

Fostering Social Competence in Students with Gifts and Talents



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Social Competence

- The process of identity development can be complicated by a desire to gain social acceptance and conform to values of a peer culture.
- This session will focus on strategies teachers and counselors can use to assist students with gifts and talents develop social competence necessary for positive peer relationships and social interactions.

Educators Need to Understand

Gifted learners can have advanced cognitive skills, but some may lack interpersonal skills needed for success.

- Asynchronous development
- Feel disconnected and isolated from peers
- Bullied and Bullies
- Introverts or Extroverts
- Need for solitude and social interaction
- Poor impulse control
- Lack of tact



Asynchronous Development

- "I guess it is the contrast, I had **mental abilities** back then that were ahead of the norm and the disconnect of **not being able to relate to kids** my own age that well.
- "They know that you are different. I mean it is like, I don't know how to explain it other than say that people just realize that I am not 'normal.'"
- "I was an unusual outsider, I wasn't something they weren't used to. They thought I was pretty weird, partially because I am as smart as I am."

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Age Peers versus True Peers

- Peers are "individuals who can interact on an equal plane around issues of common interests" (Roedell, 1989, p. 25).
- Gifted student can have **difficulty communicating** and interacting socially with age peers because they do not share the **same vocabulary, skills, or interest**.
- A drive for **achievement and self-actualization** can result in **taunts and rejection** by peers.
- Gifted children need to interact with same ability peers, where they can find acceptance and understanding which is the key to developing good social skills and positive self-concept.

(Silverman)

Anti-Intellectual Environment

Gifted students are:

- Teased and criticism by other students (brains, geeks, weird, schoolboy, etc.)
- Feels **incapable** of making friends
- Develop a non-caring **protective veneer**
- **Withdraws and becomes socially isolated**
- **Hide gifted identity** in an effort to become more socially acceptable
- May do things inconsistent with values to gain acceptance
- Turn to drugs and alcohol to numb feelings



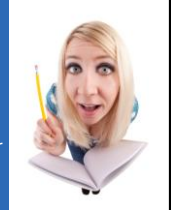
Teasing and Bullying

- Many gifted children and adolescents are targets of teasing and bullying.
- Some of their peers and teachers may perceive them as “too verbal”, “too bossy”, “too smart,” “too nerdy.”
- Because gifted children and adolescents tend to be highly sensitive to others, their reactions to being teased are extremely intense.

Schuler, 2002

Teasing

- Often the teasing and bullying is subtle such as name-calling, shoving, social ostracism, or intimidation.
- While girls use more psychological manipulation like spreading malicious rumors, boys account for the majority of physical bullying.
- Too often their victims suffer in silence.



Bullying

- Mom: “They teased him about everything and he just internalized it.”
- “I didn’t feel like interacting with them and for a long time I just didn’t. I felt like social stuff was below me and I was going to ignore it.”
- “Which is all well and good when you are eight and then you get to be 14, 15, 16, in high school and you realize those are important things.”
- “I feel very isolated from the kind of contact that it seems like a lot of people take for granted.”

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Positive Social Development

- Special efforts are needed to help gifted children find companions with similar interests and abilities.
- Otherwise, gifted children run the risk of being labeled different and strange by their age-mates.
- They may internalize these labels and become socially alienated at an early age (Whitmore, 1980).
- There is no substitute for the social and cognitive growth that occurs through the interaction of peers of similar developmental stages (p. 8).

Be Proactive

- Beware of attitudes like victims are at fault, teasing is not serious, and bullying toughens children.
- Build a positive, safe school culture.
- Provide adequate adult-to-student supervision ratios.
- Use anti-bullying curriculum.
- Conduct prevention-oriented large- and small-groups discussions beginning in elementary school.



Interventions

Counselor and teacher cofacilitated small groups for victims and bullies

- Improving interpersonal skills
- Acknowledge perspectives of others
- Solve social problems
- Express feelings and feel heard

Teach victims to interact more effectively

- Develop communication skills
- Find commonalities

Peers can enable bullies or can intervene successfully.

