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## Meeting the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students

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## Meeting the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students

### Abstract

The purpose of this review of literature was to identify the major problems gifted and talented children may face in social and emotional adjustments and how to cope with these adjustments. It also sought to document strategies by which the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students may be met in the classroom and to delineate possible interventions that can improve their academic achievement. The review and analysis of literature revealed that two major social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students are self-discovery and an assurance that they are understood and accepted. Suggested interventions focused on the integration of social and emotional programs into the curriculum and life of the school. Conclusions reached as a result of this study include (a) the need for gifted and talented programs to devote more attention to the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students very early in their learning experiences and (b) the importance of collaboration among teachers of the gifted and talented, classroom teachers, counselors, administrators, and parents in assuring that those needs are met. A number of implications for future research are also presented.

MEETING THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS  
OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

A Graduate Review of Literature  
Submitted to the  
Division of Curriculum and Instruction  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Education  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

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This Review by: Angela Germaine

Titled: Meeting the Social and Emotional Needs of Gifted and Talented Students

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the  
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Throughout my five years as a teacher of English and language arts at the secondary level, I had always been interested in the impact of students' social and emotional needs on their educational development. Then, as a novice gifted and talented facilitator at one of our public junior high schools, I became even more intrigued by the notion of these special students' needs for social and emotional development. This was a topic that was also frequently discussed among other facilitators in my graduate classes. In addition, I also had the opportunity to attend the Amana Talented and Gifted Conference in April 2000 where Dr. James Webb was the guest speaker. Dr. Webb provided an abundance of information regarding the special needs of gifted and talented students, including some reasons for the social and emotional difficulties that some gifted and talented students experience. He also listed many resources for my own learning, as well as resources and information that I could provide to teachers of gifted and talented students in our school.

Another reason I focused on this particular area was the result of my research on Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, which introduced me to the concepts of intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences. My investigation of those concepts led me to conclude that, in many school districts, a gifted and talented student's cognitive needs tend to take precedence over his or her affective needs. I wanted to determine ways in which both areas could be met equally.

My specific experiences as a teacher of the gifted and talented also have led me to believe that it is a difficult task to successfully meet the needs of these students socially and emotionally, as well as academically. Part of the difficulty is based on the mistaken

perception that gifted and talented students have few problems meeting social and emotional needs. Winner (1996) argues, however, that it is a myth that gifted children are better adjusted, more popular, and happier than average children. She believes that, in order to succeed in school, family, friendships, the workplace, community life, and democratic participation, these students need a full complement of academic, social, and emotional skills. Indeed, there have been numerous studies demonstrating that emotions have a major effect on achievement and IQ scores. As a result of my perceptions and observations, I decided to seek out from available literature what I could do to help the gifted and talented students who suffer from some of these difficulties and, in turn, make the information available to other teachers of gifted and talented students.

### Rationale

The rationale for this literature review was based upon a perceived need to address the social and emotional needs of students at the secondary level who have been identified as gifted and talented. Through study completed in my graduate classes and through attendance at professional conferences, I became convinced that the area of affective needs of gifted and talented students is an area that, until recently, has been left out of many of the programs established in our schools. As a new coordinator of the gifted and talented program in our school, I also felt it important to help identify some resources for teachers of gifted and talented students as well as providing support to them. I know that it is improbable that my school can ever totally meet the social and emotional needs of all of the students in our gifted and talented program, but to know that there is an affective curriculum and support in place should help students who demonstrate these particular types of needs. Therefore, to search out and evaluate the



current literature related to social and emotional needs of the gifted and talented seemed a worthwhile endeavor.

### Statement of Purpose

The intent of this review of the literature was threefold. First, it sought to identify from the literature the major problems gifted children may face in social and emotional adjustments, as well as procedures to cope with these adjustments. Second, it sought to identify from the literature ways in which the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students may be met in a classroom, as well as interventions that teachers of these children might use to make them successful in the classroom. Thus, the writer reviewed the literature to seek answers to the following questions:

1. What are the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students?
2. How can teachers and other administrators help to meet the needs of these students?
3. What are effective interventions (teacher resources) for helping to meet the affective needs of these students?

### Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this paper, the writer used the following definitions:

Gifted and Talented Students. This literature review uses the definition used by the Dubuque (IA) Community School District (2000): "In referring to "gifts" and "talents" we are referring to a set of characteristics and potentials, dimensions of behavior that can be observed and documented among many individuals in different ways, in different contexts, and at various times. They are not fixed designations or labels which can be permanently assigned to a person in all circumstances."

Affective development. Refers to all of the personal, social, and emotional aspects of learning (Silverman, 1988). This also may refer to a way in which we teach children how to understand themselves and others and how to make decisions, set goals, like themselves, cope with normal problems, and to clarify values.

Social Needs. This term refers to those needs exhibited by gifted and talented students in the way of viewing the world, viewing themselves, and other needs such as perfectionism and sensitivity.

### Limitations

As a beginning researcher, I discovered that finding the research on my chosen topic was not going to be as easy to find as I had first thought. I limited my research to the information discovered between the year 1980 and the present since it was during this time period that meeting social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students became an important issue. Another of the difficulties was the limited availability of sources since many of the references were not immediately accessible to me because of distance.

The most frustrating part of the gathering of information was locating the articles from the journals and even some of the texts. Many of the texts were out of print, and I could not locate them through other sources or even through bookstores. I felt that, because of this problem, my research was somewhat limited to sources that could be located on the Internet, our local library, the local AEA facility, and information I have collected through my education classes. These factors limited the number of books and journal articles used in this review.

Current literature sources in the area of social and emotional development and needs of gifted and talented students seemed to be somewhat limited. However, I was able to obtain a number of literature sources that were of great benefit to me. Surprisingly, the books that seemed to be of the most benefit were those that focused more on counseling gifted and talented students rather than on educating the students in a regular classroom environment.

### Methodology

I began my research by examining textbooks that I was required to purchase through my graduate program. I scanned indexes of books, focusing on gifted and talented students, and looking under terms such as social, emotional, and affective needs. I limited my search of textbooks to include those published between the years of 1980 to the present.

I then focused on an ERIC search through the Internet via a home computer. Key word searches included the following: social and emotional needs and affective needs of gifted and talented students. Doing this helped to assure that the search would yield only those sources pertinent to the field of gifted and talented education. I also completed searches by authors and other names that I knew were associated with gifted education. These included James Webb, Carol Ann Tomlinson, Susan Winebrenner, and Linda Silverman. Most of the searches that I conducted gave way to many sources on this topic. Although some of the information I located was not within my established date limitation, a great deal of it proved to be beneficial.

In addition to the Internet searches, I went to websites of different organizations that are affiliated with gifted and talented students. Some of these included Hoagies

Gifted Education Page, National Association for Gifted Children, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. These sites also provided links to other websites that were related to gifted and talented education.

I continued my search through the resources I located, both on the Internet and through textbooks, by browsing the reference sections found at the end of each article and each book. These citations provided a number of sources that I would not have been able to locate otherwise.

I also was able to locate on the Internet some bibliographic listings of articles and books. However, locating these titles proved to be quite difficult. I also turned to my principal, guidance counselors, librarian, and the district's talented and gifted facilitator for information. Each of these persons was able to provide me with materials that would be pertinent to my research.

In order to successfully organize the information I found in the resources, I used the following techniques to weave the information together. I developed an outline of the key issues raised in each source and then decided to focus on those issues that seemed to repeat themselves throughout. These issues then became the main focus of my literature review. Each section of the review reflected the three questions posed in the statement of purpose. Once this was accomplished, I developed my conclusions and recommendations.

### Literature Review

This review is organized into three specific sections. It begins by identifying the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students. The second section identifies how teachers and other administrators can help to meet the needs of these students. This

is followed by a section that discusses specific effective procedures for helping to meet affective needs of these students.

### What Are The Social and Emotional Needs of the Gifted and Talented?

According to some researchers, many gifted and talented students are not socially and emotionally healthy, and many programs for these students do not meet the needs of this unique group of students. Coleman (1996) found that, more often than not, our attention to gifted students focuses on their academic needs for advanced content and added rigor within the curriculum. As early as 1942, Hollingworth (in Sowa, McIntire, May, & Bland, 1994) suggested that highly intelligent children are prone to social and emotional adjustment problems. Roedell (1986) suggested that the more profound the giftedness, the more likely the student experiences adjustment problems.

