Affective Curriculum in Gifted Programs

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Current Realities

**Reactive** attention
- eating disorders
- obsessive-compulsive disorder
- extreme perfectionism
- schizophrenia
- ADHD
- oppositional defiant disorder
- depression
- suicide
- school dropout
- substance abuse
- underachievement
- tragedy

**Proactive** attention
to social and emotional concerns, “normal development”—almost nonexistent in programs for gifted students

Lack of Attention to Affective in Programs

- Understaffed programs
- Time constraints
- Training—emphasis on unresponsive school environments, not on social and emotional concerns
- No knowledge of strategies

Gifted students not seen in terms of “normal” development, not seen as needing help re: development, assumed to be able to apply abilities to meet personal challenges, not seen as having a “social/emotional self,” only talents/performance

An affective curriculum

Discussion (small or large group)
- Processing the process
- Listening/Responding skills
- Being “in the moment”
- Non-academic; non-competitive
- Embedded in core curriculum

Strategies for Addressing Affective Concerns

- Creative use of non-class times
- Meeting over lunch + borrowing 15 minutes from next class
- Advisor/advisee, homeroom, community time
- Scheduling gifted kids together daily for homeroom
- Co-facilitating classroom sessions, small groups with the school counselor
- Sharing pertinent information about giftedness with the school counselor

- Asking school counselor for catalogs (group curriculum)
- Structured (not “therapeutic”) discussion, using available curricula
- Writing assignments with an affective dimension
- Books, videos—discussion, journal responses
- Journaling (re: literature)
- Intentional content related to social/emotional development in language arts
- Giving gifted kids a chance to talk about “growing up”—non-academic life

Discussion Groups

- Co-facilitate with school counselor—learn the techniques.
  - (Counselor can facilitate groups alone.)
  - Group by ability level AND age.
  - (Benefit: Counselor becomes aware of gifted kids’ needs.)
  - Gifted kids can develop skills in articulating concerns—will benefit future relationship

- Gifted kids don’t trust non-gifted with concerns.
- Groups offer chance to remove facade of invulnerability, ask “dumb” questions, find support during difficult times, affirm strengths, provide information, sort out stressors, find common ground with others.
- Groups can accommodate mainstream kids, underachievers, superstars, risk-takers, risk-avoiders—a wide range of gifted kids.
A Study of Negative Life Events during K-12 Years (at graduation): Examples of Most Stressful Events

- **Overcommitment**
  "I’m in too much stuff. While they’re all things I like to do, the demands on my time are incredible. I feel as if I can’t do one thing well because I have to move on to the next thing. I can’t practice my violin as much as I want because I have to write 3 articles for newspaper, but I can’t do it after school because I have to work and I don’t have time on the weekends because I have a tennis match, a 3-hour youth symphony rehearsal, and— somewhere in there—my homework. And where is my social life?"

- **Injury/Illness/Accident**
  Football injuries; asthma; diabetes diagnosis; dog diagnosed with bone cancer; crashing my car.

- **Rejection**
  Not getting into Yale; All-State Orchestra, advanced soccer team, concert choir; being rejected by a girl I really loved.

Most Stressful Events, Situations

- **Transitions**
  Changed churches; first day of middle school; starting a new school; moving across town; going to high school; “Challenge Center kids (MS) went to different schools”.

- **Peers**
  "Multiple boys ridiculing me" (6th gr.); "one boy fighting/mocking me" (K-3); "trying to find a group of friends"; "being rejected by a girl I really care about"; "shuffling between friends, trying to find where I belong"; "friendship problems"; "had really no friends"; "being anti-social due to lack of knowledge in such areas".

- **Family**
  Father’s alcoholism, parents’ fighting, divorce; "being sent to drug rehab unnecessarily"; "parents grounding me and taking things away due to poor grades"; aunt’s refusal to communicate with family.

- **School**
  Besides references to ACT, SAT, AP pressures ("because of the great importance put on these tests by most people"); "learning to write cursive"; large projects; competition with peers; "my group and I needed to finish a movie and right toward the end of editing, we lost all our footage.

