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## parenting for high potential

### a note from the editor

Summer is the perfect time to recharge one's mind and body, so this issue of *PHP* is well-timed to explore the concept of nature. Inside you'll find strategies for helping your gifted children understand their internal passions, attitudes, and views of self, juxtaposed with realities of the external world.



The article on the benefits of outdoor play will give you plenty of ideas to provide multisensory encounters with nature, including tips for inspiring even the most reluctant nature enthusiast. Then, perhaps while on a walk in the woods—or simply chilling out indoors—you can use the articles on identity development, bully proofing, and issues facing the GLTBQ community as fodder to guide meaningful conversations with your child.

And, to further our commitment to deliver content directly to teens and tweens, don't miss the practical advice offered by Jim Delisle to kids he calls *selective consumers*: Those who choose to boycott assignments they view as boring or unchallenging. It's located right in the center spread...easy to pull out and share with your child now or when school starts in the fall.

So whether you're exploring the innate nature of giftedness or seeking ways to explore the natural world with your child, this issue is here to help your family reflect, recreate, and rejuvenate this summer.

Kathleen Nilles  
Editor-in-Chief



» **Inside**  
*Leap into Nature!*

# Why Is There a Gay Pride flag on My 9-Year-Old's Backpack?

By Paul James "P. J." Sedillo, Ph.D.

Gifted children are often empathetic, morally sensitive, and feel a responsibility toward others. As they become aware of the injustices in their surrounding communities, they may embark on a quest for justice for individuals who are oppressed, marginalized, or misunderstood.<sup>1</sup> With Gay Pride Month in June bringing increased visibility and awareness to the issues affecting the GLBTQQ+ (gay, lesbian,

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bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and others) community, the justice-focused gifted child or adolescent may gravitate to events and groups that support gay rights.

So, how can parents empower and educate the gifted child who now has a Pride flag on their backpack or who plans to attend the Annual Gay Pride Festival? How can you support your child when she signs up for a lesbian poetry reading at a local bookstore, or when he helps design a float for a local Alternative Sexual Expressions group for the Gay Pride Parade?

**1 Start by educating yourself.** It's important that parents educate themselves on the issue their child is passionate about. With respect to GLBTQQ+, it's important to have a foundational understanding of what GLBTQQ+ children face in schools, whether or not your child identifies as GLBTQQ+. In a groundbreaking survey of more than 10,000 LGBT-identified youth ages 13–17, the Human Rights Campaign found high incident rates of both verbal and physical harassment in schools.<sup>2</sup> For GLBTQQ+ students, faculty, and staff, the school environment can pose numerous threats and obstacles: Hateful language, physical and emotional harassment, and the threat of physical violence are a reality.

**2 Talk to your child about GLBTQQ+ culture and history.** American history as it pertains to the GLBTQQ+ community is marked by many inequities and discriminating obstacles; however, there are numerous milestones of moral courage and victories that are not usually shared in mainstream history. School libraries rarely have GLBTQQ+ book titles for students to read and check out—an upsetting fact for many children. *(See sidebar for suggestions.)*

You may also research the history that defined the Gay Rights Movement. Here are a few historical events for you and your child to explore further:

- **The Stonewall Riots.** The catalyst behind the many Pride celebrations held throughout the world, the Stonewall Riots have become the defining event that marked the start of the Gay Rights Movement in the U.S. and around the world.
- **Harvey Milk.** The first openly gay man to win a seat on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, Milk was an advocate for many marginalized groups of people on the fringes of society, including gay people and senior citizens.
- **The Briggs Initiative of 1978.** Requiring the termination of any teacher or school employee who publicly supported gay rights, this proposed California legislation faced a huge backlash and was defeated.
- **Legalization of same-sex marriage.** On February 8, 2014, the U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage.

**3 Acknowledge that your gifted child may challenge authority and question rules.** Remind your child of the many famous individuals—such as Mahatma Gandhi, Harvey Milk, and Martin Luther King—who were rule breakers and change agents. Encourage letter-writing to challenge unfair laws, and help your child use her intelligence, critical thinking, and creative skills to identify alternative solutions to the unjust practices she sees in the world around her.

**4 Locate role models and mentors.** If possible, locate a GLBTQQ+ role model and go-to person who can inspire, provide knowledge, motivate your child, and provide the wider perspective that you may lack. A good mentor can mold and provide resources and connections for new ideas, which can in turn further sharpen your gifted child's intellectual and emotional skills.

## Just for Kids

### **Gay and Lesbian History for Kids: The Century-Long Struggle for LGBT Rights**

by Jerome Pohlen

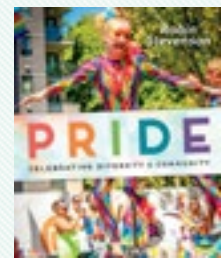
This book looks at the positive gains and struggles with the GLBT movement with the intent to provide information for the perspective of our adolescents.



### **Pride: Celebrating Diversity and Community**

by Robin Stevenson

This book goes into detail about Pride events not being just a party but an event for social justice that began with a riot. The book showcases about fighting for freedom and equality by protesting and celebrating around the world with an event known as Pride.



### **This Day in June**

by Gayle E. Pitman

This book welcomes readers to experience a Pride celebration and share in a day when we are all united. The book also includes facts about GLBT history and culture.





**5** **Direct her passions.** Allow your child to participate in community service or volunteer activities with GLBTQQ+ organizations. You can contact your local GLBTQQ+ Pride organization and volunteer through [interpride.org](http://interpride.org); attend Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) events to support confidential peer support, education, and advocacy in communities in nearly all states; and/or identify if there is a Gay-Straight Alliance at your child's school.

**6** **Become an ally.** As an ally, you honor the efforts of all activists. Celebrate the historic events of the past by honoring GLBTQQ+ Pride Month. Attend a local Pride parade or find out what other GLBTQQ+ events are occurring in your city during Pride Month and throughout the year. Demonstrate pride, love, and acceptance.