There have been many studies concerning the percentage of dropouts among gifted and talented students. Some research indicates that one of our most at-risk groups is the gifted and talented (Galbraith, 1985). Their dropout rate and suicide attempts are alarming. According to Rimm (1997), ten percent to twenty percent of school dropouts are in the tested gifted and talented range. She stated, "Almost invariably, gifted dropouts are underachievers, talented students who are unguided, uncounseled, and unchallenged" (p. 2).

Galbraith (1985) stated that, ideally, gifted learners need to take responsibility for their own learning and become life-long learners. She felt that the gifted need to understand and accept themselves. Finally, she argued that self-discovery and acceptance of self are essential, but, at the same time, it is important for them to understand and accept others.

According to the literature, being different is another characteristic that many gifted children find very difficult. They don't understand why other children may think differently than they do. Silverman (1993) stated: "They equate differentness with being 'strange' or unacceptable, and this becomes the basis of their self-concept" (p. 294). She proposed that, at later stages of their adolescent lives, their self-concepts have been fully formed; therefore, they are better equipped to understand differences and to gain appreciation of the diversity of their classmates. She pointed out, too, that it is important to remember that acceptance precedes positive social values.

Silverman also identified the process by which gifted and talented children learn to love others. She declared:

Children only learn to love others when they have achieved self-love. The process usually involves the following stages: (a) self-awareness, (b) finding kindred spirits, (c) feeling understood and accepted by others, (d) self-acceptance, (e) recognition of the differences in others; and, eventually, (f) the development of understanding, acceptance and appreciation of others. (p. 309)

Some researchers relate these stated needs to social development. For example, Silverman (1993) concluded that there are three key factors involved in gifted children's social development: (a) a responsive home environment in which the child is respected; (b) opportunities to relate to other gifted children, particularly during the early years when self-concept is being formed; and (c) opportunities to relate to the mainstream during adolescence. The absence of any of these three factors could lead to social and emotional needs.

Coleman (1996) also listed some of the more typical problems gifted students may face in social and emotional adjustment: (a) anxiety caused by advanced knowledge or understanding; (b) a heightened sensitivity to the feelings of others that may cause students to internalize the fears, anxieties or anger of those around them; (c) perfectionist tendencies, which may be related to expectations of others or may be intrinsically driven and can create a situation where students avoid risk-taking or new activities out of a fear that they will make a mistake; and (d) feelings of being alone, isolated and different that sometimes trouble gifted students who may think differently or have different interests than their peers.

In summary, the literature has identified several of the social and emotional needs of our gifted and talented students. Among the most vital needs seem to be self-discovery, as well as acceptance of self and others. These students also need to feel that they are understood and accepted; they need to recognize the differences in others; and, eventually, they need to develop an understanding, acceptance and appreciation of others.

#### How Can Teachers and Administrators Meet the Social and Emotional Needs of the Gifted and Talented?

Effective programming for gifted and talented students is an important facet in assuring a successful learning environment. It is important to remember that these students have many needs, as do many of our general education students. However, they are approached in a different manner. There are some guiding principles that the National Association for Gifted Children (1996) has provided to help educators to provide socio-emotional guidance and counseling for talented and gifted students as well as to establish a plan to recognize and nurture the unique socio-emotional development of gifted

learners. There are five principles: (a) Gifted learners must be provided differentiated guidance efforts to meet their unique socio-emotional development, (b) gifted learners must be provided career guidance services especially designed for their unique needs, (c) gifted at-risk students must be provided guidance and counseling to help them reach their potential, (d) the gifted learner must be provided affective curriculum in addition to differentiated guidance and counseling services, and (e) underachieving gifted learners must be served rather than omitted from differentiated services.

The reviewed literature revealed ways that gifted learners acquire acceptance of self and others. Galbraith (1985) stated that some students like to keep life-long journals to allow for personal reflection and growth. She also pointed out that individual and small group counseling allows for time to discuss such topics as time management, goal-setting, self-esteem, peer acceptance, career options, perfectionism, underachievement, and alienation. Roedell (1985) found that gifted children develop social skills more easily when they have the opportunity to interact with true peers.