Summer Affective Curriculum

#### PK-4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Temperature</td>
<td>Expressive language; connection</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rhythm Game</td>
<td>Ability to handle new experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Smart”, 13 Intelligences</td>
<td>Consider many ways . . . (Identity)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passions; being “too much”</td>
<td>Normalize perceptions; Identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper hat (newspapers): strengths</td>
<td>Affirm strengths; Identity develop.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mood Range</td>
<td>Expressive language; Emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parts of Me (50 listed on a sheet)</td>
<td>Embrace social/emotional strengths</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worries; worry-meter</td>
<td>Expressive language; normalize</td>
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<tr>
<td>Changes (activity sheet)</td>
<td>Developmental changes: normal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magazine cover (drawing of future)</td>
<td>Connect strengths with future</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper airplanes (put worries on)</td>
<td>Control, Not Control; “agency”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Filling the Bucket (compliments)</td>
<td>Social—practice giving/receiving</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Summer Curriculum, PK-K, cont.

| Card game (questions, directions) | Expressive language; connections |
| Perfectism (activity sheet) | Self-reflection; identity; connections |
| Self-talk (create a mantra for self) | Cognitive control |
| Relaxation activity | Develop a cognitive coping strategy |
| Career (activity sheet, résumé) | Connect education to career |
| Stress (activity sheet) | Sort out stress; differentiate long . . . |
| Somatic sense of feelings | Self-awareness; recognize feelings |
| Giving Myself Permission | Develop personal agency |
| Jenga game (with # on block) | Expressive language |
| Storybook (stress, worries, fears) | Normalize feelings |
| My Story (activity sheet) | Expressive language; connection |
| Endings / Exit Interview | Expressive language; support |

Summer Residential, Grades 5-6

| Warm-Up: Emotional Temperature Who lives at your house? |
| Best Advice Influences | High Ability/Intelligence: what does it mean? (non-group differences) |
| Uniquenesses and Similarities—among school peers, in this group/ Personal Strengths & Limitations. | Being “interesting” |
| Changes—What is Different This Year for you? | Needs: Asking for what we need |
| Upcoming Changes? | Worries: Worry-o-meter |
| How do you “de change”? | Paper Planes (have paper hands) |
| Bullying (what do they see in hall, classroom, homework, busline, neighborhood, online?) | Rebase |
| How Others See Us | Finding satisfaction |
| Being “limited” (important)? | Filling the bucket |

| Rubbish—attack! | Having fun: What does that mean? Individual preferences |

#### 3 Intelligences

- **Activity**
  How are you similar/different from anyone else? How are you different from them?

- **Emotional Temperature**
  How are you different now from 2 years ago? Who is most concerned about you doing well? How does the great importance put on these tests by most people affect you? Madison County school system developing NOW will help?

- **Mood Range**
  How are you different now from 2 years ago? Who is most concerned about your doing well? Guile

- **Stress (Activity Sheet)**
  Best, Worry, and Anger

- **Encouragers & Disenchanters**
  Questions about College (2 8s 6th?)

- **What Can We Learn?**
  Family Lives

- **Unexpected/Unpredictables**
  Coping with Stress: Models of coping: How? Faithful Lives

- **Expectations, Wishes, and Dream Images**
  Future lifestyle and gender expectations

- **What is Maturity? Satisfaction in Life**
  Future lifestyle and gender expectations

- **Change and Loss (Activity)**
  An Inertial Assessment
### Summer Residential, High School

**Do the Stereotypes Fit?**

- Test scores? Messages?
- Three adjectives: for you [by others, self]

**Sensitivity (Activity), Intensity, Perfectionism (Activity), Control; Making Mistakes (Activity—In unseparable groups?)**

**Permission (Activity—In smaller groups)**

- Emotional Temperature
- Mood Ranges; Mood Models
- Mood (Activity/Modeling/Measuring/Monitoring/Meme)

**Rating My Self-Esteem (Activity)**

**Change, Loss and Transition—in past and present**

**Change-looking (Activity—Experiencing Loss)**

**Asking “Dumb” Questions About College; What You Already Know About College; Choosing a Career (Activity—Career Needs)**

**Separate, but Connected (Leaving Home)**

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### Career Development

- **Career development needs to be addressed much earlier** for gifted kids than others their age.
- **Intense anxiety** about choosing a career, and what it will involve, can appear at a young age.
- **Career guidance can help to guard against premature foreclosure** on a career path.
- **Career “fit” should be emphasized** (personality, needs, values, interests— in addition to ability)

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### Group Projects (Social!)

