

Nurturing Your Gifted Child at Home

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Our first task as a parent

Gifted students need opportunities in each academic area to practice higher-level thinking skills (analysis, synthesis, evaluation), develop creativity, and enhance their problem-solving skills. But their need for this challenge doesn't stop at the end of the school day.

These skills can be encouraged significantly at home. Best of all, you can do it simply and informally, without your child even realizing what is happening!

Our first task as a parent is to

- ◆ **help our gifted child stay engaged with learning and**
- ◆ **nurture them to make the most of their abilities**

What does 'nurturing' mean?

- ◆ Creating an environment where kids can develop a positive relationship with their interests
- ◆ Exposing them to new ideas and experiences

Thinkers. Do-ers. Innovators. Problem Solvers. Leaders. Questioners. Searchers. Creators. Challengers. Mystery Solvers. Jokesters. Trivia Buffs. Wonder-ers. Experimenters.

The pressure to be gifted 24/7 in all walks of life can be very intense for these children, which is why parents should try to **remember that these children are children first and gifted second.**

Discover your gifted child's interests



- ◆ **“Interest Inventories” are available free on the web.**
- ◆ **Sign your child up for classes or enrichment activities and investigate whether your local schools, colleges, businesses, and performing arts companies offer free or low-cost events outside of school hours**
- ◆ **Connect your child with family, friends, co-worker and neighbors to learn what they do for work or for a hobby.**
- ◆ **Consider having monthly projects on different topics using activity boxes, STEM kits, FBISD GT Family Series (fortbendisd.com/GT)**

Feed your child's voracious appetite for knowledge



- ◆ **Make books and magazines in various genres and subjects available.**
- ◆ **Find family-friendly websites for your child to explore.**
- ◆ **Lead by example! Be a learner yourself by showing your child that learning is something that doesn't stop at the end of the school or workday.**
- ◆ **Exposing your child to available community resources will help to expand his or her knowledge about areas of interest and ignite curiosity and excitement:**

Museums (art, science, health, children's

Studios (art, dance, theater, music)

Zoo/Aquariums/Wildlife safari/State Parks

Libraries (workshops, events, classes)

Community centers

Festivals

Plays/Opera/Ballet/Symphony

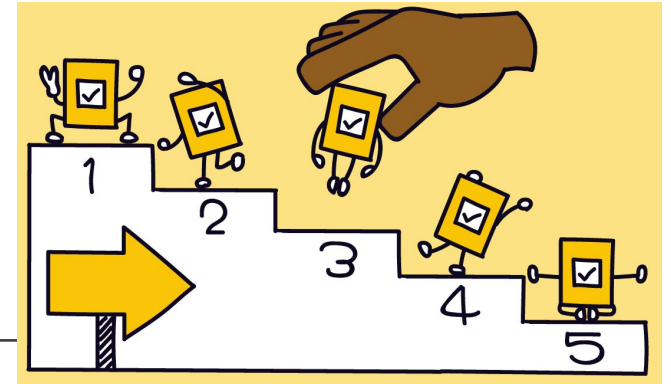
Mentorships (fortbendis.com/gtmentorship)

Don't over-schedule your gifted child; That is not the same as providing challenge

- ◆ Nurturing vs. Pushing – different things
- ◆ Give your child exposure to many different skills and activities that may uncover talent and passion in the child.
- ◆ Give your child the freedom and opportunity to make choices regarding clubs, activities, and extra-curriculars.
- ◆ Give your child enough down time to process, read for fun, vegetate, and let ideas simmer.



Demonstrate how to prioritize, schedule and let go



- ◆ Gifted individuals discover early that they have many interests and can get more done—wear more hats—than most other people.
- ◆ Sometimes they get over-involved and can't decide how to lower their stress and their commitments.
- ◆ Even gifted people need down time and processing time, so they must learn how to pick and choose carefully in order to allow the time necessary for emotional growth and self-discovery.
- ◆ Help your child learn to recognize the difference between their own goals and someone else's.

Help your child learn to manage time



- ◆ **When they start school, gifted children usually have few problems keeping up with work.
They learn quickly and easily.**
- ◆ **While that may sound like a real advantage, it can lead to problems. These children may never learn to manage their time in order to get work done.**
- ◆ **At some point, whether in high school or college, they may feel overwhelmed by the work they need to complete and don't know how to set time aside to complete tasks.**
- ◆ **Teach your child how to create and use a time-management schedule.**

Use short-term goals and rewards



- ◆ Sometimes a child gets overwhelmed by a large task.
- ◆ It's not that the task is difficult, but the child may not be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel and may give up before he or she even begins.
- ◆ Help your child see the task as a series of smaller tasks. Make each small task a goal and try setting a reward for that goal.
- ◆ Sometimes rewards won't be necessary once a child is able to see the task as a manageable one.

Encourage questioning



- ◆ **As you've probably noticed, gifted children ask a lot of questions. Sometimes their curiosity can be exhausting.**
- ◆ **Create a home library of reference materials including a dictionary, a thesaurus, a world almanac, book of world records.**
- ◆ **Add reference books on topics that interest your child (dinosaurs, planets, etc.).**
- ◆ **When your child asks a question, you can't answer, it's ok to admit it.**
- ◆ **Help your child find the answer by visiting the library, searching the Internet, making phone calls and/or consulting experts on the subject.**
- ◆ **Lead by example! Be curious yourself. Let your child know when you are learning something new or researching the answer to a question you have.**

Listen your gifted child



- ◆ Gifted children have a lot to share.
- ◆ They may talk to you about the movies you haven't seen, books you haven't read or games you haven't played, however it is very important to show interest and let them express themselves.
- ◆ Sometimes they might be couple of steps ahead of you and you might not have the context to understand what they have in mind.
- ◆ Be patient, listen to them and let them teach you.