According to some researchers, it is also important that special efforts be taken to help ensure gifted children to find companions that have similar interests and abilities. If these efforts are not made, gifted children run the risk of being labeled in negative terms by their age-mates. For example, Whitmore (1980) says that these children may internalize these labels and become socially alienated at an early age. Silverman (1993) argues if these children have true peers, they can then be themselves and understand each other's jokes, play games at the same level, and also be able to share their heightened level of sensitivity and develop more complex values. It seems that there is increased give and take in these relationships on an equal level.



Much of the literature pointed out that gifted students enrolled in special programs experience enhanced self-esteem mainly because of the abundance of opportunities such classes provide for social interaction with peers of similar intelligence. According to Tracy Cross (1998), there are some ideas that guide the social and emotional development of gifted children which teachers, counselors, and parents can use. She stated that, first of all, the school faculty and staff should recognize and respect the relationship between social and emotional needs and academic needs: It is important to remember that one affects the other. Second, they should be cautious about forcing their desires on students based on their perception of students' strength areas: "Talent manifests over time with opportunity" (Cross, p. 26). Third, school faculty, staff, and parents should teach pro-social skill development, since "teaching gifted students a handful of social skills can reduce the number of negative experiences they may encounter while in school" (Cross, p. 26). Fourth, they should ensure that gifted students be taught to enjoy nonacademic activities. Fifth, they should teach gifted students ways to manage stress. Sixth, to accomplish many of the suggestions previously noted, adults should model the behavior they wish gifted students to exhibit. Like all children, Cross says, "Gifted students learn from the behavior of adults" (p. 26). Seventh, school faculty and staff must understand that much of how gifted students appear and behave is biologically affected—they should not try to change the basic nature of the student. Eighth, teachers, counselors, and parents should embrace diversity, not merely tolerate it. Ninth, they should expose gifted students to knowledgeable counselors, thus avoiding professionals who are not knowledgeable about gifted students. Cross stated, "A proactive counseling program can be invaluable to gifted students. Learning about

oneself and how to effectively relate to others in school can positively affect the psychological development of gifted students” (p. 26). Tenth, teachers, counselors, and parents should realize that many gifted students will have created coping strategies while in the earliest grades in school. Finally, they should provide opportunities for a student’s down time. According to Cross, “Providing gifted students opportunities to explore or read for pleasure can reduce the stress and may have the positive effect of increasing avocational pursuits when they get older” (p. 26).

Silverman (1993), in her research, concluded: “When a solid base of self-esteem is developed in early childhood, gifted students are better equipped to branch out and make friends with others who are unlike themselves. Therefore adolescence is developmentally the most appropriate stage for these widening horizons of social interaction” (p. 303). Thus, she argued, if faculty and staff ensure that gifted students have a support group of gifted friends and peers, those students will feel they can join in other groups such as team sports, band, extra-curricular clubs, church and community activities, and other social events without fear of rejection. The hoped result will be that gifted and talented students are more likely to gain respect and assume leadership positions.

In summary, the literature concluded that when teachers are dealing with gifted and talented children, there are some major strategies that can be used in helping to meet the students’ social and emotional needs. Some of these strategies include: (a) teaching pro-social skills so that these children can reduce the number of negative experiences they encounter while in school, (b) teaching gifted students ways to manage stress, (c) having special programs for gifted students that allows them to interact with peers of

similar intelligence, and (d) counseling that is made available to gifted students and their families as a means to learn about oneself and how to effectively relate to others in school. These are just a few of the ways that teachers, counselors, and administrators can help in meeting the social and emotional needs of our gifted and talented population.

In concluding this section, it also should be noted that the literature pointed to the importance of home and family in meeting their gifted and talented children's social and emotional needs. "Children are sponges, absorbing all that their environments have to offer-language patterns, attitudes, values, impressions of themselves" (Silverman, 1993, p. 291). Therefore, it is imperative for the needs and ideas of these students to be respected at home so that, in turn, these children will learn to respect the needs of other children in their classrooms. "Many gifted children receive a good foundation for self-esteem within their families" (Silverman, p. 308). The only problem, according to Silverman, is that these children meet other young people; and the openness and confidence is replaced with self-doubt and thick layers of defenses.