- **Academic competitions**
- **Research projects**
- **Creative projects**

Incorporate “play” into these inherently social endeavors.

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### Speakers

- **After-school lecturers—from universities, medical centers, mental health agencies—with extra credit from classroom teachers**
- **Single-event speakers about the “burdens of capability,” developmental issues—counselors, social workers, psychologists**
- **Mental-health professionals** interacting with small discussion groups or classroom groups.

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### A Secondary-Level Program: Affective Dimensions in All of Them

- Future Problem Solving
- Noon-hour philosophy class
- Classical music appreciation
- Spanish, French, German teaching in elementary schools
- Mime
- Dance
- Collaboration with art teacher (art competitions)
- Breakfast Club for poetry
- After-school Creative Writing
- National History Day
- Sign language
- Sign-language teaching

- After school lectures
- Career-shadowing (1 day each)
- Independent Study
- College courses
- AP classes
- Small-group independent study/research in classes heterogeneous re: ability
- Test-outs for computing
- Test-outs for English II
- Test-out for Government
- Engineering Field Trips
- Private music instruction
- Nobel Conference in MN
- Chinese

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### Speakers, Lecturers: Beyond the Curriculum (“horizontal”)

- Constitutional law
- Career artists
- Religions of the world
- American Indian culture, music, humor
- The language of the corporate world
- **“Living in the Age of Anxiety”** (series of 13)
  - e.g., depression, anxiety, teen pregnancy, the future of immunology, eating disorders, health and wellness, substance use, meditation, stress, biofeedback re: stress
Career Development

- Beyond interests and abilities—personal characteristics, personal values, personal fit in various career environments!
- School counselor can provide information.
- Career programs online
- Emphasis—NOT on “deciding,” but on becoming aware of personal needs, as related to potential career contexts.
- Career-shadowing (1 full day) experiences (Every math star shouldn’t be an engineer!)
- Field trips to see engineering, professionals applying science (or communications, or art) majors
- Panels of adults with at least two career changes

Affective Component in Core Curriculum, grade 1 (“Overcoming”)

- Materials: Mood Meter (to recall their mood during the event)
- Standards: Achievement identity; interact with diverse peers; model respect for diversity; product-based assessments re: progress, social needs
- Objectives: Listen, give opinions, interact positively, recall “a hard time”
- Rationale based on: Maslow; theories about stress, life crisis (Ch. 1, 2 in Social-Emotional Curriculum, Peterson, EGTVGT: “My Story”; Erikson)
- Engage: What do you think about the story?
  - What happened to the girl, her mom, her grandma?
  - How did they make it through such a tough time?
  - (Children tell their “story.”)
- Reflection: How did you feel when you told your story?
  - How did you feel when you listened to someone else?
  - How do you feel about how you handled that tie?
  - What will you try to remember the next time something bad happens?

Affective Component in Core Curriculum, grade 4

- Standards: social interaction; self-awareness; self-efficacy; group participation; coping skills
- Rationale: Focus on loss, forgiveness, friendships—universal concerns
  - Petronis and Hammond (2006) Guided viewing of film with gifted students, GCT, 29
  - (www.thegloryproject.com); Peterson, EGTVGT: discussion questions related to relationships
- Objectives: self-understanding, including about what is valued in relationships, how loss is experienced, how to cope with feelings, relating to feelings of the main character
- Engage: journaling (not to be turned in) about qualities of friends, favorite family member; someone they “don’t like”; share the qualities; don’t name anyone; discuss a personal “influencer”
  - times when it’s hard to ask for help; adults they would/would not ask for help; ways to ask for help

