



# Advocacy for Gifted and Talented in New York

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## Parents and Teachers – Partners in Education

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Parents and teachers are partners in the education of the gifted child. Parents should be aware that as their child's first teachers, they have the most lasting impact on their children's lives. The child's early experiences provide him/her with the tools for gathering and using information. Through exposure, interaction, encouragement and support, parents enhance their child's critical and creative thinking skills. For learners of all ages this is best done through perceptive questioning. These types of questions include:

- Why?
- If...then...?
- How do you know that...?
- Are there other ways of looking at it?
- In how many ways...?
- How else could? How can we solve...?
- Would it be better...?

Teachers build on early learning experiences when gifted youngsters come to school by continuing to provide an environment that is rich with opportunities to make discoveries about oneself and the world. (See appendices for suggestions on enriching the home environment for very young children, and parenting of gifted children.) Through a carefully designed curriculum and the teacher's questioning strategies the gifted child should be offered opportunities to think creatively and solve problems.

The Parent/Teacher partnership is further enhanced through positive interaction of the parent with his/her child's class and school. Gina Ginsberg Riggs cites the following:

- Parent as Learner - How does the school work?
- Parent as Helper - How can I help with the teacher's "busy work"?
- Parent as School Supporter - How can I communicate positive feelings?
- Parent as Source of Information- How can I keep the teacher better informed about the child?
- Parent as Resource Person - How can I share my time and talent?
- Parent as Agent for Change - How can I be an advocate for my gifted child's education?

The answer to the last question about becoming an agent for change, and advocating for a child's education?

- Educate yourself
- Be a joiner (i.e. join AGATE!)
- Become political
- Build community support

## APPENDIX I: Suggestions for Parenting the Gifted

1. Create a home atmosphere that encourages communication and is non judgmental about sharing ideas.
2. Value the affective development of your child as well as the cognitive. The child is much more than his/her IQ.
3. Encourage physical development. Let your child participate in a variety of activities such as swimming, bike riding, dancing, skating, ball playing, etc. Take the direction from your child.
4. Provide a role model that shows sensitivity to your child's unique qualities; perfectionism, daydreaming, curiosity, sense of justice.
5. Help your child set realistic goals.
6. Help your child manage his/her energy and time wisely by setting priorities, analyzing levels of difficulty of tasks, assessing best ways to complete tasks, and analyzing current use of time.
7. Give your child opportunities to make decisions and then support his/her decision.
8. Encourage your child to be responsible for him/herself and his/her actions.
9. Set realistic limits. Remember the gifted child has to live in a world with others.
10. Provide a rich cultural environment by taking your youngster on trips, having a variety of reading materials available, and encouraging a particular interest through exposure to people and media.
11. Be available to share information about your child that may help the teacher get a more complete picture.
12. Communicate directly with the teacher to get information about classroom policies or procedures. Check your facts with him/her before suggesting changes.
13. Be enthusiastic about positive efforts of the school on behalf of gifted youngsters. Communicate the good feelings you have about a teacher, an event, a policy.
14. Support legislative efforts on behalf of education for the gifted.
15. Continue to attend conferences and read about education for gifted students. Be an advocate.
16. Enjoy the very special joys that come with being a parent of a very special child...who is, after all, a child.

## APPENDIX II: Caregiver Activities

1. Organize and design a safe environment that allows for a variety of sensory experiences; family living areas and outdoor areas should be available for exploration of the senses:
  - Visual: plants, fish in bowls, pictures, patterned objects, mirrors
  - Tactile: a variety of textures to feel (soft, hard, rough, smooth), sculpture, finger food, mud play, finger paints, painting with jello
  - Olfactory: baking smells, flower smells, farm and field smells
  - Gustatory: snacks of differing tastes and textures  
(because toddlers spend most of their time gaining information, building concepts, and observing.)
2. Provide a variety of toys and household objects to play with; for stringing, nesting, digging, pounding, screwing; construction toys (pieces not too small), peg boards, record players, magnets, magnetic letters, alphabet blocks, prisms, water toys, flashlights, spin tops, jigsaw puzzles, magnifying glasses, dolls, collections of small objects, toy animals, various household tools, books, and art materials.

(because this gives intellectual stimulation, supports later learning, strengthens perception and problem solving abilities.)

3. Play games like hide and seek, treasure hunts, guessing games, matching and sorting, finger games, circle games; encourage and provide materials for imitative play, such as "I do what you do".

(because this facilitates concept development, practice in planning and carrying out complicated projects, anticipating consequences, developing skills of problem solving.)

4. Teach child to be aware of name objects in the environment (including baby's own body parts): play games with the caregiver; give names to objects as they are used.

(because this provides language experiences.)

5. Look at scrapbooks with child, read books to child, make books familiar.

(because this provides symbolic language experiences.)

6. Make scrapbooks with the child of pictures of animals, cars, trips, (these can become the child's own books).

(because this gives language experience.)

7. Talk to baby during all care-giving activities: bathing, dressing, eating, use of patterns of speech with baby that you use with other members of the family; short 20-30 second "conversations" are important.

(because this helps baby to understand more complicated sentences, increases language background and experience.)

8. Take neighborhood walks to library, stores, playgrounds, on collection excursions, out to feed the birds; always discuss what is seen and experienced.

(because this provides a background of experiences for future concept building.)