#### What Are Effective Procedures to Meet Affective Needs of the Gifted?

"Young adolescents have a preoccupying load of social and emotional concerns that for most are of more concern than academics. The stress which results impedes the ability to think, solve problems, use short-term memory, and form new memories" (Kock, Mehrens, Pickering, and Wee, 2001).

Realizing that such stress exists, what are some effective procedures/strategies that can be utilized to deal with these affective needs? Galbraith (1985) proposed that when teachers begin to credit gifted students for previously learned information, provide open-ended assignments, allow for choices, provide time to explore passion areas, and

give opportunities to work with students of similar abilities, the affective needs will begin to be met. She argued that the biggest contribution that educators can make to meet the affective needs of gifted learners is to closely examine their behaviors and then respond appropriately.

In their study of social and emotional development of gifted and talented adolescents, Kock, Mehrens, Pickering, and Wee (2001) discussed several strategies for meeting the affective needs of the gifted and talented. They believe that teachers could benefit from knowing these concerns in a variety of ways, or at least ease the concerns of the students, so that the educational process can continue. In order for education to occur, Kock, Mehrens, Pickering, and Wee state there are several essential elements that need to be evident. First, students need to feel socially adequate. Second, there needs to be room for allowing social exploration, personal achievement of students; and, third, all students need to feel accepted by the peers and allowing for autonomy and personal identity.

Keeping these essentials in mind, Kock, Mehrens, Pickering, and Wee (2001) stated that students need to feel as though they are socially accepted by the teacher. The more negativity a child feels toward a teacher, the less likely the teacher will be able to influence the student to accept learning opportunities that are available to them. It is imperative that teachers be aware of how their treatment of students may affect the performance of the students.

Another educational implication identified by Kock, Mehrens, Pickering, and Wee (2001) is that schools have a great opportunity to influence the social climate of student relationships. They believe that schools need to give students time and a setting

where they can have a protected time to learn how to deal with social issues outside of the traditional classroom learning experience. For example, middle school students say that athletic games, parties, and field days are their favorite school based social activities. Schools should realize this, and scheduling should allow for all students to participate in intramural and extracurricular activities to help to accommodate for this influenced social climate.

Kock, Mehrens, Pickering, and Wee (2001) pointed out that power seeking is something that can also be found in middle schools, primarily among boys. According to them, these boys have a strong need to have some sense of power over something or someone. Therefore, since students tend to stick together in groups most like themselves, it is important for teachers to provide opportunities for diverse groups of students to work together. Teachers also need to help develop healthy self-concepts in their students since this is the time that self-esteem begins to be an important part of their development. In addition, teachers can also help by assisting their students in setting realistic goals for students; always having positive expectations for the students; and providing understanding, reassurance, and affirmation to the students. The researchers felt that it is imperative for all students to be in a positive social-emotional environment; however, it is especially important for at-risk students.

According to Kock, Mehrens, Pickering, and Wee (2001), peer acceptance is another of the educational implications mentioned above. Such acceptance, they state, often relies on following unwritten peer-group norms. For example, many students feel that they need to dress and act in ways that are accepted by their peer group in order to "fit in" to the group. Unfortunately, many times teachers are unaware of these norms,

and this can cause students to choose between pleasing the teacher and pleasing their friends. The researchers were convinced that, because of this, it is imperative for the teacher to observe students and identify the peer-group norms. The writers pointed out that there are typically a couple of "leaders" the teacher can follow to observe the ways they act, dress, and the people they associate with. Peer acceptance is one of the most compelling factors in an adolescent's life.

Finally, Kock, Mehrens, Pickering & Wee (2001) were persuaded by the results of their study that it is important for teachers to allow students to develop their own identity but, with guidance, to direct them down the right path. According to the writers, students at the middle school level tend to be most successful when they have access to supportive adults, have the opportunity to develop positive peer relationships, and can acquire new skills all while experiencing success where they feel it is a safe environment.

