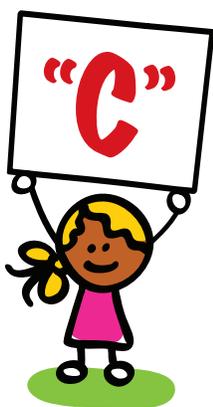


ABC's of Being Smart

By Dr. Joanne Foster

In the last issue, I worked with the letter B. In this piece, I focus on C and continue to categorize the points for readers. In upcoming articles in this series, I will extend the material letter by letter, offering understandings about gifted education and high-ability learners. Parents and teachers are welcome to share their perspectives and experiences with me in “word-bites” and I will consider how to incorporate these into upcoming articles. Be on the lookout, for D is for development.



I Can “C” Clearly Now

Being!

- **Conviction**—determination, enthusiasm, and passion—keys to success
- **Choice**—offering children lots of learning opportunities enables them to grow in various directions
- **Competence**—another word for capability—however, it doesn’t just happen; in order to master something, children have to work hard and not simply rest on their laurels
- **Challenge**—not too cushy, not too complex, but at a comfortable level
- **Cognitive development**—children develop at different rates, and there is considerable diversity in the ways in which they learn
- **Comparison**—avoid comparing children’s abilities; help them appreciate their own unique strengths and also their areas of weakness
- **Common sense**—not the same thing as intellectual prowess, common sense is something that parents can help children develop through modeling and consistent guidance
- **Context**—the milieu in which people work or play (such as home or school) has a direct impact on levels of accomplishment and motivation, and on attitudes toward learning
- **Confidence**—not all high-ability learners are confident in their abilities (academic, social, or other), and some need help with this

- **Culture**—cultural influences should be developed; they have a direct bearing on who we are—and how we learn

Doing!

- **Clarification**—clarify expectations—your own, the school’s, the child’s, and others’—to ensure that demands are well-defined, fair, and flexible
- **Communication**—open channels encourage involvement and strengthen connectivity
- **Control**—children feel respected when rules are dependably enforced, but somewhat flexible, and they’re given age-appropriate autonomy
- **Coping**—to help children become more resilient, and cope effectively in the face of setbacks, answer their questions, allay their fears, listen to their concerns, and suggest resources
- **Courtesy**—be considerate of others in potentially thorny situations, such as meetings with teachers and school administrators
- **Computers**—electronic devices are gateways to learning for today and in the future (although computer time might need to be limited, and supervision is good, especially in the early years)
- **Change**—help children adjust to new programs, friends, challenges, and heightened expectations—be patient and also constructive and caring
- **Compassion**—all children appreciate it when the adults in their world genuinely heed and respect



their feelings—and everyone benefits when this transpires

Stretching!

- **Creativity**—encourage children’s ideas—even the outlandish ones—so they can extend their enthusiasms (what can be more exciting than discovery, innovation, and trying something new?)
- **Critical thinking**—every bit as important as creative thinking and a stepping stone to reasoned inquiry and more sophisticated thought processes
- **Collaboration**—working with others is a great way to learn and to achieve goals, and also to create a rich and engaging learning environment for all children
- **Curiosity**—stimulate a sense of wonder and inquisitiveness—a cool way to motivate anyone!
- **Co-create**—parents, teachers, and children can and should work cohesively to make learning relevant and as motivating as possible
- **Cross-grade and cross-curricular learning**—encourage teachers to look beyond the regular grade, subject, or classroom curriculum in order to tap into enriching material
- **Clubs**—and also competitions and contests—activities that range from recreational pastimes to studies at advanced levels, these extracurricular pursuits enable children to reach out and connect

with others who have similar interests

- **Community**—a good place to play, learn, and work with others; to develop a sense of self; and to acquire a bevy of neighborhood resources!
- **Counseling**—parents and teachers sometimes need help understanding the exceptional developmental needs of children, and sometimes children who are experiencing stressors also benefit from counseling services; consult with professionals to explore the full range of support systems available
- **Congratulations**—for all you do on behalf of gifted and high-ability learners. ☺

Author’s Note

Joanne Foster, Ed.D., is coauthor (with Dona Matthews) of the award-winning book *Being Smart About Gifted Education* (2009, Great Potential Press), now in its second edition. She also is a parent, teacher, consultant, researcher, and education specialist. Dr. Foster has more than 30 years of experience working in the field of gifted education. She has written extensively about high-level development and has presented on a wide range of gifted-related topics at conferences and learning venues all across North America. 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.