**7** **Start or support a Safe Zone Program at your child's school.** Safe Zone Programs are common in schools and are usually designated by a placard outside a teacher's classroom, the principal's office, the school cafeteria, or other school entryway. A Safe Zone is a place for a person who needs help, advice, or just a safe space to talk. For more information, contact [thesafezoneproject.com](http://thesafezoneproject.com).

**8** **Start or support an anti-bullying policy at your child's school.** A strong policy protects all students, but many schools need explicit guidance on safeguarding GLBTQQ+ students. If starting an anti-bullying policy at your child's school, be sure to include language specifically prohibiting harassment based on nonconformity to gender norms, gender identity, and gender expression, as well as give examples of harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Once in place, evaluate the effectiveness of your school's anti-bullying program annually using student and staff surveys.

Staff and faculty members specifically trained to prevent and respond to bullying incidents play a pivotal role in developing and maintaining your school's anti-bullying program and are essential if a bullying incident occurs. It's important, then, to also designate an anti-bullying coordinator and an anti-bullying task force. Communicate effectively and often with students, parents or guardians, and the community about issues such as bullying. Post the name and contact information for your school's anti-bullying coordinator in the office, on the school website, and in the student handbook. Ensure that reactions to reports of harassment do not further stigmatize students who were targeted for their real or perceived GLBTQQ+ identities.

By becoming educated and involved, we can unlearn or dispel negative perceptions and attitudes of others by replacing malice

*(Continues on p. 23)*

# Getting Gifted Kids Outdoors:



# Tips for a Summer of Play

*By Dr. Leigh Ann Fish and Dr. Patti Ensel Bailie*

For many, childhood memories are of outdoor play: “baking” mud pies, building forts, climbing trees, playing tag at the park, and constructing sand castles at the beach. Children today spend only half as much time playing outside as their parents did 30 years ago.<sup>1</sup> Childhood is moving indoors, yet research shows that a lack of outdoor play can have serious consequences for children.

There are several factors that are influencing this phenomenon. With more cars on the road and speed limits increasing, many parents are reluctant to allow their children to play, walk, or ride bikes on streets or near roadways.<sup>2</sup> Green spaces are also disappearing at an alarming rate, limiting the number of available parks. At the same time, many parents’ fear of injury or “stranger danger” means many children don’t take advantage of the limited green space available. Finally, kids may opt for “screen time” over play time, and increased participation in organized sports and other extracurriculars means kids don’t have as much time for play outdoors.

Kids who don’t have a lot of unstructured outdoor play are at risk for a range of negative outcomes:<sup>3</sup>

- Greater risk for unhealthy lifestyles and childhood obesity
- Fewer sensory-rich experiences
- Higher diagnoses of ADHD-type symptoms
- Lower academic performance in school
- Less empathy for plants and animals
- More apathetic/destructive attitude toward others
- Lower self-confidence
- Less independence
- Diminished creativity

The good news is that many of these can be reversed or restored by spending time outdoors! The benefits of outdoor experiences, although important for all children, can help nurture gifted children in many ways.

### Improved Social Skills

Some gifted children crave time alone; others may want to engage with peers but find it difficult. Their advanced vocabularies and intellectual curiosity, when coupled with asynchronous social skills and heightened emotional sensitivity, can lead to rejection if others perceive gifted children as annoying, bossy, contrary, intense, serious, self-absorbed, negative, sarcastic, or boastful.<sup>4</sup> Being in nature can provide space for being alone, but it may also advance interactions with others and build resilience in social situations by allowing children to practice social skills.



**TIPS**

Provide opportunities for children to work together. Social skills such as communicating clearly, asking for help, encouraging others, disagreeing politely, actively listening, sharing resources, staying on task, waiting patiently, and resolving conflicts are practiced authentically as children build forts or collect tadpoles.

Sharing the natural world can foster prosocial behaviors and increased empathy. Children learn to look after each other when hiking on woodland trails. Learning to care for plants and animals may lead to greater sensitivity and care toward others.

### Enhanced Emotional Well-Being

Gifted children's emotional intensity can fuel passion for learning and motivation to achieve, but it can also create anxiety, self-criticism, and doubt. Being outdoors in nature can offer a break from anxiety, providing a quiet space in which to relax and calm down. It can also boost self-confidence as children learn to persevere and overcome obstacles.



**TIPS**

Make time for being outdoors on a regular basis. Provide quiet time in a natural area outdoors, such as near a lake or in the woods.

Help children find ways of expressing their intense emotions through stories, poems, art, music, journal entries, or physical activities—all which can be done in nature!

### More Risk-Taking, Resilience, and Grit

Taking risks in academic or intellectual areas may be more comfortable for some gifted children than physical, social, emotional, or creative risk-taking which may come less easily or less naturally. Older gifted children, in particular, may have adopted risk avoidance behaviors, preferring tasks with clear, unambiguous steps or choosing to stick with what they can already do well. But children can't develop resiliency or grit when tasks are too easy. Spending time outdoors can be the perfect place

to practice taking risks, to try and fail and try again, and to put forward effort in overcoming obstacles. Doing so may contribute to a growth mindset rather than a fixed one.



**TIP**

Give children autonomy to take risks outdoors. Exploring natural areas with trees to hang on and boulders to climb allows children to build confidence. If they don't succeed, help them view success by giving praise for effort rather than accomplishments.

### Better Physical Health

When gifted children are asynchronous in their development, their intellect can outpace their physical maturity, leading them to struggle with fine and gross motor abilities.<sup>5</sup> Outdoor physical activity can improve memory, enhance muscle tone, strengthen the heart and circulatory system, build strong bones, and help maintain a healthy body weight. Children who regularly play outdoors have been shown to eat and sleep better; outdoor play has been linked to improved eye health, healthier immune systems, and higher levels of Vitamin D.<sup>6</sup>



**TIPS**

Climbing trees, balancing on logs, and hiking on trails can aid physical development on a large scale. Fine motor development can be supported by taking apart flower heads, pine cones, or seed pods to examine how they function.

Cross-lateral movement (crossing the body's midline) such as digging with a shovel, raking leaves, and sweeping with an insect net enables the two sides of the brain to communicate, strengthening nerve cell pathways.

