

Introduction

less hostile to the concept of giftedness - so there is a brighter future for the gifted. This does not mean that the path will be smooth or easy; it means that the range of educational possibilities has increased and that we, as parents and teachers, need to keep ourselves informed and make use of these opportunities.

You are not alone in your task of caring for a young gifted child. There are other parents and teachers with whom you can share the experience. Daunting though it may seem, your role as parent or teacher will be a rich and rewarding one.

Introduction

This book has been written for the parent, teacher or facilitator responsible for a very young gifted child. There are a range of books available which provide information on developmental and educational strategies for older children, but very little exists for people involved with a gifted or talented preschool child.

Young Gifted Children offers a simple guide for survival at home, at a preschool and during the first years of school. The information concerns children in the age range from birth to middle childhood, and the main focus is on the "here and now", on what to do and what to plan for.

Parents need to be in touch with educational environments so that they can ask teachers questions about the impact of the environment on their child. Teachers need to understand both the home and school environment so that they can co-operate with parents in the various educational processes the child will experience. And parents and teachers should know how the needs of a young gifted child differ from the needs of other young children.

Gifted children are precious, and they depend on you more deeply than their mature behaviour suggests. These children will become the "clever country", but the future depends on whether parents and teachers can model appropriate attitudes and behaviours, and offer them full support and guidance.

It is as easy to make the mistake of providing only for the cognitive development of gifted children as it is to provide only for the physical development of athletes. Gifted children, as well as gifted adults, are people experiencing all the complexities of being human; and the speed of their learning, their cognitive excellence, is only one aspect of their uniqueness.

As a parent, teacher and psychologist I've asked all the questions and experienced all the doubts about guiding gifted children. I've heard many stories by parents and teachers who share the same problems as you, and I firmly believe that with access to information and emotional support, gifted children can learn to enjoy, understand and share their gifts.

Because of the unremitting pressure applied to schools by parents and teachers over the past ten years, the education system is finally beginning to realise that there is an urgent need to provide specialised training and programmes for the gifted. Choices are opening up and schools are becoming

Chapter Four	51
Potential into Achievement:	51
Providing for Cognitive Needs	51
Questions to ask the principal	52
What options are available to gifted children?	53
School provisions for young gifted children	53
Organisational provisions within a school or preschool	54
Early entry	54
Vertical streaming	56
Classroom provisions.....	57
Preventing underachievement in young gifted children	59
Organisations providing support for parents of gifted children	64
Bibliography	66
About the Author	69

Contents

Introduction	5
Chapter One	7
Early Identification: Is the Child Gifted?	7
Working definitions	7
Objections against the identification of young gifted children	7
Means of early identification.....	15
1. I.Q. tests	15
2. Inventories	16
Checklist of characteristics of young gifted children.....	16
1. Curiosity	16
2. The ability to learn quickly from mistakes.....	17
3. The ability to transfer knowledge.....	17
4. Depth and/or breadth of interest	18
5. Advanced preference in books and films	18
6. Boredom when forced into redundant work and learning ...	18
7. Decrease in quality on a series of repetitive tasks	19
8. Creative mischief	19
9. Friends.....	19
10. Games	19
Chapter Two	21
Potential into Performance:	
What Else is Needed Besides Cognitive Ability?	21
1. Ego strength	23
2. Perseverance	25
3. Tolerance of failure	26
4. Inner directedness.....	28
5. Tolerance.....	30
6. Diligence	31
Chapter Three	37
Potential into Achievement:	
The Role of the Child's Environment	37
Siblings.....	39
Sensory stimulation	41
Degree of freedom to explore	42
Books, tapes and listening	43
Computers	44
The need for privacy	46
Television watching	47
Toys and pets	47