Affective Lesson in Core Curriculum: Grades 1, 2, 3

- DEALING WITH ANGER: The Day Leo Said I HATE YOU (Harris)
  - Rationale: addresses feelings through the arts, asynchronous development, lack of opportunity to discuss emotions or social issues; support for creative gifted kids; idiosyncratic manifestations of giftedness
  - Warm-up: ask if ever angry, ever said something mean when angry
  - Discussion: What do you understand about Leo being angry? How did he deal with anger in a way that “didn’t work” for him? How do you think he felt when he said, “I hate you”? How do you think his mom felt?
  - Activites:
    - Anger worksheet (situations they get angry about; what they do)
    - Discussion group (3-5 children): sharing, listening, respecting feelings
    - Whole class: negative and positive ways to deal with anger; effects of keeping anger in vs. to talk it. Ways to calm down
    - Anyone who didn’t share to write a note to the teacher about it.
  - Project Options: ore: expressing anger, story/poem/song: write/perform a skit; draw/paint a picture, create a comic strip; make a poster.

Affective Component in Core Curriculum: Grade 7 (Lang. Arts)

- STRESS (2 days)
  - Objectives:
    - Students will be able to individually assess stress levels.
    - Students will be able to define stress based on their own perspective.
    - Students will be able to recognize sources of stress in their lives.
    - Students will be prepared to help classmates devise coping mechanisms.
  - Methods:
    - Whole-group and small-group discussion; individual activity; writing
  - Resources:
    - Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff for Teens: Carlson.
    - Essential Guide to Talking with Gifted Teens – Peterson (“Sensitivity” activity sheet)
  - Activities:
    - Warm-up: “What causes stress in your life?”
    - Discuss: how stress affects daily life, performance, mood, attitudes
    - Read: Carlson chapter; Ask: topic already on the board?
    - Create: personal list; identify top 3; write paragraph—coping strategies
  - Evaluation: None? (personal thoughts and feelings; compliment to “norm”)

Stress, continued (gr 7)

- Warm-up: Children ask, in small groups:
  - “What thoughts from the first day?”
- Read another chapter: Discuss potential “overwhelming” and brainstorm strategies for coping
- Ask: “How does sensitivity affect our awareness? How might it increase stress level?”
- Write: discoveries from discussion, a personal definition of stress, strategies for coping
- Evaluation: Whether written product addressed the assignment
Affective Components in Core Curriculum: Grades 11-12

Persuasive Writing: Eating Disorders

Objectives:
- Students will be able to articulate principles of persuasive writing.
- Students will be able to produce coherent and focused text, a well-defined perspective, and a tightly reasoned argument.
- Students will be able to articulate concerns related to eating disorders, as well as be knowledgeable about resources.

Materials and Methods:
- Discussion groups; online resources; persuasive essay organizer; Essential Guide for Talking with Gifted Teens (session—eating disorders)

Activities:
- Research the topic (or be given articles)—4 sources (with proper citation form); discuss, using EGTWGT questions, in groups of 4; use organizer to write arguments with supporting evidence; write a letter to self/someone (as an assignment); read essay aloud to group; groups choose best to be presented to class.

Affective Curriculum:

- Contributing to the School Climate
  - . . . which values learning, many kinds of intelligence, diversity, harmony, and learning about the self
  - Flies for lectures can contribute to this atmosphere.
  - Teachers become aware of and sensitive to the affective concerns of gifted kids.

- Draws attention to “burdens of capability”
- Combats negative perceptions of gifted education
- Emphasizes NEEDS
- Can be somewhat open to entire school, without less quality
- Decreases arrogance, since 4.0 does not = stellar affective expression

- Gaining skills in articulating concerns and discovering commonalities with peers might be critical to sound mental health for some struggling with serious issues.

- ALL gifted students can gain from attention to affective concerns. Even future relationships and quality of life across the lifespan may be enhanced.

A Challenge for Counselors?

