

According to the editor, the 1998 Teaching for Intelligence Conference maintains that

such teaching holds great promise for all America's learners. It advises us to study more carefully where we have been educationally over these past fifteen years. Beyond current schooling's narrow focus on IQs, standardized test scores, and minimal curriculum requirements, there is a vast world of thought, inquiry, wisdom, and beauty ready to help educate children. (p. vii)

This well-edited volume provides an extremely thought-provoking contribution to the central tenets of teaching for intelligence. The reader is inspired to examine his or her own perspectives regarding the education of our young and the need for a connection between and among curricula, pedagogy, and intelligence. The editor was successful in providing a well-grounded and comprehensive focus for such an examination. Those in gifted education would benefit in many ways as a result of reading this volume. As the editor suggests, the papers in this collection challenge educators to go back to the beginning of the current reform period and ask how teaching for intelligence has made a difference. As a field, we are well-advised to study where we have been educationally over the past decades and reflect upon our future path.

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Smutny, J. F. (Ed.). (1997). *The young gifted child: Potential and promise, an anthology*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press. ISBN 1-57273-109-5.

Where does giftedness begin? Is giftedness something within the child, some aspect of his or her physiological makeup present at conception? Are the parents the giver of the gift, nurturing and encouraging the seeds they have planted? Do teachers make a gifted child blossom? Do schools provide the appropriate environment that elicits the gift? Or, is it really the psychologists, educators, and researchers who are responsible; the ones who know how to find these special children, who learn how they should be nurtured by their parents and their teachers, who tell us what it is about these children that is special?

In her book *The Young Gifted Child: Potential and Promise, an Anthology*, Joan Smutny has gathered together varying perspectives on all these aspects of giftedness in young children. In reading this compendium, one realizes how complex the world of gifted children is, and how far we have come in understanding how we can develop their talents. Reaching potential does not have to be as much a matter of chance as it

once was. The good fortune of gifted children whose parents naturally assumed the role of nurturer or whose special teacher recognized the spark still play an important part in the lives of many, but the knowledge gained by those in gifted education will help to create parents who become nurturers and teachers who know how to recognize the spark. Smutny's book will undoubtedly teach someone—a parent, teacher, or counselor—important information that will make the difference in the life of a gifted child.

The 41 chapters of this book do not make easy reading, more because of their presentation (the font selection is a little hard on the eyes) and volume than their content. But, they have much to offer for the effort. The book is divided into six sections: Perspectives, Identification, Special Populations, Parenting the Gifted Child, Meeting Social and Emotional Needs to Effect Growth, and Creating Effective Educational Experiences for Gifted Young Children. The sections contain from 6 to 14 chapters, each written by a specialist in the subject. Among the authors are many familiar names and new ones, as well. The sections offer a variety of perspectives on the issue being covered. Because each author is writing a chapter of his or her own, there is some redundancy as the background needed to make their point is included. Although it may be redundant to someone reading the book from front to back, it is ideal when a chapter is taken alone for a class, for example, or to enlighten a colleague, parent, or teacher. Because so many authors have an opportunity to discuss a different aspect of their area of research or interest, each section of the book offers a more holistic perspective of a topic than a single chapter on the subject or a book by a single author.

Smutny has done a good job of compiling the sections into a logical flow of information. For example, in the first section on identification, the reader learns first about conceptions of giftedness in Barbara Clark's chapter on "The Beginnings of Giftedness: Optimizing Early Learning." "Identifying the Gifted Infant" by Judith Gelbrich is interesting, making clear the need for more research on bringing identification to younger and younger populations. Bertie Kingore offers a wonderful applied chapter concerning her Kingore Observation Inventory, which would be useful to any kindergarten teacher who wishes to improve the opportunities for students with exceptional ability. Using her KOI, a teacher will be able to pinpoint what it is about that special student that suggests a recommendation to a gifted program. In a more theoretical chapter, Maurice Fisher discusses what he has termed "sensibilities," qualities that a gifted child possesses that are not necessarily evidenced by traditional measures of ability. Closely linked to Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, identifying these sensibilities requires a new outlook on giftedness. Fisher calls for a

“major revolution in attitudes and thinking about the assessment of young children” (p. 60).

