



Table of Contents

Preface	4
Introduction: Gifted Perspectives	6
A Garden of Gifts	11
Who is Gifted?	15
Gifted Preschoolers	21
Your Gifted Daughter	27
Is This Child Gifted?	33
A Guide to Right/Left Hemisphere Functions	38
Birth Order	48
“But I Don’t Want to be Gifted!”	51
Discovering the Magic: Your Child’s Creativity	57
Discipline—With a Difference	62
Now Hear This!	67
Fathers Are People Too!	71
Gifted Children at Risk	76
It’s Only Jargon	79
Gifted on Tuesdays	84
Textbook Dependency	88
Sarah’s School	90
Let’s Get Organised!	94
A Survival Kit for Parents of Gifted Children	99
Taking Time to Communicate	105
The Coffee-table Christmas	108

Introduction

Gifted Perspectives

An Interview with Nancy L. Johnson by Kathy Balsamo

Parent meetings attracted 10-15 parents years ago. Nancy now finds it is common for 200 parents to attend a meeting. Parents are becoming very knowledgeable. They attend workshops, are educated, read and are coming to schools with “ammunition”, expecting better things for their children.

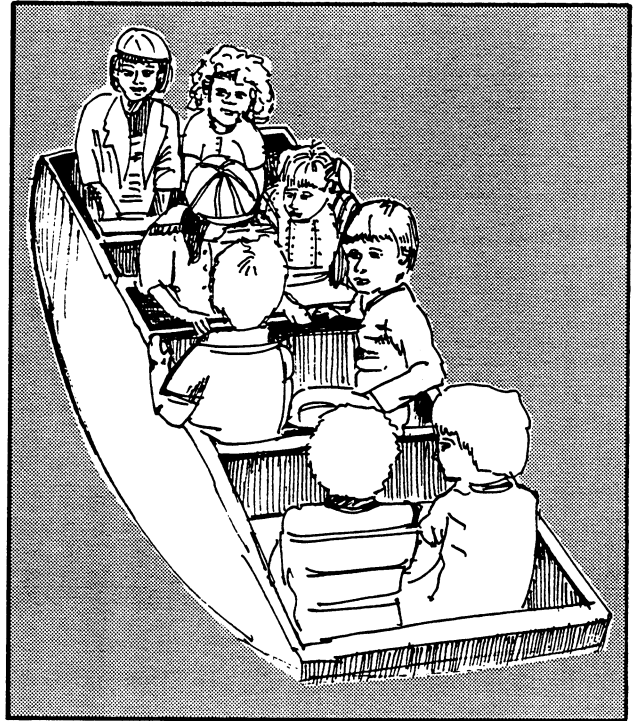
Nancy sees changes in parenting roles, relationships and attitudes towards children, educators and the gifted curriculum.

A Cultural Mirror

We try to use the schools to change our society and I believe it's the opposite. It has always been a reflection. Our schools reflect our economy, our society and our culture. Look into any classroom in this country and you are looking at culture and all the advantages and problems that go with it. If it's alright to be gifted in your community it will be alright to be gifted in your school.

Implications of Today's Family Structure

Firstly, in two parent families both parents usually work. The traditional family unit with Mum being home is disappearing. That fact affects education in general and therefore affects gifted education.



We're beginning to understand that some women can do it all; some can have a family and a career. Others cannot. It's not a weakness. These women have found that they have to leave their jobs; or they have to have a career, stop it for awhile and be a mother and a wife and then return to their careers.

Secondly, in the past, children had a role model of one parent being the achiever, mainly Dad. Even though Mum was achieving, it didn't appear the same. The child who has a role model of *two* people achieving receives a double whammy. Many high-achieving parents do not realise the stress for gifted children. We're seeing students who say to us, "There's no way I can be as good as my parents. I can't do more."

Students can react to change and the pressure to achieve in very powerful ways. I see a tension, a constant tension, that some gifted children *are* able to handle. Frequently we are recommending that gifted children take karate lessons and do physical things—like jogging—to get the body going because that will relieve the tension. They're like a rubber band, constantly being stretched tight. That's a reaction to the constant tension to achieve. Some *don't* handle tension well. They end up anorexic and have serious emotional problems, eating problems or run away, attempt and commit suicide.

Most of us were raised in the 50s and 60s by parents who wanted more for their children. We grew up in an economy that was constantly building. People made more money and bought a house. When you sold it, you sold it for more money. Everything was constantly building. Salaries were constantly going up. However, that levelled off. No longer are salaries building and we are learning to live with less.

But parents' hopes for their children are the same today.

We now have young people with families who, because they cannot 'make it on their own', are moving back with Mum and Dad who have a house that is paid for.

A fourth change involves *Supermums* and *Superdads* who are both working and clawing their way to the top of the corporate ladder. Psychologists tell us we should be supportive of children, be there to guide them and help them, but don't dictate the outcome of their lives. It's hard for these high-achieving parents, these *Supermums* and *Superdads*, not to do that, especially when they know their child has potential.

So, not only do they want to be supportive, but they want to say, "This child is going to the biggest and best medical school."

Another significant change is the number of older parents who have younger children. Women who were not going to have children at 30 decided at 35 to have children. Those students are in primary

school now. Many of these families have two parents with jobs and only one or two children. All the eggs are in one basket. They get THE attention, THE focus. Most of these parents are more emotionally and financially secure having their first child at 30. Thus, these children get a different kind of start than with a parent 21 years old with no money.

And lastly, we have young unmarried parents and single parents. There's a bit of a desperation sometimes. The single parent overtries, overdoes. There's a feeling of 'I'm it'. One parent is trying to compensate for two parents. That is accentuated when the child is gifted.

Shifting Interaction and the Extended Family

We're seeing baby boomer parents who don't just put their children into ANY creche or ANY preschool. They look for a *gifted* preschool. They look for creches that will prepare these children and will give them two or three rungs up on the ladder when they go to school.

I believe we're now into a different kind of extended family. It used to be that Mother was the main nurturer. She was there and spent the most time with the children. Now we have fathers becoming more involved in nurturing.

Creche and preschool staff—the new extended family—are interacting with the child more in a day's time than Mother.

Another interaction for some children is television. So the interaction has changed to involve other kinds of interaction, not just Mum.

Mobility

In addition to the stress of having two parents as high achievers, many gifted children have the stress of moving a lot. Although mobility was forced on some, many more are choosing it.

Now there are people who deliberately move because of the schooling situation. Parents will