- Prevention-oriented group work
- Development-oriented group work
- Group work without a common issue
- Group work focused on “growing up”
- Group work as preparation for employment, marriage/partnership, parenting, friendship, self-care
- Group experiences as socialization
- Group work recognizing the social dimensions of “problems in living”

Discussion Groups—the “Content” is from the Kids.
Developmental

- Focused on "normal development"
- Filling gaps related to social/emotional development
- Helping with developmental "stuckness"
- Providing a chance for students to connect with others ABOUT development
- Providing even best friends a chance to talk ABOUT development in new ways
- Providing psychoeducational information

Goals & Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To develop listening skills</th>
<th>To develop skills in expression</th>
<th>To discover shared concerns</th>
<th>To enhance self-esteem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To gain insights</td>
<td>To break down stereotypes</td>
<td>To explore identity issues</td>
<td>To reduce stigma of &quot;counseling&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase self-awareness</td>
<td>To develop social skills</td>
<td>To develop coping skills</td>
<td>To develop trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To learn to give &amp; receive compliments</td>
<td>To learn to give &amp; receive feedback</td>
<td>To learn how to deal with ANGER</td>
<td>To learn how to deal with STRESS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Goals & Objectives, continued

| To learn how to deal with FEAR | To learn how to deal with ANXIETY | To learn how to deal with WORRY | To learn how to deal with perfectionism |
| To understand AUTHORITY | To learn how to learn for HELP | To understand TRANSITIONS | To develop skills in SELF-ADVOCACY |
| To learn to appreciate PEERS | To learn to appreciate TEACHERS | To learn to appreciate TEACHERS | To learn how to deal with "THE SYSTEM" |
| To share developmental concerns | To learn to articulate feelings | To discover commonalities | To develop compassion for others |

Fears of Teacher-(Co-)Facilitators

- Not the usual "curriculum"—with content
- More ambiguity
- Less control
- Not "problem-solving"
- Different sense of accomplishment
- Discomfort with affective concerns
- Fear of what might be heard, asked for
- Fear of not knowing what to say, do, advise
- Fear of "bombshells," tears, behavior

Guidelines

- Consistently nonjudgmental listening is crucial.
- Every student has a need to be heard, and groups help to meet that need.
- Avoid major changes in group composition once the group begins.
- A regular and intense, even if relatively short-in-duration, group series is preferable to an infrequently meeting, longer series.
- Group size should be relatively small. How small???
- Confidentiality must be firmly established at the outset, even though group members should understand that it cannot be guaranteed.

Advantage of Some Structure

- Everyone is required (unless they "pass") to say something in each session (via "go-rounds").
- Dramatic, crisis-prone group members are less likely to dominate.
- Inappropriate directions can be "reined in," by guiding the group back to the focus.
- Sometimes difficult topics can be explored comfortably when there is the "distraction" of some brief paper-and-pencil activity at the outset.
Important to Keep in Mind

- A focus (not just “hanging out”)
- Developmental topics
- A “one-down” facilitator
- Open-ended questions
- Emotional “bombshells”
- “I’m going to tell you something I’ve never told anyone before.”
- Mandatory reporting
- The possibility of depression, suicidal ideation, trauma, eating disorders, OCD, anxiety, substance abuse, PTSD

Becoming a Group

- Stroking/Norming when desirable behaviors happen
- Scaling (1-10): “Where do you think your group was today—if the following is a ‘good group’?”
  - Respect for everyone—no put-downs
  - Eye contact and respect for whoever is speaking
  - Listening when someone else is talking
  - Avoiding talking about someone not present
  - Responding to each other, not just to the leader

Assumptions

- All students need to be taken seriously, heard.
- Shy students also want to be recognized.
- All students need support, no matter how strong and successful they might seem.
- All students feel stressed at times.
- All students are sensitive to family tension.
- All students feel angry at times.

More Assumptions

- All students feel socially inept and uncomfortable at times.
- All students worry about the future at times.
- All students, no matter how smooth and self-confident they may appear, need practice talking honestly about social and emotional concerns.
- All students wear a façade at times.