### Greater Curiosity, Creativity, and Imagination

Creativity should be nurtured in all children. Play in nature-rich environments provides variety and challenge requiring thoughtful decision-making to navigate. Whereas manufactured toys promote more predictable play, open-ended, natural materials encourage children to be inventive, imaginative, and resourceful.



**TIPS**

Encourage children to use sticks or rocks in unique and inventive ways, such as making fairy houses, building forts, or creating works of art.

Feed children's curiosity by encouraging them to ask questions and investigate things in the natural world of interest to them. Model it for them by asking questions you wonder about and follow up by seeking answers.

*(Continues on p. 9)*

## Ideas for Getting Outdoors This Summer

### **“Kidscape your backyard” or neighborhood.**

Find ideas in *A Parents’ Guide to Nature Play* by Ken Finch or at [www.greenheartsinc.org](http://www.greenheartsinc.org).

**Start your own nature club.** Download the Children & Nature Network’s free *Nature Clubs for Families Tool Kit* to get started at [www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org).

**Try nature journaling.** Have your child choose a spot in a natural area to visit throughout the seasons to draw or write about what is seen and heard.

**Take a hike!** Walks or hikes can include:

- Providing lists or pictures for children to find on a natural scavenger hunt.
- Looking for animal tracks.
- Watching and listening for birds.

**Micro-hike.** Place a hula hoop on the ground and explore everything within the hoop using a hand lens.

**Be a scientist or detective.** Have a clipboard to record questions to investigate! Start small with the plants and animals in your own backyard, neighborhood, or local park.

**Try a seasonal activity.** Camping, skiing, snowshoeing, ice skating, boating, fishing, and other seasonal outdoor activities can be enjoyed as a family. Equipment can often be borrowed or rented.

**Visit a local, state, or national park or Audubon center.** In addition to exploring the site, many offer special events, classes, and programs for families.



## But, My Kid Won't Play Outside!

Is your gifted child reluctant to play outside? Try these tips!

**Resist perfectionism.** Gifted children can be perfectionists and may obsess over feeling inexperienced, needing the right clothes or gear, or feel frustrated with their own lack of expertise in new situations. You don't have to be an expert and neither do they. Resist these pressures and adopt an attitude of *"Let's learn this together."*



**Modeling.** Watch your words and reframe your outlook. Gifted children are keen observers and may be modelling and internalizing what they've heard family members say or do. Instead of reactions like, *"Ew, that bug is really gross,"* make it cool by saying, *"Wow, that bug is really interesting. I wonder what it is?"*



Grab a hand lens, a jar to collect it, and use a field guide to find out.

**Connect to interests.** Connect outdoor activities to their interests. A bonfire and s'mores can be a great way to introduce stargazing that could lead to fascination with the night sky. For children who delight in all things weird or gross, focus on plant or animal "super-powers" or scat identification hikes. If your child is into carpentry, try building bird or bat houses together.



**Gear up or cool down.** For children who claim to wilt in the heat, give them a variety of loose parts and access to water (hose, buckets, barrel, or squirt bottles). They can build their own micro water park. If sensory experiences are too overwhelming, offer gloves or tools when playing in sand, dirt, mud, or water. Use waders for children who don't like the sensation of getting wet and pack extra clothes in case they need a quick change.



**Find like-minded peers or mentors.** If your gifted child struggles with making social connections, try connecting



them with people they are already comfortable with, like kids in their neighborhood, older children, or adults who share an interest in nature or outdoor play. Introducing one new thing at a time frees them to engage outdoors without adding social pressure to conform.

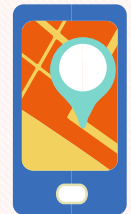


**Dress for the weather.** Outdoor enthusiasts say, *"There is no bad weather, only improper clothing."* Use boots, waders, mud suits, rain gear, and snow gear to extend play across the seasons.

**Create garden art.** Visually and creatively gifted children can plan, draw, and plant vegetable, herb, or butterfly gardens. The reward comes when they harvest and eat what they planted or when they attract brightly-colored visitors.



**Incorporate technology (if necessary).** For children who are tech-savvy, incorporating some technology into their outdoor adventures may get them outside. GPS devices can be used for geocaching and orienteering. Digital cameras can be used for photography and videography. Handheld devices, such as the *Identifyer*, can be taken on hikes and used to identify common bird calls and frog sounds. Apps, like *SkyView*, use augmented reality to overlay constellations, planets, and heavenly bodies over your own location in real time.



**Set time limits.** For children who are extremely resistant to going outdoors, setting a time limit may help.

-Dr. Leigh Ann Fish and Dr. Patti Ensel Bailie

(Continued from p. 6)

## Reduction in ADHD-Type Symptoms

Many gifted children show high levels of intellectual, emotional, physical, sensory, or imaginal intensity called overexcitabilities. Some researchers suspect overexcitabilities play a role in the misdiagnosis of ADHD in gifted children, especially those with psychomotor (physical) overexcitability. Recent studies suggest that there is a reduction in symptoms of ADD and ADHD when children play in natural areas.<sup>7</sup>



Nature can provide a release for pent-up energy and tension in safe, gratifying ways. Choose outdoor sites like parks, prairies, or wooded areas where children can run, climb, and explore.

## Getting Started

As a family, where do you start? Families should consider a variety of opportunities for spending time outdoors with their children, in both structured and unstructured play. First-hand, multisensory encounters with nature don't have to be wilderness experiences. Even time spent on a patch of ground, in the corner of a yard, or "on the fringes" can work. If you don't have a backyard, find a local park to explore.

One of the most important things you can do is model the desire to be outdoors, get your hands dirty, and share your enjoyment of the natural world. Prioritizing time in nature makes sense on a total development level for all children. So much so that some advocates are now calling regular time in nature as a right that should not be denied.<sup>8</sup> We believe the benefits for gifted children are no exception. ☺

## Resources

### Acorn Naturalists

[www.acornnaturalists.com](http://www.acornnaturalists.com)

### Children and Nature Network

[www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org)

### Green Hearts Inc.

[www.greenheartinc.org](http://www.greenheartinc.org)

### Insect Lore

[www.insectlore.com](http://www.insectlore.com)

### University of Maine at Farmington's Nature-Based Education Resource Guide

<http://umf.maine.libguides.com/naturebasededu>

## Authors' Note

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Patti Ensel Bailie, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Maine at Farmington. She has worked in the field of early childhood environmental education for more than 25 years, with previous positions including assistant director of the Nature-Based Early Childhood Education certificate program at Antioch University and various leadership and educator roles at three different nature centers in the Midwest.

