

Are you meeting the social and emotional needs of your gifted and talented learners?



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Primary Teacher – 15 years
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BED papers - Massey University,
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True / False



You have two minutes to sort the statements into True or false....GO!

My Research



Primary teachers' perceptions of the social and emotional aspects of gifted and talented education.

Five Rotorua Primary schools.
Forty Four participants - Questionnaires
Four interview participants - interviews

Findings

Teachers were

- uncertain about the social and emotional characteristics and needs
- positive attitudes towards gifted and talented children while acknowledging their lack of personal knowledge
- frustrations at barriers affecting their ability to support gifted and talented children's social and emotional needs
- in need of professional development



*The truly creative mind in any field is no more than this:
A human creature born abnormally, inhumanly sensitive.*

To him...

*a touch is a blow,
a sound is a noise,
a misfortune is a tragedy,
a joy is an ecstasy,
a friend is a lover,
a lover is a god,
and failure is death.*

Add to this cruelly delicate organism the overpowering necessity to create, create, create - - - so that without the creating of music or poetry or books or buildings or something of meaning, his very breath is cut off from him. He must create, must pour out creation. By some strange, unknown, inward urgency he is not really alive unless he is creating.

Pearl Buck (no date)

Are you meeting the social and emotional needs of your gifted and talented learners?



- "Schools should aim to meet the specific social and emotional needs of gifted and talented learners" (Ministry of Education (MOE), 2000, p.6).
- "develop awareness of the particular social and emotional characteristics of gifted and talented students, and promote their holistic wellbeing" (ERO, 2008, p. 54).

Three competing theories



- Gifted children are **more vulnerable** to emotional difficulties and **more at risk** of adjustment problems than their non-gifted peers.
(Morelock, 1996; Piechowski, 1991; Silverman, 1998).
- Gifted children are **more advanced** in social and emotional development, **better adjusted** than their non-gifted peers and less likely to have social and emotional difficulties
(Clark, 1997; Gross 2000; Parker, 1996; Neihart, 1999).
- Gifted children are **just as liable** to emotional difficulties as others
(Feldhusen & Nimlos- Hippen, 1992; Freeman, 1994).

Affective Characteristics



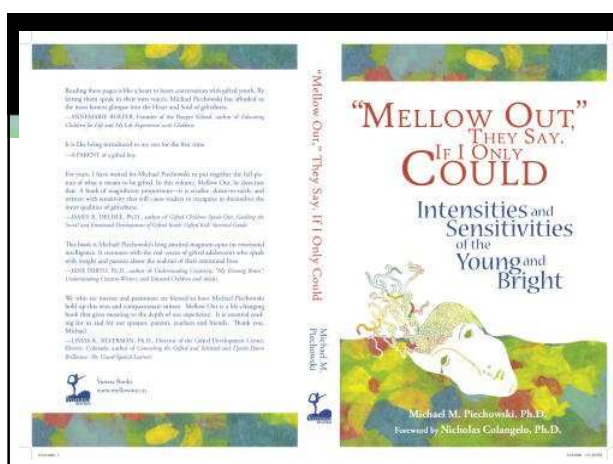
What are the commonly reported affective characteristics of gifted and talented children?

What does the research say?

Overexcitabilities



- Overexcitabilities are often used to describe certain characteristics of the gifted.
It is often recognized that gifted and talented people are energetic, enthusiastic, intensely absorbed in their pursuits, endowed with vivid imagination, sensuality, moral sensitivity and emotional vulnerability. . . [They are] experiencing in a higher key. - Michael Piechowski. (Heylighen, no date, p.5).
- Dabrowski's overexcitabilities ("superstimulabilities") - extreme sensitivity of central nervous system
- 'over the top' reactions, for example screaming when there is a sudden loud noise.



Perfectionism



- unrealistic expectations of themselves to achieve at high levels in everything they do
- Teachers, parents and other adults can also have inappropriately high expectations for gifted children which can reinforce and exacerbate perfectionist tendencies
- may lead to avoiding challenges so as not to appear imperfect.
- Positive and negative motivations to achieve
- fear of failure or making a mistake.
- Frustration at falling short of their expectations can lead to emotional outbursts.

