

PROLOGUE

As each child is a gift, so each child comes with distinguishing gifts. For some, the balance makes for a tranquil passage through life. For others, the balance produces frustrations, dreams, and energies which resemble the tides of the sea in their power and relentlessness. Giftedness brings its own particular set of pleasures and perils.

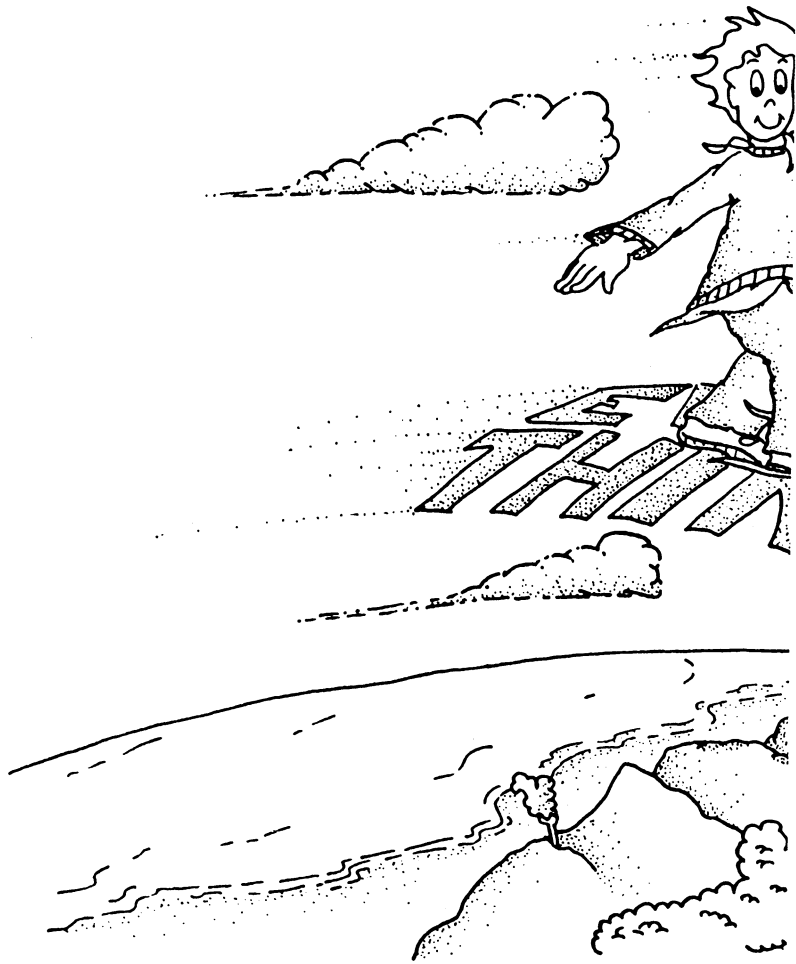
Gifted children have intense emotional and social needs that are frequently sacrificed to intellectual or academic concerns, particularly when educators get into the act. Being a teacher myself, I feel a license to criticize my own profession which I might deny to an outsider.

One worry is that as giftedness nudges other special educational needs aside in the popular and professional press, two things are happening. The first is a denigrating of the needs of gifted children. This springs from a philosophical discomfort with the idea of favoritism for an endowed elite. We prize equality so highly that superlative performance is often suspect. Paradoxically this coexists with ready applause for superheroes in sports, moneymaking, and daredevilism. The idea of singling out one element of the population for special support is mistrusted unless the element is below the average. It is idealistically comfortable to help the underdog. Topdog is supposed to take care of himself.

The second cause for my concern is the limelight recently thrown on a group of children labeled "the gifted and talented." Suddenly these children are the focus of a great deal of governmental and professional attention. Their lives will be microscopically examined, they will be the objects of studies, and the recipients of hot, new, educational materials. This may be wonderful, or it may not. It all depends on whether the live child is found in the program or sacrificed to it.

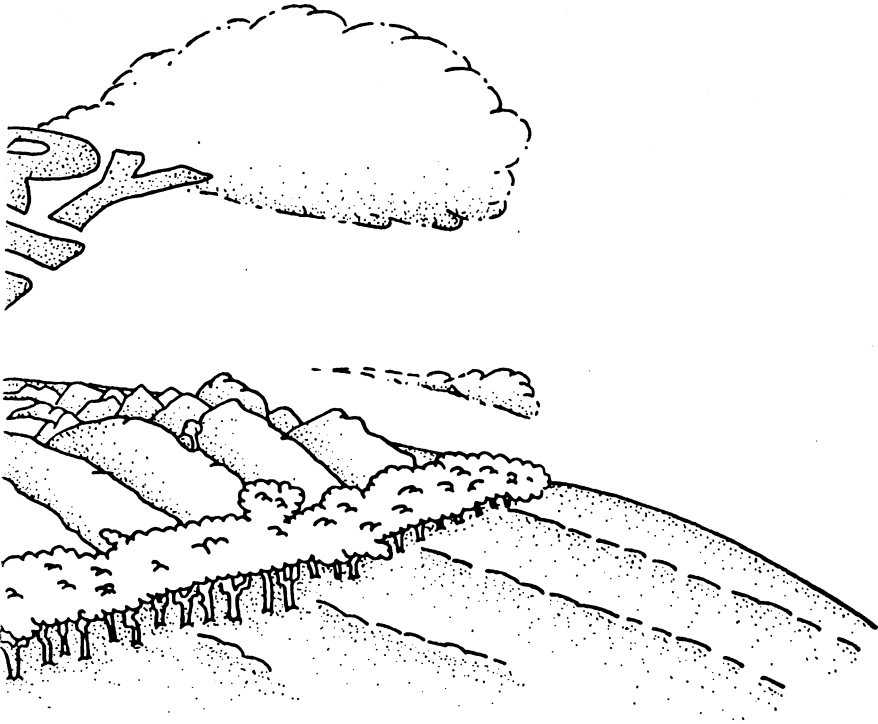
As a teacher and a parent I want to share what insights I have with others who are concerned with children: educators, parents, physicians, those who plan community projects, and enlightened caretakers who want to protect and support gifted children so they may grow into whole people.

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The Story of Evan-Everything

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“*E*van-Everything.”

The kids in school sometimes call me that. I like knowing about lots of different things, and it’s usually easy for me to remember them.

Sometimes I learn by listening. I know a lot about electricity and gears from hearing my dad and his friends talking, and I’ve learned how to make electric circuits. My mom is a dietician so I know some things about bodies and nutrition from listening to her. I hear things on TV too, and I know lots of stories from the records and cassettes from the library. If I listen to a song, even just once, I can sing it back and sometimes even play it.

I learn from looking around, too. There are patterns everywhere if you take time to see them. You can find lots of patterns on buildings. How many different shapes; squares, rectangles, arches? How many windows, how many rows? Sometimes shapes look good because they balance each other. That’s called symmetry. (I learned that word

from TV.) Sometimes designs look better when they don't balance. And it isn't just the things you *see*; some music balances and some doesn't.

People balance too, at least on the outside. Two arms, two legs, two eyes, two ears. Even though you've only got one nose, it has two holes, and your mouth has two lips. But what about when you feel a special way? My feelings don't always match up. How about ideas? Are they supposed to come in pairs? And where do they come from anyway?