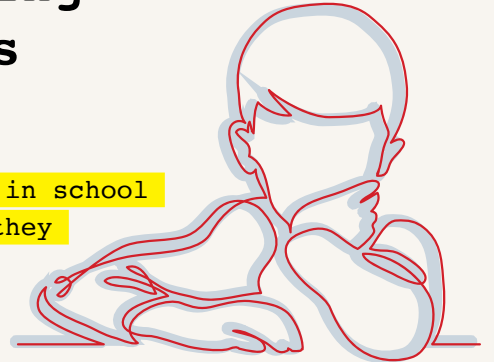
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## Doing Poorly on Purpose: Making School Matter for Gifted Kids

By James R. Delisle, Ph.D.

It happens too frequently: Gifted children do poorly in school on purpose because they don't see the relevance of what they are learning. Gifted kids yearn for a connection between school work and real life, and they just don't find it in monotonous worksheets or group projects in which the other kids expect "the gifted kid" to do all of the work to get a good grade.



Some gifted kids' desire to achieve overshadows the fact that their school work is not very challenging. But then there are the other gifted kids, the ones I label selective consumers. These children will do just about anything for a teacher who treats them with respect, but they will refuse to perform for a teacher whom they perceive as just going through the daily motions that require all students, even gifted ones, to complete every single assignment.

I love selective consumers, and I have worked with many of them over the 40+ years of my teaching career. Why do I love them? Because I see them as the equivalent of canaries in a coalmine, tweeting loudly that disaster will strike if nothing changes. Selective consumers do much the same thing above ground: They send out warning signals about their education. "I hate this work. It's so boring," your child might say. Or "I've already shown you that I know how to do this work. Why do I have to keep proving it to you?" We disregard these signals to the gifted child's academic peril.



As your kid enters middle and high school, you need to give her the tools to become her own best educational advocate. On the following pages, I offer several suggestions for gifted tweens and teens to take charge of their own learning and help to make education relevant to them.

James R. Delisle, Ph.D., has been an educator of gifted kids and those who work on their behalf for more than 40 years, working with students in grades 2 through graduate school. Focusing his work on the social and emotional needs of gifted individuals, Jim has published 21 books.

**Need more info?** Check out Jim's books: *Doing Poorly on Purpose: Strategies to Reverse Underachievement and Respect Student Dignity* (2018—ASCD/Free Spirit) and *Parenting Gifted Kids: Tips for Raising Happy and Successful Children* (2006—Prufrock).

# There's No Need to Wear What Doesn't Fit

By Jim Delisle, Ph.D.



**Imagine this:** You are an 8th grader, and your school's principal makes a morning announcement. "We've conducted a study of your class," he states, "and have determined that the average 8th grader wears a **size 9 shoe**. Therefore, starting tomorrow, **every student** will be required to wear that size shoe to school each day."

## ★ Huh? ★

For some of your classmates, this will be perfectly all right, as their feet are an absolutely average size 9. But some kids will have a shoe size of 6, meaning that they'll be sloshing around in footwear that is just too big for them. Yet others (perhaps you) have a size 11 foot that is going to be pinched with every step they take.

**CRAZY, ISN'T IT?** And just as crazy is the idea that a one-size-fits-all 8th grade curriculum will be just fine for every kid in class. It isn't, and if you're a gifted kid, your mind might feel just as pinched as your feet would be in a too-small shoe. **Being required to "learn" stuff that you already know just doesn't make sense.**

Some gifted students who find themselves in this situation opt to go through the motions and do the required work, even if it is easy or boring. But then there are others—I call them selective consumers—who actively refuse to complete assignments or homework that doesn't come close to challenging or intriguing them. Often, this decision not to comply with school requirements results in losing privileges at home and/or at school.

**So, what to do?** I've come up with 4 ways you can "get to A," while maintaining your individuality and dignity. "Getting to A" doesn't necessarily mean a report card "A" (although that might happen); rather, the "A" represents four attributes and attitudes that help you approach your teachers in a polite and professional manner. These **A's** may help you get what both you and your teachers desire: an education that is challenging, relevant, and enjoyable.



# Autonomy

Here's a psychological concept for you to explore: **locus of control**. With locus of control, you need to think about why you succeed and fail. Did you succeed or fail because teachers like or dislike you, or because you did or did not put in any efforts in completing your work? Selective consumers often blame adults for things that go wrong, while taking full credit for positive outcomes. Do you succeed or fail due to others' behaviors? Or are you the **"master of your own universe,"** accepting responsibility for your wins and losses? Understanding where you fall on the locus of control spectrum helps you become more independent, or autonomous, and may actually provide insights for your teachers as to where you get the source of your learning satisfaction.



*"The only thing worse than being denied opportunities is being forced to take them."  
—Eric Grevstad*

Do you succeed or fail due to how others act?

Go to [www.psych.uncc.edu/pagoolka/LC.html](http://www.psych.uncc.edu/pagoolka/LC.html) to find out!

*"You miss 100% of the shots you never take."—Wayne Gretzky*



## Access

Believe it or not, **teachers cannot read your mind**. So, if you'd like education to be different, you need to suggest some ways to access parts of learning that aren't related to the typical curriculum. Here are just two examples from kids I know:

1. Meghan asked her algebra teacher to take the chapter-end test at the start of the teaching unit. When she scored 95 percent, her teacher allowed her to work on an independent study in poetry instead.

