

R We There Yet?

Reflecting upon Parents' and Teachers' Roles in Gifted Education

By Dr. Joanne Foster

Parents and teachers often share common goals, and are well-positioned to nurture children's gifted and high-level development by working together to support and enhance learning. Read and ask yourself: R you there yet?

Rationale

No gifted child is alike, which means that developmental pathways differ from one child to the next. It's important, therefore, for us as parents, caregivers, and teachers to always take a step back and reflect on the rationale for why a particular path is appropriate for a specific, individual gifted or high-ability child.

- **Respect**—Every child has individual differences, learning preferences, interests, and areas of strength and weakness.
- **Recognize**—Giftedness has exceptional capability in one or more areas, requiring programming adaptations or differentiated learning experiences.
- **Responsibility**—Facilitate lots of opportunities so children can be the best they can be.
- **Reasonable goals**—Help set objectives that are sensible and realistic.
- **Recommendations**—First, carefully consider the many influences and factors that may have an impact on a child's development.
- **Respond**—Stay flexibly attuned to individual needs, and sensitive to what might affect children emotionally, socially, or academically.



Receptiveness to Change

Just as our children develop and grow physically, their gifted needs will change over time. From time-to-time, parents need to reevaluate their child's situation, be open-minded, and be ready to offer help with children's adjustment to new learning situations or programs.

- **Reassess**—Parents should reevaluate programming on an ongoing and targeted basis, to ensure it remains appropriate.
- **Rightness of instructional methods**—Are they fitting, meaningful, timely?
- **Range**—Understand the importance of an array of learning options that vary with respect to depth and scope.
- **Readiness**—Be mindful of ability (which develops step by step), so children can be properly challenged and happily productive.

- **Realization of limitations**—Be accepting of what a child can and cannot do.
- **Review**—Explore various perspectives, recommendations, processes, goals, and decisions.
- **Rest, recreation, and relaxation**—Downtime is really important for recharging energy and igniting creativity.
- **Realistic**—Recalibrate expectations about the pace of school change and be patient, but persistent.

Resourcefulness

There are a plethora of resources out there to help parents find appropriate experiences for their gifted child. It's important to tap into support systems and community resources, and seek information from multiple sources to facilitate children's play, exploration, learning, and development.

- **Rapport and relationships**—A climate of mutual trust among the child, parents, teachers, and outside supporters is good for everyone.
- **Risk-taking**—Always within reason, and as a way to stretch and extend frontiers.
- **Relevance**—Real-world significance makes learning more interesting; it's a powerful motivator.
- **Record-keeping**—Keep up-to-date information on what's happening in a child's life, and a record of activities that illustrate abilities in different areas.
- **Riches**—Nurture the mind, the creative spirit, and the various social and



emotional dimensions of children's lives to promote well-being.

- **Representation**—Advocate in positive, constructive ways.
- **Resolve**—*Continue* to advocate in positive, constructive ways.

Reassure

Both children and parents occasionally need reassurance that they are not alone. Emphasize that individual differences are normal and accepted, diversity is a strength, and that support is available.

- **Reflect**—Encourage children to take time to think about what matters to them—and why. (Reflection is important for adults, too!)
- **Resilience**—Not everything comes easily, and children often need help seeing

errors as learning opportunities.

- **Reaffirm**—Keep positives in mind—things improve with effort.
- **Reinforce**—Support a child's personal, social, and academic growth.
- **Rally**—Collaborate, share ideas, and join forces with others.
- **Rejoice!**—For lots of very good reasons! ♡

Author's Note

Dr. Joanne Foster is co-author (with Dona Matthews) of *Beyond Intelligence: Secrets for Raising Happily Productive Kids* (2014) and the award-winning *Being Smart about Gifted Education* (2009). She's also the author of *Not Now, Maybe Later: Helping Children Overcome Procrastination* (in press). In addition to *Parenting for High Potential*, Joanne's writing has been featured in numerous publications around the world. She

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