Dr. James Delisle (1998) of Kent State University stated his belief that there are basically two key trends in the field of giftedness; and that once people understand and accept these trends, one can consider how parents and educators can provide for the emotional needs of gifted and talented students. First, he argued, the field of education has put emotional issues on the back burner for years because of the increased accountability in schools, and, as a result, we find more interest in academic achievement while the focus on "emotional achievement" has been almost completely ignored. Second, he proposed that our conceptualization of giftedness has gone awry--lost its primary focus. One of the reasons for this lost focus is the education community's emphasis on giftedness as being synonymous with academic or creative achievements--visible achievements. Delisle (1995) earlier expressed his belief that if parents and

educators would insist that the emotional lives of all children are as vital, perhaps more so, than their academic achievements and abilities, then we might see more of a focus on this important domain of development. He is convinced that the first step we must take is to reconceptualize our view of success and achievement to include the heart, not just the head.

Some writers have identified what they call confounding factors involved in the social and emotional concerns of many gifted students. Winner (1996) identified the following:

1. The conflicting messages of “conform” and “be who you are” come to a head for some gifted students earlier than for many others. This can increase issues of self-esteem.

2. For many gifted students, academic work in childhood is not a significant challenge. They may experience academic failure for the first time in upper grades, middle school, or high school.

3. As academic subjects increase in complexity, learning differences/disabilities become apparent. In less sophisticated tasks, gifted children can often cover up or compensate for an inability (which could come from a learning disability), but those compensations may not work as learning becomes more complex.

4. Some gifted students resent their own giftedness. They want to be cool, they want to fit in, and they conclude (correctly) that their intellectual capability reduces the probability of this happening. Adults usually make it worse by denying this harsh conclusion.

5. Gifted kids are terribly competent at knowing when adults do not tell the whole truth.
6. Gifted children typically are greater risk takers. This can lead to both more success and more danger.
7. "Gifted" does not mean "reasonable." Frequently adults forget that these great thinkers are children; and that as children, part of their job is to push the limits. Even though the children see connections and anticipate the consequences, they still want/need to win, to be right, and to have it their way. Some gifted kids are particularly skilled in this area (Winner, 1996).

Winner (1996) concluded by saying that we, as educators, need to provide meaningful choice. Choice, she said, yields profound results, from increased esteem, more sophisticated high-order thinking, more perseverance at low-order tasks, and even increased classroom attendance. For gifted and talented students, choice gives them the power to define themselves and know that they are exercising their own strengths, including their own free will. She stressed that it is important to note that choice does not mean "Do whatever you want." It means "Within these limits, do whatever you want."

In 2001, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory published a report, The Learning Environment, in which they outlined some of the basic needs of gifted and talented students, as well as ways in which educators can meet these needs. One of their contentions was that a key to the success of all students is a non-threatening atmosphere. The publication indicated that most gifted students are perfectionists and that they may place great significance on getting the right answers or completing tasks quickly. As a result, these students may be outsiders among their classmates. The



writers contended that the foundation of a good learning environment is that feeling of being safe and of being accepted. Therefore, it is the teacher's responsibility to help create this atmosphere by modeling respect and care for all class members' well being. All students, they stated, need to recognize and feel the value of the abilities and experiences of themselves as well as others.

The Laboratory publication (2001) also stated that there are times when gifted students will feel insecure. Such feelings may occur when they are presented with open-ended inquiry or problem-solving activities. Under such circumstances, these same students will more than likely insist that they need procedures spelled out for them so they can follow directions and reassure themselves that they are doing the assignment the correct way. At this point, proposed the writers, it is important for the teacher to remind students that mistakes are an important part of learning.

According to Dan Goleman (1995), author of Emotional Intelligence, emotional well being is the strongest predictor of achievement in school and on the job. He stated that many research studies show that a person's IQ predicts only a small part of career performance (4 to 20 percent), while emotional intelligence predicts about 80 percent of a person's success in life. Expanding upon Howard Gardner's intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences, Goleman developed five dimensions of emotional intelligence which he feels should be incorporated into everything we do in school.