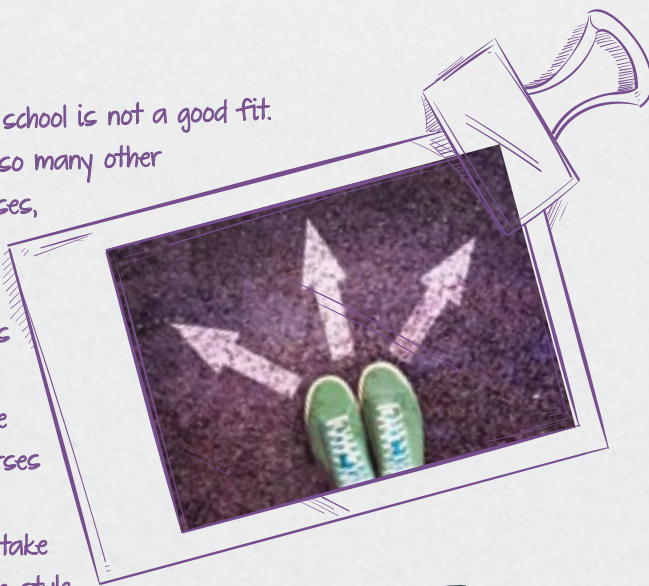
2. Instead of completing a book report in the typical way, Adam convinced his teacher to let him write the entire book report without using the letter "E," a challenge that added creativity to this usually bland assignment.

You seldom gain access to new ways of learning without asking for it.  
**The ball is in your court. Speak up!**



## Alternatives

First, the bad news: For some gifted students, 'typical' school is not a good fit. Now, for the good news: There have never before been so many other innovative ways to 'do school.' Homeschooling, online courses, and summer university classes for both high school and college credit are all available options. Want even more independence? Become self-educated by learning subjects of interest through Khan Academy or Ted Talks. If you choose to stay in your high school and want more of a challenge, check out Advanced Placement (AP) courses or explore International Baccalaureate (IB) options. These are just a few of the alternatives available, so take some time to examine which ones best fit your learning style.



## Aspirations

Some kids seem to know right out of the womb that they want to become a pediatric neurologist as an adult, while others might have absolutely no idea which of the many interesting career or college majors to select. If you fall into this latter category, you might have 'multipotential': a range of interests and abilities so diverse that you could be successful at just about any option you choose. You need to know one thing about multipotential: If it is making it hard for you to decide where to focus your career dreams, there is nothing wrong with you. Don't let others—friends or adults—rush you into picking a career or college path that you're not ready to take. Instead, if you are interested in a particular career (or two or three), check with the guidance counselors in your school about locating a mentor who can help you learn the ropes of becoming a veterinarian, electrician, or composer. This will guide your aspirations, or dreams for the future.



### Did you know?

The average college student changes majors five times.

### Did you know?

Famous entertainers: colleges and their majors

**Ashley Judd**—French & Classics—University of Kentucky

**Sean "Diddy" Combs**—Business—Howard University

**Conan O'Brien**—History & American Literature—Harvard University

**J.K. Rowling**—French & Classics—Exeter University

**Mick Jagger**—Economics—London School of Economics

# It's Your Turn

9 TED Talks recommended by students, for students

<https://blog.ed.ted.com/2017/03/16/9-ted-talks-recommended-by-students-for-students/>

5 most popular Khan Academy videos of all time

<https://globalcitizen.org/the-5-most-popular-khan-academy-video-lessons-of-all-time>

Ted Talk by Emilie Wapnick on "Multipotential"

[https://www.ted.com/talks/emilie\\_wapnick\\_why\\_some\\_of\\_us\\_don\\_t\\_have\\_one\\_true\\_calling](https://www.ted.com/talks/emilie_wapnick_why_some_of_us_don_t_have_one_true_calling)

Gifted Teen Survival Guide: Smart, Sharp and Ready for (Almost) Anything

by Judy Galbraith and Jim Delisle



## Wrapping Up

There are many paths for "Getting to A," even for the selective consumers among you who haven't always excelled in school. By following your dreams and opening yourself up to the four As highlighted here—autonomy, access, alternatives, and aspirations—education can become much more than an exercise in frustration. It can become an awesome (...that's another 'A') journey.

# Bully Proofing Your Twice-Exceptional Child

By Amra Mohammed

Casey was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) at around 3 years old. His mother noticed that Casey was an outcast at school, and he often felt angry and frustrated. However, as a one-year-old, Casey's speech was fluent. He could recite some nursery rhymes, sing the national anthem, and have conversations with adults. He was a creative child who invented his own games and stories.

School assessments identified Casey as having an IQ in the gifted range, but he often had difficulty with social skills, self-esteem, and self-control. He did not get along with other children, who viewed him as strange and often teased him. Casey seemed to live in his own world, playing by himself.

Unable to manage peers' teasing, Casey acted out. He talked out of turn and too much, left his seat, and fought with peers during group work. Teachers punished him for those behaviors, which only made him act out more. Punishment after punishment and failure after failure diminished his sense of self. His mother reported that he often said, "I don't know why I was born; I'm worthless." Because of this, he hurt himself. When she went to get Casey from school one day during third grade, Casey's mother found him sitting on the floor at the classroom door

hitting his head with a sandal, upset with himself that he had been punished. Each day, on the way back home from school, he would complain about how peers and teachers didn't understand him, how they treated him unfairly, and how he felt low and worthless.

Twice-exceptional (2E) students are those who demonstrate a gift or talent in one or more areas and have a disability in another area.<sup>1</sup> One identifying characteristic of 2E children is asynchronous

development, or the display of unusual talent or maturity in one or more areas alongside a struggle to develop in other areas. Asynchronous development may exhibit internally or externally. Internally, asynchronous development indicates different rates of physical, intellectual, emotional, and social skills development. In contrast, external traits may include a lack of inclusion with both same-aged peers and age-related expectations of society. These external traits illustrate the



**It is critical to teach 2E children to manage expectations realistically.**

importance of special efforts to facilitate healthy social and emotional development in 2E children.<sup>2</sup>

The social and emotional issues that 2E children demonstrate can be as debilitating as their other challenges. Parents see a frustrated, angry, and depressed child; however, parents of a 2E child may also experience similar emotional and psychological issues.

**Hidden issues.** The child's psychological or emotional issues are often hidden behind negative behavior. For example, antisocial behavior may mean a lack of social skills in general or a disability that affects social skills, such as autism. Inappropriate behaviors such as teasing, clowning, anger, withdrawal, apathy, and denial of problems may signal poor self-esteem.