Help your child develop and practice social skills



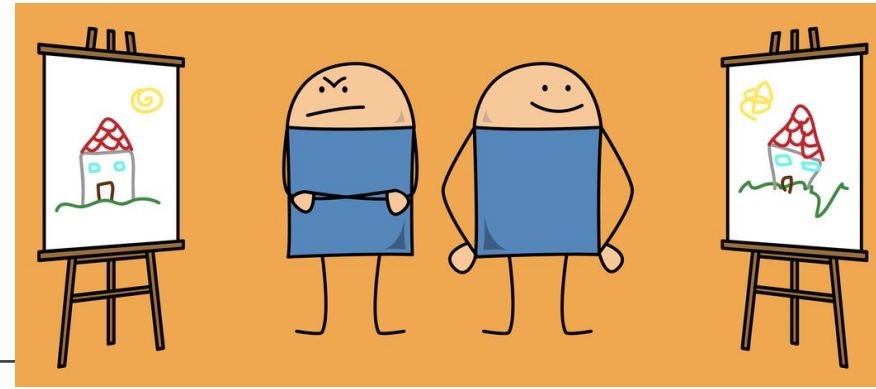
- ◆ Encourage your child to recognize and appreciate other people's talents and abilities.
- ◆ Some gifted children have difficulty relating with children their own age because of their advanced vocabulary and varied/diverse interests.
- ◆ Talk with your child's teacher and other parents of gifted children to help foster friendships with other gifted children.
- ◆ Provide opportunities for your child to socialize with older children through programs outside of school.

Support your sensitive child



- ◆ Gifted children often have more intense feelings than other children their age.
- ◆ They may develop empathy at an early age, quickly pick up on others' emotions, worry about world issues, be curious about the meaning of life and death, cry, anger and/or excite easily.
- ◆ It's important that you acknowledge and respect your child's feelings and talk about feelings open and honestly.
- ◆ Share your own feelings when appropriate.
- ◆ Teach your child words to describe his or her feelings.

Help your perfectionist child



- ◆ Perfectionism can be a problem for gifted children. They often feel pressured by teachers, parents, and friends to be “perfect.” Perfectionists often set impossible goals for themselves, aren’t satisfied with their successes, are afraid of making mistakes, and expect too much of themselves.
- ◆ Show your child that you accept him or her “as is.”
- ◆ Keep your expectations realistic and praise your child for taking risks, even if things don’t work out.
- ◆ Give your child permission to make mistakes at home in a safe environment and praise your child’s efforts as much as you do their finished products.
- ◆ Share with your child times in your own life where your mistakes led to a learning opportunity.

Encourage them to do things they're not good at

- ◆ Gifted children need activities where they might experience failure.
- ◆ If they don't have these opportunities now, they will find it much more disheartening when they do eventually encounter other things in life where they can't succeed easily.
- ◆ Be a role model! You can have fun at something even if you'll never be the best at it
- ◆ This can be a message for your gifted child that failure is acceptable.



Praise your child's efforts



- ◆ Gifted kids sometimes have trouble connecting personal effort to achievement. Much of what they do and learn comes easily to them, so they can achieve with little effort. To help a child succeed, praise efforts at success and make that praise specific.
- ◆ Try to be particularly aware of when your child really has put a great deal of effort or thought into something and needs encouragement or positive feedback.
- ◆ For example, instead of saying "Nice work," it's better to say something like, "You worked hard on your science project; you really earned that grade."
- ◆ Avoid the reverse: don't say things like, "If you worked harder, you would do better."

Keep track of your child's school performance and progress

- ◆ Talk to your child on a regular basis about his or her experiences at school.
- ◆ You will be able to pick up on signs of frustration or boredom.
- ◆ Stay in touch with your child's teacher.
- ◆ Attend parent-teacher conferences, and include your child, when appropriate.
- ◆ Build a respectful relationship with the teacher.



Go outside and play

- ❖ Research has shown that unstructured time outdoors has a multitude of benefits for children.
- ❖ It reduces anxiety, depression, and aggression, increases cooperation, flexibility, and fitness, and allows children to use their imagination.
- ❖ Children are often involved in so many extracurricular activities (soccer practice, dance, music lessons, etc.) they have little or no free time.
- ❖ Take your child for a nature walk now and then. Take advantage of community parks, playgrounds and state parks.



Take care of yourself to recharge!

- ◆ Parenting a gifted child is a wonderful adventure. It's not always easy.
- ◆ Practice parent self-care! Your child is your world, but they can't be your whole life 24/7.
- ◆ Making time for yourself can provide perspective and balance, so don't be afraid to give yourself a break or make special time for you and your partner.
- ◆ Regularly set aside a half-hour to an hour each day just for you.
- ◆ Take a nap, focus on your hobby, read/listen to a book or magazine, take a walk, call a friend, take a fitness class, watch your favorite show.
- ◆ By taking care of yourself, you're teaching your child to do the same.
- ◆ You'll need your strength, wisdom, and sense of humor in the years ahead.



References

- ◆ National Association for Gifted Children, www.nagc.org
- ◆ Top Ten Ways to Nurture Your Gifted Child at Home, www.idsalliance.com
- ◆ How to Nurture Your Gifted Child, www.verywellfamily.com
- ◆ 20 Tips For Nurturing Gifted Children, www.cwschool.org
- ◆ Some Do's and Don'ts For Raising Your Gifted Kids, www.sengifted.org