Dysynchrony



- two particular domains are very asynchronous in their development. Terrassier (1985)
- uneven rates of development between intellect and fine motor skills, intellect and social skills, or intellect and emotional responses and may cause difficulties in performing and interacting well

Underachievement



- perform at very low levels or average levels for their age.
- Withdraw or disruptive
- child loses interest, motivation and commitment to performing well, or has a fear of failure
- hide their abilities in order to fit in with their same aged peers

Introversion



- more comfortable in their own inner world
- prefer to work independently
- more productive when working alone.
- misinterpreted as anti-social behaviour.

Undesirable Behaviours



- domination of class discussions,
- inattentiveness,
- day dreaming,
- distractibility,
- inappropriate use of humour,
- task avoidance,
- resistance to working with others

Self Concept



- Characteristics of gifted and talented children can sometimes be over generalised:

Brighter doesn't necessarily mean happier, more successful, socially adept or more secure. Neither does brighter necessarily mean hyper, difficult, overly sensitive, or neurotic. In terms of emotional and social characteristics, brighter may not mean anything 'different' at all

(Delisle & Galbraith, 2002)

Activity



All birds Fly

Skills

Self awareness
Self control
Concentration
Observation
Tolerating frustration

Social-emotional needs of gifted children:



- To understand their **similarities and differences** to their peers,
- To **appreciate individuality**,
- To understand and develop **relationship skills**,
- To develop an **appreciation for their** high-level sensitivity and intensified emotional experiences,
- To gain a **realistic assessment** of their ability and talents and how they can be **nurtured**,
- To develop an understanding of the distinction between 'pursuit of excellence' and 'pursuit of perfection',
- To learn the art and science of **compromise**.

VanTassel Baska (1998)

Social-emotional needs of gifted children:



- The need for **companionship** of children of similar abilities and interests as oneself- children at similar developmental stages.
- The need for social **acceptance** by the groups in which one is placed for the purposes of learning
- The need to **feel secure**; this allows one to take **intellectual risks**.
- The need to **express, rather than conceal**, one's abilities, feelings and interests.
- The need for **self-acceptance**.

Gross (2002)

The message often being given to children by teachers is:



You are having trouble relating to peers. As a strategy for addressing this problem, we will place you in a room full of children from whom you feel different. We will then ask you to spend a great deal of time doing activities that you find repetitive and boring. When you get good and frustrated with this situation and act out toward your classmates and teachers, we will say, 'See we knew you needed work on social skills'

Saunders and Espeland (1986, as cited in Taylor, 2004)

Is this still true 25 years later?

Taylor (2004) challenges teachers to ask themselves these questions:



- Are the gifted children whom I teach **happy, fulfilled** students who want to come to school?
- Do I focus on the **strengths** rather than weaknesses?
- Do I acknowledge that it is okay for gifted children to know more than me about some things?

What can classroom teachers do?



It is the teachers' role to

- equip children with coping **skills** in order for them to function in a classroom where their ideas and behaviours may differ from their peers.
- provide for and **support** the social and emotional needs and development of the gifted child by teaching specific skills such as persistence, tolerance, risk taking and flexibility.
- provide **environments** in which emotional sensitivity can be nurtured and supported.
- provide **opportunities** for social development where the child's needs are accepted and valued rather than suppressed.

Key concepts teachers need to address in their classroom programmes include:



- Recognising and respecting the relationship between social and emotional needs and academic needs,
- Being cautious about forcing your desires on students based on your perception of their strength areas,
- Teaching pro-social skill development,
- Teaching enjoyment of non-academic activities,
- Teaching ways to manage stress,
- Modelling acceptable behaviours,
- Not trying to change the basic nature of the student,
- Embracing diversity, not merely tolerating it,
- Exposing students to knowledgeable counselling,
- Providing opportunities for down time.