**Frustration.** The twice-exceptional student's lack of initiative may indicate frustration when directly associated with a low level of academic performance.<sup>3</sup>

**Discrepancy in expectations.** In addition, the discrepancy between the 2E child's own high expectations and performance in gifted areas in contrast to areas of disability can also be an underlying cause of social and emotional difficulties for 2E children.<sup>4</sup>

**Social impact.** 2E students often struggle with developing healthy social relationships and frequently suffer from isolation, teasing, or aggressive bullying. Negative social experiences leave these children wounded and alienated from peers, in many cases well into adulthood.

**Lack of school support.** Furthermore, it is often difficult for schools to provide

the specialized attention and learning environment that these children require.

### Strategies to Help

Parents can play a vital role in helping their 2E child build resiliency—or the ability to “bounce back”—in the face of difficulties by intervening and advocating on several levels.<sup>5</sup>

Early identification and support in problem areas is the most effective way to support positive social and emotional development, and parents have the earliest opportunities to provide vital input and guidance to their children. Furthermore, students who know, understand, and accept their strengths and weaknesses are more likely to achieve desired outcomes. One activity that enhances deeper understanding and self-esteem is for 2E children

(Continues on p. 22)

## Interventions for Social and Emotional Health

### Emotional Understanding

- Facilitate your child's understanding of personal strengths, interests, and weaknesses.
- Encourage and teach empathy for others.
- Facilitate the development of self-esteem.
- Nurture your child's personal awareness, understanding, and acceptance.
- Help your child learn to set realistic expectations and engage in structured goal setting.
- Celebrate attaining individual goals and self-actualization.
- Help your child develop a healthy locus of control and the ability to self-regulate.
- Seek specialized counseling for any child exhibiting signs of anxiety, dysfunctional perfectionism, depression, stress, or suicidal tendencies.

### Social Understanding

- Model a respectful environment that values individual differences.
- Provide opportunities for your child to work with intellectual peers and those with similar interests and abilities.
- Encourage your child's involvement in school clubs, interest groups, or other extracurricular activities.
- Attend social groups to aid your child in developing social skills and building peer relationships.
- Teach self-advocacy skills.
- Learn to empower, versus enable, your child.
- Provide explicit instruction to help students improve relationships with peers, teachers, and family.
- Facilitate mentorships or apprenticeships.
- Seek specialized counseling for any child dealing with intensities, sensitivities, and extreme feelings.

### Source

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



Positive parental—and sometimes professional—involvement is critical to the social and emotional well-being of 2E children because they frequently face significant difficulty in these areas. Self-awareness, self-acceptance, empathy, and the ability to adapt to different social situations are key factors in developing social and emotional resilience.

### SCENARIO 1: PARENT SUPPORT

**Problem:**

My son did not know how to think and respond when there were unpleasant situations, like being teased.

**Strategy:**

I told him that we can't control others' behaviors; we can only control ours. People that tease you want to see you angry and react, so you must not serve them. If they call you names, give them unexpected responses, such as telling them, *"Thank you for teasing me,"* or telling them you take that as a compliment. They will soon learn that their teasing can't affect you.

**Result:**

It was hard for him, but he practiced for years. We also tried to help him understand other kids. Among those that bullied him verbally, most of them also had ADHD like my son. So, I explained to him they shared ADHD in common, and that instead of being angry, he could be empathetic. When he was in high school, bullying did not affect him.

### SCENARIO 2: PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

**Problem:**

Socially she's... very empathetic, and she doesn't ever want to hurt her friends' feelings even if it's to say, *"No, that's my snack. You can't have my snack."* She sees it as, *"I'm sharing,"* but sometimes the way that they do it is more... aggressive. She really does need to stand up for herself and say, *"No, this is my snack. You need to ask."*

**Strategy:**

The school psychologist is working with her and she participates in a social group to practice skills in advocating and standing up for herself to her friends.

**Result:**

She has one really good friend, but she is very aggressive [who] tells her what to do [more] than asks. When [my daughter] does eventually stand up to her, she gets really nasty. I say, *"You're doing what you're supposed to do. I know this person is not being kind about it because you're actually telling her you're not okay with being told to do everything."*



# Identity, Purpose, and Happiness: Helping High-Achieving Adolescents Find All Three

By Kathryn Grubbs

The teenage years can be difficult, filled with questions, emotions, and decisions. For high-achieving adolescents who may experience asynchronous development or experience the world more intensely, these years can bring about intense emotions, feelings of isolation, or difficulty understanding the injustices of the world.<sup>1</sup> As parents, we may try to protect our children from experiencing the same level of teenage stress we felt only to hear the common reply: “*You’re not me!*” While it’s natural to take this as a cue to disengage and parent implicitly, parents

must provide explicit support of teenagers as they figure out who they are, what they will do as adults, and what makes them happy.

**Who am I?**

This question of identity rules the lives of most adolescents in one form or another, even if it is not readily apparent.<sup>2</sup> Identity development is about making what feels true inside align with what is accepted outside. As an adolescent works to make sense of the world, she is also trying to find and understand her place

To help your child explore who she is:

**Expect and be open to shifting identities.** Understand that identities for all of us shift, grow, and change over time. As a parent your role is not to dictate how or when this happens, but rather to accept that it does. Believe your child when she says, “*I am x.*” or “*Y feels true for me.*”

**Ask open-ended questions.** “*What do you believe?*” “*How do you know?*” “*What makes you think that?*” Asked with curiosity and openness—and not as a form of interrogation—these questions will help you understand how your adolescent identifies herself.

**Advocate for your adolescent.** Instead of limiting identity choices based on your worries or beliefs about what is acceptable, be a supporter as your high-ability child figures out how she fits into your family, your community, and the larger world.



in it. This may encompass gender expression, racial identity, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, academic ability, cultural background, and more. An adolescent may feel pressure to conform or take on certain identities from parents, friends, relatives, school, community, media, culture, and beyond. High-achieving adolescents may not want to conform to societal pressures—a decision that can bring about more social isolation or rejection. As a parent, you may—quite naturally—want your children to conform to a certain ideal, with the hopes that your child will be happy and accepted in life.