- Utilize peer-group power



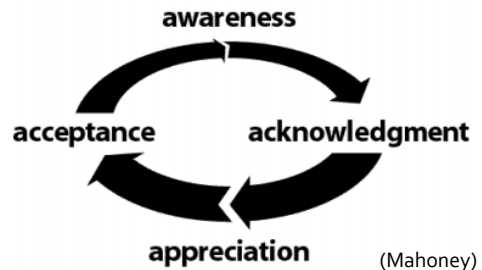
Basic Counseling Tenets:

- nonjudgmental,
- focusing on strengths,
- respecting and fostering autonomy,
- active listening,
- open-ended questioning,
- avoiding teacher/facilitator self-disclosure,
- respecting privacy, and
- processing

(Peterson, 2009)



Four Stages of Awareness Model



Self-Talk Strategies

- Teach children that body language and the tone of voice matter.
- Help a child go from being victimized to being assertive.
 - “Calm down. I’m smart enough to handle this.”
 - “I know what’s going on and what they’re trying to do. I’m not going to let them take my power away.” (Schuler, 2002)

Role-Playing Strategies

The price of being teased or bullied can be devastating. It may lead to intense anger, withdrawal, and/or depression. Too many suicides and murders have resulted from a bright child being teased. (Schuler, 2002)

McCoy (1997) offers suggestions on how to appear relaxed and in charge:

- Look people in the eye
- Stand up straight, with feet slightly apart
- Keep your hands in your pockets
- Move closer to the person rather than backing off as you talk
- Speak loudly enough and use a firm and determined voice say “Stop bullying me!”



Role-Playing

Role-Play

- Approaching others and introduce yourself
- Asking to join a group to play a game
- Sharing and waiting your turn
- Beginning and sharing a conversation
- Giving compliments and saying thank you

Practice skills learned for a week

Reflect on what happened

(Trail, 2011)

Identity Development

- “It seems like for other people, it is so easy to kind of submerge their identity for the group. You know, in a lot of social situations that is important and if you don’t do that, it kind of marks you as a leper.”
- “My choices got me in trouble in high school. It is easy to say I was hanging out with the cool kids, but that doesn’t absolve you.”
- “I knew what was right and wrong, I just chose to ignore it. I can’t really blame anyone else for that.”

Identity Development

- The process of identity development can be complicated by a desire to gain social acceptance and conform to values of peers.



Social Adjustment /Acceptance

- Keeping children with age peers is not the way to “socialize” them.
- If we isolate children from true peers in the heterogeneous classroom, we place them in the position of being ostracized because they are different.
- Children who were accelerated had positive and healthy levels of social self-esteem.
- (Gross, 1994)



Flexible Grouping

Should be purposeful:

- Based on student interest, learning profile, readiness
- Geared to accomplish curricular goals

Implementation:

- Purposefully planned using interest surveys, learning profile inventories, exit cards, quick writes, observations
- Invitational groups

Cautions:

- Avoid turning groups into tracking situations
- Provide opportunities for students to work within a variety of groups
- Practice moving into group situations and assuming roles within the group



Small Group Projects

Work collaboratively to:

- identify topic or problem to investigate
- select a method of investigation
- plan type of product to show growth
- develop a rubric to evaluate project
- evaluate project



21st Century Learning & Innovation Collaboration

- Know when it is **appropriate to listen and when to speak**.
- **Work effectively** with **diverse teams** to achieve results not independently obtainable.
- Respond **open-mindedly** to different ideas.
- **Compromise** to accomplish a common goal.
- **Share responsibility**
- **Value** the contributions made by each team member.

(Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009)

Acceleration

- Acceleration allows students to move at an appropriate pace.
- It makes more sense to think about readiness, rather than age, as the main determinant for grade placement.
- Acceleration **broadens the friendship group**.
- Many gifted children gravitate to older children, so **making friends becomes easier with acceleration**.