Cross (2004)

Specific strategies



to use while helping gifted children and adults to recognize, cope with, cherish and take advantage of their emotional intensity:

- Jointly discuss the positive outcomes of being emotionally intense—i.e. sensitive to others, caring, loyal, have strong feelings,
- Cherish and celebrate diversity and individual differences,
- Think about how these traits effect a person's perception of the world,
- Accept the individual as is — including "bizarre" descriptions and expressions of feelings and alternative ways of viewing and doing things,

Specific strategies continued



- Teach individuals to find ways to change their behaviours and responses, rather than just dwell on personal failures,
- Share that intense feelings, depression, are OK,
- Teach individuals to anticipate physical and emotional responses,
- Help individuals to understand how their intense emotions may adversely affect others,
- Find physical outlets for emotional energy.

Lind (2003a)

Practical strategies for responding to the particular needs of introverts:



- giving wait time - more time to think before responding to a questioning,
- don't interrupt while child is giving explanations,
- don't embarrass introverts in public,
- reprimand them privately rather than publicly,
- let them observe in new situations before attempting it,
- develop an early warning system for finish times,
- don't push them to make lots of friends, and finally and some would argue most importantly, respect their introversion,
- don't try to make them into extraverts.

Gross (no date)

Activity



Smiling is contagious
(To the tune of ten green bottles)

Smiling is contagious
You catch it like the flu
If you smile at someone
They start smiling too
If you say hello as well
They'll say hello to you
Being kind and friendly
Is what we like to do

Bounce Back teachers resource [McGrath and Noble \(2003\)](#)

Classroom strategies



- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • affective components in programmes • journal writing • goal setting • problem solving • co-operative games • co-operative grouping • vocabulary building • discussions and debates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • biographies • bibliotherapy • guided viewing films • creative outlets for expressing feelings • philosophy • mentorships |
|---|---|

Strategies



- **Journal writing** – Diaries, blogs, wikis
- **Goal Setting**
- **Problem-solving.** eg Future Problem solving New Zealand (<http://www.fpsnz.co.nz/>).

Co-operative Games



- *Games that are facilitated mindfully and with integrity can provide rich learning experience that goes beyond the teaching of skills as a way of masking or compensating for social ineptness and opens up the possibility of a much deeper learning instead, the type of learning that leads to socially intelligent interactions and promotes feelings of personal fulfillment and self-respect (Plummer, 2008, p.13).*

Co-operative Game Activity



Social Skills Games for Children [Plummer \(2008\)](#)

Freeze Frame

Skills

Understanding feelings
Self awareness
Non verbal communication
Imagination

- **Co-operative Grouping** - group dynamic skills, rules and responsibilities.
- **Vocabulary building** - recognize, accept, express and understand their myriad of feelings through discussions, activities and games specifically designed to expand the child's "feelings" vocabulary.
- **Discussions and Debates** - critically examine social, ethical, or moral issues and problems and develop awareness of their own and others values. Eg De Bono's Six Thinking Hats (http://debonoforschools.com/asp/six_hats.asp) or Ryan's Thinkers Keys (<http://www.thinkerskeys.com/>)

- **Biographies** - positive role models.
- **Bibliotherapy** - guided process using quality literature as a catalyst for discussing social and emotional experiences and issues.
- **Guided viewing films** - similar to the process used in bibliotherapy.
- **Creative Arts** - express themselves in positive and constructive ways through creative and visual arts.

- **Role Playing** - creative problem solving technique, using interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences while developing self concepts and self confidence
- **Philosophy** - thinking skills programme that taps into children's natural curiosity, and assists them in their search for meaning. Eg Philosophy For Children (P4C), Philosophy For Children Association of New Zealand (P4CNZ) <http://www.p4c.org.nz/Home.php>
- **Mentorships** - role model that influences and stimulates the child's interests through passionate shared interests and a mutually beneficial relationship.

Other Resources



Emotional Literacy
[Adams 2011](#)

Socially Strong Emotionally Secure
[Bruce and Cairone \(2011\)](#)

Supporting Emotional Needs of Gifted website



<http://www.sengifted.org/>



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