In fact, adolescents can be great at fitting in, but that does not mean conforming is without strife. Self-actualization occurs when a person’s “ideal self”—or who they would like to be—is congruent with his “actual self.”<sup>3</sup> We are all constantly aiming toward a state of congruence, moving back and forth between our ideal and actual selves. For adolescents, this dual self-experience is often just coming into consciousness, and for advanced learners, the realization of having a dual self-experience may show up at even earlier ages.

### What will I do?

As adolescents develop, their identity exploration will extend to the type of work they are interested in pursuing, or their purpose. As Emilie Wapnick reminds us in her TED Talk “*Why Some of Us Don’t Have One True Calling*,” asking your child what she wants to be when she grows up can feel overwhelming not just because your child may not know, but because it may feel like she has to choose one thing.<sup>4</sup>

Wapnick introduces us to the term multipotentiality which is an experience high-achieving adolescents may have of wanting to pursue many things at once or over time. As a counselor and advisor working with adolescents, I love exploring purpose and future career options with my students. I try to keep in mind that the skills, experiences, and jobs of the future may not exist today. This realization helps me stay open to our changing world and pushes me to support a range of options that my students may be considering, rather than trying to help them speed up, narrow, or limit career pursuits.

Furthermore, today it is common to have multiple careers over a lifetime rather than stick with one field until retirement, as our parents and grandparents might have done. With this in mind, the questions become more about what your child wants to

pursue first, rather than what your child wants to focus on for the rest of her life. Working in a university setting, I like to remind my students that while there are certain expectations they will have to fulfill to graduate—like choosing at least one major—they don’t have to choose the career path now that will interest them for the rest of their lives.

For parents, it may be difficult to not push for more or provide the guidance that you received or wished you had received as a child. Just as with identity, these messages may come across as limiting or frustrating rather than helpful and supportive. Parents may worry about their kids making money, being employable, finding job prospects, and gaining prestige. To ensure you are supporting your child in finding their purpose, here are some questions I use when working with high-achieving students:

- What academic areas are you drawn to when you aren’t doing required work?
- What activities do you enjoy outside of school?

## Glossary

**Asynchronous development.** When the social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and creative aspects of a person develop on a trajectory that is outside of norms, and at an uneven rate.

**Identity.** Who you are, and the characteristics that distinguish you from others.

**Intensities.** Feelings, emotions or traits, where one experiences the world more vividly than others through various senses.

**Multipotentiality.** Having the talents or skills to pursue many things at once, or over time.

**Self-actualization.** When a person’s “ideal self”—or who they would like to be—is congruent with her “actual self.”



- What career paths interest you that you could find ways to explore?
  - How much do you know right now about what it takes to pursue the career paths that interest you?
  - When you think about the environment in which you like to do schoolwork now, what characteristics stand out to you?
- Adjust the language and wording of these types of open-ended questions based on the age of your child.

### To help your child pursue happiness:

- Revel in your child's happiness.
- When your child feels a burst of glee, enjoy that moment with them. It's a parenting success, after all!
- Encourage your child to reflect on that moment.
- I encourage my students to listen to their internal voices to identify the feeling of happiness. Ask your child, "What feels so good right now?" "How do you know—from your smile, a feeling of giddiness, or something else?" Part of cultivating good mental health is having the ability to check in with yourself and to experience feelings as something in your control or understanding.
- Model empathy, but discourage feeling dependent on another's feelings.
- Often, children start to relate happiness to how others are feeling: "I know I am happy because my mom is happy, my teacher is happy, and my friend is happy." Instead, model interest and empathy for—not dependence on—your own child's experiences. She, in turn, will develop empathy for others alongside compassion for herself and her own experience of the world.

### What makes me happy?

In my work with adolescents, it is important to stress that happiness is a state that we aim for, hope for, and pursue, but it is not something we will always feel every moment of the day. How does this translate to the young people in our lives, especially those who are high-achieving and often feel pressure, experience confusion, and face challenges?

In *Excellent Sheep*, William Deresiewicz summarizes happiness as feeling connected to others and engaging in meaningful work.<sup>5</sup> If we focus on these two concepts, we can begin to weave identity and purpose into happiness. To feel connected to others, it is important to understand who you are and what matters to you. To engage in meaningful work, you need to have a sense of purpose. Happiness is what you feel when you experience congruence, or when you can say to yourself, "I feel good about who I am, what I do, who is in my life, and how I exist in the world."

Supporting your child's identity development and sense of purpose are key factors in supporting her pursuit of happiness, especially during the emotionally and physically tumultuous teenage years. Parenting isn't easy; neither is growing up. ☺

### Resources

- Ibanez, Z. R. (2015, March 4). When I grow up: Multipotentiality and gifted youth [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://educationaladvancement.org/grow-multipotentiality-gifted-youth>
- Lab, H. (2015, February 19). How to help kids find their way in the world [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/hopelab/purpose-how-to-help-kids-find-their-way-in-the-world>
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### Author's Note

Kathryn Grubbs is an academic adviser at the Robinson Center for Young Scholars at the University of Washington in Seattle. Prior to her current position she worked as a middle school/high school



counselor for 8 years, most recently at a residential high school for gifted students outside of Chicago. Besides her work in schools, she has experience in college counseling, inpatient and outpatient mental health, homeless supports, and domestic violence programs. Kathryn has presented at WCGTC, NAGC, NCSSS, SENG, and WAETAG and provides professional development locally to parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators.

**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Daniels, P., & Piechowski, M. (2008). *Living with intensity: Understanding the sensitivity, excitability, and the emotional development of gifted children, adolescents, and adults*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

<sup>2</sup> Erikson, E. (1959). *Identity and the life cycle*. New York, NY:

International Universities Press.

