

A photograph of a man and a young boy sitting together, looking at a book. The man is on the left, wearing a blue and white plaid shirt, and the boy is on the right, wearing a light blue t-shirt. Both are smiling. The boy is holding a yellow pencil. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a classroom or library setting.

# ABCs

## of Being Smart . . .

By Dr. Joanne Foster

• In the last issue, my analysis amplified the letter A. This time, I work with the letter B. In upcoming articles in this series, I will extend the material and offer understandings about gifted education and high-ability learners as I move alphabetically from C through Z. I invite parents and teachers to share their perspectives and experiences in “word-bites,” and I will consider how to incorporate these into the mix.

## And the B Goes on . . .

### Being!

- Brainpower—something to be proud of—every day
- Bolster children’s confidence—help them feel good about themselves, even in areas of weakness, where they can learn to be proud of their effort, perseverance, and improvement
- Bored—when children are not sufficiently challenged they often become bored and frustrated and who can blame them?
- Bored (again)—and, then, sometimes being bored is the best way to figure out what one really wants to learn and do
- Benevolence—aside from academics, parents and teachers can help children become kind, compassionate, and contributing members of society
- Better—gifted learners are not better than others; they’re just following their own developmental pathways
- Belonging (rejection can be brutal)—social competence varies from child to child, and has nothing to do with academic competence. Caring adults can assist children in finding that “fit” or friend by talking to them honestly about their giftedness and their concerns about relationships, social norms, and how to build and maintain friendships
- Balance—like everyone, gifted learners have areas of strength and weakness; personal balance involves learning to accept what one can do easily and what is more challenging
- Believe in children—and convey that belief—and they will learn to believe in themselves

### Doing!

- Being smart is just the beginning; actually doing something with one’s capabilities—and putting forth effort—is a lot more important
- Boasting—sometimes “showing your knowing” can be perceived by others as boastful or even arrogant. Children should be encouraged to share their ideas and understandings with pride, but in ways that don’t eclipse others
- Bragging—“My son is sooo smart he can count backwards by threes from 1000. Want to hear?” Be proud, but considerate; pleasant, not pompous.
- Best practice in gifted education—there are many models of and approaches to teaching, and it is next to impossible to label any particular approach as “best practice.” It makes good sense to find out what works most effectively for each child in response to individual needs and nuances
- Busy work (versus meaningful activities)—think about, and act upon, the difference
- Behavioral problems—when learning is pleasurable, motivating, and successful, children are less likely to act out; however, when they experience frustration, boredom, unhappiness, or other concerns, then it’s important to think about the possible underlying reasons for their misbehavior, and to employ proactive, responsive, and preventive strategies (Two cautionary notes: Learning problems can contribute to negative behavioral patterns; be sure to consider that possibility. And, when behavior is aggressive, serious, persistently disruptive, or when children consistently ignore major age-appropri-

ate societal norms, it's time to seek professional help.)

- Bridge any gaps—between what a child is learning in school, and what he needs and wants to learn
- Bullying—can take many forms (aggression may be physical, verbal, written, virtual; bullies may be young or old; and sometimes gifted learners are targeted) and because threatening experiences can compromise a child's development or sense of well-being, bullying behaviors have to be addressed and eradicated in a sensitive, timely, informed manner by schools, parents, and students, working together
- Books—read, enjoy reading, read lots, read together, and encourage children to read

**Stretching!**

- Beyond the curriculum—seek out the atypical, with an emphasis on choice, and various kinds of activities within and outside your community
- Budding—growth is ongoing, as is

learning, and it must be nurtured with continual support that is both sensitive and responsive to individual needs

- Broaden understandings—of what giftedness is all about
- Build networks of support—in areas such as advocacy, instructional methods, team teaching, resource sharing, parenting, and anything else that has an impact on a child's learning and healthy development
- Bring new ideas to the table—bring creative applications to teaching and learning, professional development, counseling and guidance processes, and any approaches that might benefit gifted learners and stimulate and encourage high-level learning
- Brain-based research—this area of study will continue to inform education with respect to how brain functioning and principles of cognitive neuroscience have an impact on teaching and learning processes
- Buzz—create and discover the

countless resources to tap (e.g., websites, conferences, people, webinars, journal articles, workshops)

- Breadth—increasing the scope and sophistication of inquiry will enable children to extend their understandings and learn at a higher, broader, and deeper level

**Author's Note**

Joanne Foster, Ed.D., co-authored the award-winning book *Being Smart About Gifted Education* (2nd ed., 2009). She also is a parent, teacher, consultant, researcher, and education specialist. Dr. Foster has more than 30 years experience working in the field of gifted education. She teaches educational psychology as well as gifted education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. She can be reached at [joanne.foster@utoronto.ca](mailto:joanne.foster@utoronto.ca).



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