he allowed to be in an "enriched" program? And again, why, if he is such a genius, can't he be accelerated, if she has all those words straight?

Mrs. Barnes, who knows how mischievous and stubborn her son can be, takes refuge in an old concern: "Is he well behaved?"

"Oh, yes," the teacher replies. "If only he wouldn't spend so much time daydreaming. Of course, he always knows the answers, whenever I call on him."

Ten minutes isn't a very long period in which to discuss your son's problems with his teacher or to resolve anything, especially with a roomful of parents waiting their turn. Besides, Danny is such a good kid that his mother has no desire to air his frailties before the community—and there really isn't much privacy in this session. So she brings her questions to a polite conclusion, trying to accentuate the positive traits she thinks the teacher will value in her son, and goes home to ponder the whole thing.

All these words! They don't mean the same thing to the teacher as they do to her. Is it good or bad to be a divergent thinker? How can you be a genius and an underachiever at the same time? These and other questions trouble Mrs. Barnes. If only she were like Mr. Johnson. He would just bellow: "Hold on there, sister! What do you mean by *this* or *that*?" He would not leave a parent-teacher conference more befuddled than when he started.

The harassed teacher reverts to jargon because it is the fastest way to get a lot said in a very little time. But we have a few extra minutes, so let us see if we can't decipher the code and make some sense out of what sounds like non-sense.

GENIUS

Actually, the term *genius* is seldom used in educational circles. It is a term reserved for those very rare beings whose knowledge and abilities seem limitless and incredibly outstanding. We tend to assign the term to artists, musicians, writers, and poets such as Michelangelo, Beethoven, and Shakespeare, and occasionally to scientists who make noteworthy contributions to our knowledge, such as Einstein. These are eminent persons whose accomplishments we recognize as being unique. They are *achievers*.

Educators at one time ascribed the term *genius* to any child with an IQ or score of over 140 on a special test, the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test. This occurred simply because Lewis Terman used that designation for the thousand gifted children he studied in his famous book *Genetic Studies of Genius*, first published in 1926 (67). As a matter of fact, this definition of *genius* has found its place in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (p. 946): "4c: a person endowed with transcendent mental superiority, inventiveness, and ability. . . . a person with a very high intelligence quotient usu. in the range of 140 or above **Syn:** . . . GIFT." Before that, children with similarly high scores were called "Terman" children because of his work in adapting the Binet-Simon tests from the French.

GIFTED AND TALENTED

The more common term in use today is *gifted* coupled with *talented*; however, there is still great disagreement as to what these terms mean. They are often defined in terms of the goals of special programs. Congress, in order to pass legislation that would authorize allocations of funds for education of the gifted, arrived at a very broad definition, which was suggested by a special study (46, p. 2) on the status of education for the gifted in the United States.

The statement reads:

Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society.

Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the following areas, singly or in combination:

1. general intellectual ability
2. specific academic aptitude
3. creative or productive thinking
4. leadership ability
5. visual and performing arts
6. psychomotor ability

It can be assumed that utilization of these criteria for identification of the gifted and talented will encompass a minimum of 3 to 5 percent of the school population.

It is in the nature of these broad definitions that they themselves require definition. In fact, there is not very much agreement among the professionals on what each of the terms means, and later legislation at the federal level uses the following language:

For the purposes of this part, the term "gifted and talented children" means children and, whenever applicable, youth, who are identified at the preschool, elementary, or secondary level as possessing demonstrated or potential abilities that give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, specific academic, or leadership ability, or in the performing and visual arts, and who by reason thereof, require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school. (Gifted and Talented Children's Education Act of 1978, Section 902.)

These definitions combine the terms *gifted* and *talented*.

It may be easier to define these terms in language that reflects the application of the words. Like P. W. Bridgman, Nobel Prize winner