Their many years of experience are evident in John and Hazel Feldhusen’s chapter, “Identification and Nurturing of Precocious Children in Early Childhood.” Speaking in practical terms more about what can be done with the gifted child than the identification procedures, the Feldhusens offer such advice as, “It is desirable to carry out grade advancement midyear. The receiving teacher and the teacher the child is leaving can then easily confer about how best to help the child make a smooth transition” (p. 64). Throughout this chapter, it is clear that the authors have seen the situations leading to their advice. The final chapter of this section, “The Importance of Early Identification of Gifted Children and Appropriate Educational Intervention” by Dorothy Sisk, might have fit in the final section of the book on Creating Effective Educational Experiences for Gifted Young Children because it describes programming options and, in particular, a program developed to improve the opportunities for success of underserved students. The chapter fits in this section because of its emphasis on identification for the project and characteristics of students, parents, and teachers, and it also provides an appropriate bridge to the next section of the book. A problem with such a comprehensive book is that readers who only choose the section they are interested in may miss relevant material in chapters that do not fit so neatly under their section title. Identification comes up again and again throughout the book, and readers interested in this subject would be enriched by reading most of the chapters rather than focusing on just this first section. Smutny’s introduction to each section describes each chapter and can provide a guide to readers who don’t want to read every chapter.

Each section of the book offers varied perspectives much like the first. Throughout the book, I found myself thinking of ways in which I could use different sections to inform those around me who have not had exposure to theory and research in the area of gifted education. The section on identification is ideal for my friend whose kindergartner belongs in a gifted program, but who does not know that it is worth fighting for. Our local kindergarten teachers would be much more effective in identifying students with exceptional ability if they would use the Kingore Observation Inventory. The local preschool could benefit from Gail Hanninen’s advice in “Designing a Preschool Program for the Gifted and Talented.” A friend’s daughter who has a gifted two-year-old would be very interested in Part IV: Parenting the Gifted Child: Enabling and Encouraging Parents, as well as Patricia Hollingsworth’s chapter, “The World of the Young Gifted Child Viewed Through Open Systems Concepts,” in which she discusses the school, parent, and child relationship. Every

parent of gifted children should read “Parents of Gifted Children: Sheep in Wolves’ Clothing?” by Gina Ginsberg Riggs. This chapter is written for teachers about the parents they are likely to encounter in a gifted program. Perhaps Riggs’ frank advice coupled with the excellent primer in “Conceptual Models: Their Role in Early Education for the Gifted and Talented Child” by LeoNora Cohen and Janice Jipson would turn the most difficult parents into supporters. Cohen and Jipson’s historical overview of curricular models put names to the feelings I’ve had in my experience with good and bad early education for my children. Parents’ desires for their child’s early education are not always the same. Some parents want their young child to be in a program emphasizing academic learning; others want a more play-oriented environment. An understanding of the conceptual model upon which a program is based can be an effective tool in choosing a preschool program or evaluating an elementary program. Knowledge is power, and the more parents learn about their child’s education, the better advocates they can be.

Elizabeth Meckstroth’s chapter “Complexities of Giftedness: Dabrowski’s Theory” in Part V: Meeting Social and Emotional Needs to Effect Growth, is another that I would want new teachers of the gifted or parents frustrated by their child’s “oddities” to read. Dabrowski’s description of the overexcitabilities many gifted children (and adults) exhibit may help to alleviate some of the concerns and frustrations parents and teachers have. As I read this chapter, I wondered how many children are on Ritalin because they exhibit Dabrowski’s psychomotor overexcitability. “The psychomotor overexcitability has been found to be the one of Dabrowski’s classifications that is the most significantly correlated with high intelligence” (p. 296).

Patricia Duggins Hoelscher proposes a likely expansion of gifted education to the medical community in her chapter, “The Role of the Pediatrician.” Many parents deal with psychosomatic illnesses, twitches, stress, and other physical complaints that are actually caused by their gifted child’s unique characteristics. What happens to the child whose physician is unfamiliar with the exceptional behavior of gifted individuals? Among other possibilities, the child may receive inappropriate treatment, perhaps with irreversible negative consequences. Even though my personal experience and that of other parents have supported Hoelscher’s argument, I had not thought before of the need for training in the medical community.

Joan Smutny has done an admirable job in compiling this resource. This book makes interesting reading and is an ideal resource for anyone working with young gifted children, their teachers, or their parents. Every elementary school could benefit from a copy of this book on the shelf, available for reference to the principal or counselor, and some sections

should be required reading for new teachers. Anyone who sees him or herself as a disseminator of information would find ways to use this book. Researchers and practitioners alike are likely to find some new angle in the variety of subjects presented here. Smutny brings together the voices of many advocates and experts on behalf of young gifted children.

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