The first of these dimensions includes self-awareness, which is the basis for self-confidence. Students need to know their strengths and limits and how to be decisive. Young people also need to be aware of why they feel the way they do and what action options they have.

The second dimension, knowing how to handle upsetting feelings or impulses, is the root of emotional intelligence according to Goleman (1995). In his discussion, he presented some information on the social consequences of being impulsive for both boys and girls. According to him, boys are three to six times more likely to be violent by the end of adolescence. Girls are three times more likely to get pregnant during adolescence. Those children who are chronically sad or anxious in elementary school are more likely to end up as substance abusers in adolescence.

Moving toward our goals or motivation is the third element of emotional intelligence as identified by Goleman (1995). He stated that important elements of motivation are hope, having a goal, knowing the small manageable steps it takes to get to that goal, and having the persistence to follow through. We can, he believes, actually teach hope, optimism, and motivation to learn. Many families do this by teaching their children how to set goals, to persevere, and how to work toward high achievement.

The fourth element is empathy, which means reading other people's feelings by tone of voice or facial expressions, not necessarily words. Goleman (1995) argued that emotional intelligence is learned and that it is learned from the earliest years straight through all years of schooling. It is a fundamental human ability that is seen even in infants and small children.

Social skills is the fifth element of emotional intelligence. Goleman (1995) was convinced that, by placing our attention on social skills and emotional development, we are enhancing academic development as well. He stated, "Emotional intelligence matters for school achievement, job success, marital happiness, and physical health" (Goleman, 1995, p. 44-45).

Goleman (1995) concluded that (a) we can raise the emotional intelligence of our gifted and talented students by providing support for those students that need it, and (b) we can teach children how to handle their feelings. Teachers have the opportunity to teach shy children to develop their social skills. He emphasized that social-emotional development programs should be integrated into the curriculum and the life of the school, involve parents, and include community mentors.

To summarize this section, each of the researchers mentioned above focused on a few major procedures that educators and parents can use successfully to meet the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students. Kock, Mehrens, Pickering, and Wee (2001) mentioned that social adequacy, social exploration, personal achievement, peer acceptance, autonomy, and identity are all needs of gifted and talented students and that educators need to address these issues in the classroom. Delisle (1995) reinforced these notions by stating that parents and educators need to insist that the emotional lives of these children are, perhaps, the most vital part of their schooling. The Northeast Regional Educational Laboratory Report (2001) added to this list, proposing that it is important for the teacher to remind students that mistakes are an important part of learning. The publication also contended that modeling done by the teacher is an important facet of the gifted and talented student's education. Finally, Goleman (1995) reminded educators that social and emotional programs need to be integrated into the curriculum and the life of the school, involve parents, and include community mentors.

## Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations for Future Research

### Summary

As stated earlier, the intent of this review of the literature was to identify from the literature the major problems gifted children may face in social and emotional adjustments, as well as procedures to cope with these adjustments. It also sought to identify from the literature ways in which the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students may be met in a classroom, as well as interventions that teachers of these children might use to make them successful in the classroom. Through a review of the literature, answers were sought to three important questions:

1. What are the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students?
2. How can teachers and other administrators help to meet the needs of these students?
3. What are the effective interventions for helping to meet the affective needs of these students?

As a result of my review of the literature, answers were sought to the questions stated above. First, the major social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students include (a) self-discovery, as well as acceptance of self and others; and (b) an assurance that they are understood and accepted. Second, educators can meet the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students by providing counseling sessions. Finally, a number of interventions for helping to meet the affective needs of gifted and talented students were delineated. They include crediting students for previously learned information, providing open-ended assignments, allowing for choices, providing time to explore passion areas, and providing opportunities to work with students of similar ability. I concluded that recognition of these important factors by educators, parents, and

counselors are the beginning steps in addressing and meeting the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students.

### Conclusions

My review of the literature has reinforced my belief that gifted and talented programs need to include the important component of meeting the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students. It has provided me with new thoughts and ideas concerning those needs as well as how to meet them. Within the limitations of this review of literature, I also have developed some conclusions concerning possible problems and solutions related to the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students.