<sup>3</sup> McLeod, S. A. (2014). *Carl Rogers*. Retrieved from [www.simplypsychology.org/carl-rogers.html](http://www.simplypsychology.org/carl-rogers.html)

<sup>4</sup> Wapnick, E. (2015, April). *Emilie Wapnick: Why some of us don't have one true calling* [Video file]. Retrieved from [https://www.ted.com/talks/emilie\\_wapnick\\_why\\_some\\_of\\_us\\_don\\_t\\_have\\_one\\_true\\_calling](https://www.ted.com/talks/emilie_wapnick_why_some_of_us_don_t_have_one_true_calling)

<sup>5</sup> Deresiewicz, W. (2015). *Excellent sheep: The miseducation of the American elite and the way to a meaningful life*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

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to learn about famous people who are also twice-exceptional. Through learning about such people and how they have overcome their exceptionalities, 2E children can see that they, too, can excel.<sup>6</sup>

Even with a tailored learning program, 2E children will experience negative emotions and setbacks. During these times, children need to talk openly about their feelings and problem-solve to resolve negative emotions. This support can take place in informal discussions with teachers, parents, or peers, but in some cases, a more formal intervention may be appropriate, such as individual counseling for mild issues or therapy for more severe issues.<sup>7</sup> With practice, your child can become bully-proof. ☺

## Resources

### Assertiveness

<http://practicalkatie.com/2012/01/13/10-tips-for-teaching-assertiveness-skills/>

### Building Resilience

[http://southernearlychildhood.org/upload/pdf/Dimensions\\_Vol42\\_3\\_Petty.pdf](http://southernearlychildhood.org/upload/pdf/Dimensions_Vol42_3_Petty.pdf)

## Bullying

<http://blog.connectionsacademy.com/No-One-Should-Have-to-Fear-Going-to-School/>

## Communications Skills

<http://www.betterparenting.com/teaching-kids-non-verbal-communication/>

## Twice-Exceptionality

<http://www.2enewsletter.com/>

## Author's Note

Amra Mohammed is a faculty member in the department of Special/Gifted Education at the University of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. She is currently completing the doctoral program in special/gifted education at the University of Northern Colorado. Amra served as program coordinator and teacher for the Summer Enrichment Program at the University of Northern Colorado in Summer 2017, and is currently developing a similar program for Jeddah University. Her area of specialization is twice-exceptionality.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Neumeister, K. S., Yssel, N., & Burney, V. H. (2013). The influence of primary caregivers in fostering success in twice-exceptional children. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 57(4), 263–274.

<sup>2</sup> Idaho Department of Education. (2010). *Twice-exceptional: Students with both gifts and challenges or disabilities*. Retrieved from [www.sde.idaho.gov/academic/gifted-talented/files/manuals](http://www.sde.idaho.gov/academic/gifted-talented/files/manuals)

<sup>3</sup> Nielsen, M. E. (2002). Gifted students with learning disabilities: Recommendations for identification and programming. *Exceptionality: A Special Education Journal*, 10(2), 93–111.

<sup>4</sup> King, E. W. (2005). Addressing the social and emotional needs of twice-exceptional students. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 38(1), 16–20.

<sup>5</sup> Wood, S. M., & Estrada-Hernández, N. (2012). Rehabilitation counselors' awareness, knowledge, and skills regarding twice-exceptional consumers. *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling*, 43(1), 11–18.

<sup>6</sup> Bradunas, G. (2017). Understanding and helping twice-exceptional students [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://blog.connectionsacademy.com/understanding-and-helping-twice-exceptional-students/>

<sup>7</sup> Olenchak, F. R. (2009). Effects of talents unlimited counseling on gifted/learning disabled students. *Gifted Educational International*, 25(2), 144–164.

(Continued from p. 4)

and hostility with positivity and love.

The catalyst for your child's interest in GLBTQQ+ issues could be the seemingly unfair reprimand a classmate receives for an infraction he did not commit, a rebuff from an unrequited love because of an imperfect body type or same sex attraction, questions about his own emerging sexual identity, or the developing awareness of poverty, racism, gender discrimination, homophobia, and other forms of social injustice. We must remember that while many gifted children have a desire and intense passion to change unjust individuals and unfair situations, they are still children.

As a parent, you can help your gifted child become more educated and feel more comfortable to manage situations that may arise. Honor your child's questions, concerns, and anxieties—not only about GLTBQQ+ issues, but all injustices in our lives—with understanding and respect. ♡

## Resources

### Print

Friedrichs, T. P., Manzella, T. R., & Seney, R. (2017). *NAGC Select: Needs and approaches for educators and parents of gifted gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students*. Washington, DC: National Association for Gifted Children.

### Web

#### Interpride

[interpride.org](http://interpride.org)

#### PFLAG

[pflag.org](http://pflag.org)

#### Safe Zone Project

[safezoneproject.com](http://safezoneproject.com)



## Staggering Statistics

Educating yourself about the issues GLBTQQ+ children face is a vital step, and it can spark thoughtful, action-oriented conversations with your gifted child.

- GLBTQQ+ students are more than twice as likely to have skipped school in the past month because of safety concerns.
- Ninety-seven percent of LGB students hear derogatory phrases used in school. Half of the teachers fail to respond to homophobic language when they hear it.
- Ninety percent of 15–24-year-olds have been called names because of their sexuality.
- The majority of respondents who are out or perceived as transgender while in school (K–12) experience some form of mistreatment, including verbal or physical harassment (54%) or sexual assault (24%).

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Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network. (2016). *Teasing to torment: School climate revisited*. Retrieved from [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

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Human Rights Campaign. (2017). *Growing up LGBT in America*. Retrieved from [www.hrc.org/youth-report](http://www.hrc.org/youth-report)

### Author's Note

**Paul James (P. J.) Sedillo, Ph.D.**, is an assistant professor at New Mexico Highlands University, where he teaches courses in special education and gifted. His work has been published in *Gifted Child Today*, and his recent book, *Solidarity through Pride*, is a historical account of the GLBTQ Albuquerque Pride movement from 1976 to 2016. He is past president of the New Mexico Association for the Gifted, chair of NAGC's GLBTQ Network, and local arrangements co-chair of the 2019 NAGC 66th Annual Conference to be held in Albuquerque, NM.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Silverman, L. K. (1994). The moral sensitivity of gifted children and the evolution of society. *Roeper Review*, 17, 110–116.

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