■ (Colangelo, Assouline, Gross, 2004)

21st Century Support Systems Learning Environment

- Promote a **sense of community** and **connecting with wider world**.
- Support **positive relationships** needed for effective learning.
- Accommodate **unique learner needs**.
- Help students grow **emotionally, socially, physically, and academically**.
- Addresses multiple and interconnected learning **needs of the whole child**.



(Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009)

Celebrate Similarities/Differences

- Index of Learning Styles Questionnaire (Soloman & Felder, n.d.)

<http://www.engr.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/iisweb.html>

- Cognitive style
- Strengths
- Challenges
- Interests

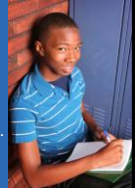


Preference Survey

1. Subject preference
 - Reading, writing, spelling, mathematics, science, social studies, art, or music
2. Learning preference
 - Listening to speaker, talking with others, reading, watching, experimenting, computer, detailed directions, choices
 - Working alone, working with a partner, working alone
3. Product preference
 - Reports, PowerPoint, projects, displays, art, charts, acting
4. Interests
5. Extra-curricular activities
6. Personal goal for the year (Tomlinson, Kaplan, Renzulli, Purcell, Leppien, Burns, 2002)

Civil War Unit aligned with interests

- Music
 - African American spiritual and Fife and Drum Corp
- Reading
 - Historical fiction and non-fiction
- History
 - Primary source documents, multiple viewpoints, videos and films, letters
- Art
 - Political cartoons, pen and ink drawings, etc.
- Video Games
 - Simulations, Civil War reenactments (Tomlinson, Kaplan, Renzulli, Purcell, Leppien, Burns, 2002)



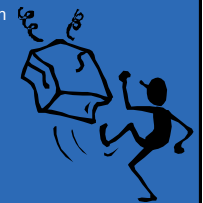
Emotional Intensity



- Emotional intensity refers to the passion gifted people feel daily.
- Intensity is the driving passion that enables some to achieve amazing things.
- The pressures to achieve and fit in can be overwhelming.

Emotional Intensity

- Emotional intensity results in a range of behaviors that can be:
 - Internal
 - moodiness, anxiety, and depression
 - External
 - yelling or crying, temper tantrums, and physical expressions of anger or frustration



Teachable Moments

- Behavioral outbursts, whether internal or external, are teachable moments.
- Take the time to redirect the behavior and focus on teaching the gifted child how to understand and redirect their behavior.



Group Discussion

- There is a need for students to cognitively process the emotional meaning of an experience and learn appropriate ways of expressing their emotions and solving their problems.
- Discuss a time when you were over scheduled.
- How did it make you feel?
- What steps did you take so it will never happen again?



Topics for Group Discussions

- Expectations
 - self, parents, and peer
- Feeling overwhelmed by competing expectations
- Underachievement
- Internal locus of control and motivation
- Multi-potentiality
- Emotional intensity
- Introversion and extroversion
- Belief in self
- Authentic friendships
- Identity development
- Diversity
- Celebrating creativity
- Peer Pressure
- Gender role expectations
- Nonconformity
- Perfectionism
- Self-actualization
- Developing resiliency
- Stress management
 - College & career exploration (Hebert, 2007)

Books for Group Counseling

- The Gifted Kids' Survival Guides : For Ages 10 & Under (Galbraith, 2012)
- The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide: A Teen Handbook (Galbraith & Delisle, 1996)
- When Gifted Kids Don't Have All the Answers: How to Meet Their Social and Emotional Needs (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002)
- Let's Be Friends: A Workbook to Help Kids Learn Social Skills and Make Great Friends (Shapiro, 2008)
- Making Friends Is an Art (Cook, 2012)

Bibliotherapy

- The Bookfinder (www.BookFinder.com)
- Some of My Best Friends Are Books* are useful in locating children's books related to specific issues.
- Recommended authors:

Helen Cresswell
Paula Danziger
Constance Greene
Maria Gripe
Virginia Hamilton
Mollie Hunter
E. L. Konigsburg
Joseph Krumboltz

Madeleine L'Engle
Ursula LeGuin
Sonia Levitin
Katherine Paterson
K. M. Peyton
Mary Rodgers
Stephanie Tolan
Cynthia Voigt

Biographies and Auto-Biographies

- Powerful tools to guide social and emotional development of students with gifts & talents
 - Establish role models
 - Help with identity development
 - Reducing alienation
- (Hebert, 2009)



Biographies

- Madeleine Albright
- Maya Angelou
- Melba Pattillo Beals
- Erma Bombeck
- Donna Brazille
- Rachel Carson
- Sandra Cisneros
- Amelia Earhart
- Anne Frank
- Leta Stetter Hollingworth
- Wilma Mankiller
- Margaret Mead
- Sandra Day O'Connor
- J. K. Rowling
- Lance Armstrong
- Neil Armstrong
- Arthur Ashe
- Russell Baker
- Larry Bird
- Terry Bradshaw
- Tom Brokaw
- Jim Carrey
- Ben Carson
- Jimmy Carter
- Bill Gates
- Ron Howard
- John McCain
- Barack Obama

(Hebert, 2009)

Videotherapy / Journaling

- Videotherapy – View movie or segments over time and discuss in a small group setting. Also, can be used with teachers to increase awareness of characteristics of the gifted.
- Journaling – Valuable outlet for students to voice their needs and concerns (Hall, 1990). Dialogue journaling between a teacher and student can open lines of communication

Mentors



The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed.

Carl Jung 1875-1961

Special Programs

Gifted students enrolled in special programs experience enhanced self-esteem primarily because of the opportunities these special classes provide for social interaction with true peers.

(Coleman & Fults, 1982; Feldhusen, Saylor, Nielsen, & Kolloff, 1990; Karnes & Wherry, 1981; Kolloff & Feldhusen, 1984; Maddux, Scheiber & Bass, 1982),.

The benefits of summer programs for the gifted have been well documented.

(Higham & Buescher, 1987; Kolloff & Moore, 1989; Olszewski-Kubilius, 1989; VanTassel-Baska, Landau & Olszewski, 1984), with some unexpected bonuses.

Affiliation



Isolation

- "He didn't want to continue (in gifted programming) because, he at that point was feeling like he didn't want anything to make him feel different."
- Destination Imagination "gave him a home for that part of him where (creativity) was thought of highly."
- "Students were in control of a great deal of what happened (in the music program). I was never shy about sharing my opinion and I've been section leader for two years now?"

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Social Networking

- Texting and social networking may be helping introverted gifted kids in connecting with others who have similar interests.
- Not a substitute for connecting in real life.



Gifted Children Need

- To feel safe and secure at school
- To be challenged academically
- To have personal strengths affirmed
- To figure out their identity
- To be comfortable in own skin
- To develop autonomy
- To become self-reliant and resilient
- To learn social & collaboration skills
- Compassionate and non-judgmental adults
- Supportive, caring, encouraging teachers
- Assistance with career and college planning



NAGC STANDARDS Learning Environments

- 4.2. Social Competence. Students with gifts and talents develop social competence manifested in positive peer relationships and social interactions.
- 4.2.1. Educators understand the needs of students with gifts and talents for both solitude and social interaction.
- 4.2.2. Educators provide opportunities for interaction with intellectual and artistic/creative peers as well as with chronological-age peers.
- 4.2.3. Educators assess and provide instruction on social skills needed for school, community, and the world of work.

References

Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2009). retrieved from <http://www.p21.org/>

Trail, B. A. (2011). *Twice-Exceptional Gifted children: Understanding, teaching, and counseling gifted students*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

VanTassel-Baska, J. L., Cross, T. L. & Olenchak, F. R. (2009). *Social-emotional curriculum: With gifted and talented students*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.