First of all, I am convinced that gifted and talented programs must devote more attention to the social and emotional needs of our gifted students rather than limiting our services to meeting just academic needs. This is very important regardless of the false notion that all gifted students are well adjusted. We must recognize that each student has his/her unique set of social and emotional needs, and we must develop strategies for meeting those needs. If some of these needs are met, then we will be successful in meeting some of the needs of our gifted and talented students.

Second, the literature review established the fact that if these areas of need are recognized early, they can be relatively easy to address. From my reading and professional experience, I am convinced that one place for these problems to surface safely is in a classroom with a teacher of the gifted and talented. Gifted and talented students are more likely to discuss their feelings and explore their frustrations in a setting with other gifted and talented students. With open communication and support from the teacher and classmates, many gifted and talented students will resolve their fears and

dilemmas. If, instead, gifted and talented students feel misunderstood, alone, and frustrated; they may experience acute social and emotional problems. Should these negative feelings arise, they can be dealt with effectively when they are in a psychologically safe environment.

Another conclusion reached as a result of this review is that meaningful choice is an effective strategy for meeting social and emotional needs. For gifted children, choice provides the power to define themselves and to know that they are exercising their own strengths, including their own free will. Giving students choice does not mean, "Do whatever you want;" but, rather, "Within these limits do whatever you want" (Freedman & Jensen, 1999).

The reviewed literature seemed to suggest that gifted children who are faring well are those involved in academic programs specifically designed for them. For example, Cline & Schwartz (1999) stated: "When students are not placed in appropriate settings, behaviors result that can be cause for concern. The combination of sensitivities and high intellectual functioning can cause problems that should be addressed in school" (p. 155). They also concluded: "Concerns about the social and emotional development of the gifted should be addressed early to avoid experiencing difficulties later" (p. 163). Based on this research and review of the literature, one could conclude that an implementation of special programs would assist in helping gifted and talented students to develop a healthy self-concept and prevent underachievement.

The reviewed literature also seemed to point to some specific areas that need to be addressed in order to properly meet the social and emotional needs of our gifted and talented population. First, children need to be identified as gifted in domain-specific

areas; everyone in society should feel that he or she has a place and is appreciated for what she or he can do. Recognizing and emphasizing individual gifts is essential for the development of human potential. Second, emphasis should be placed on interpersonal and intrapersonal skill development. Personal skill development is important to the development of a healthy self-concept, and this can be achieved by the establishment of curriculum for these students that includes self-awareness, understanding, and acceptance of self and others, as well as communication skills. Third, values education should be integrated into the curriculum. When a teacher incorporates values education into the curriculum, he or she makes the student stop to think about some important questions. For example, is this a decision you are proud of and would stand up for? Would you tell others? How do you let others know how you feel? Cline and Schwartz (1999) concluded that domains of giftedness and level of ability should be the determining factors for programming for gifted children. Fourth, guidance and counseling specialists for the gifted should be provided. This in itself can be a form of education in the intrapersonal and interpersonal realms. Counseling can be one of the best ways gifted students can learn more about themselves and their conflicts with the world. Counselors are well equipped to sort out a variety of problems in students' lives, whether it is related to the home, career options, drugs, peer identity, or school and intellectual concerns.

I also concluded from the review of the literature the importance of collaboration among gifted and talented teachers, classroom teacher, counselors, administrators, and parents. Each of these individuals needs to play a vital role in the academic career of each individual student. It is important that there is open communication among each of the noted parties. Also, the adults need to listen to the student and to his/her needs.

These individuals need to have an understanding and provide guidance for gifted and talented students. A special understanding and guidance by gifted and talented teachers, classroom teachers, counselors, administrators, and parents is needed if the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented children are to be met.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this literature review suggest some areas for further investigation:

1. A survey of school districts in Iowa to determine the extent to which gifted and talented programs are dealing with the social and emotional needs of the gifted and talented.
2. A study of elementary and secondary counselors to determine their perceptions of the social and emotional needs of the gifted and talented students in contrast to general education students.
3. A qualitative study of gifted and talented students who have graduated from high school in the Dubuque Community School District to determine their perceptions of how their social and emotional needs were met by the school district.
4. A survey to other large school districts in Iowa to see what types of programs have been implemented to aid in meeting the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students.



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### Additional Resources

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