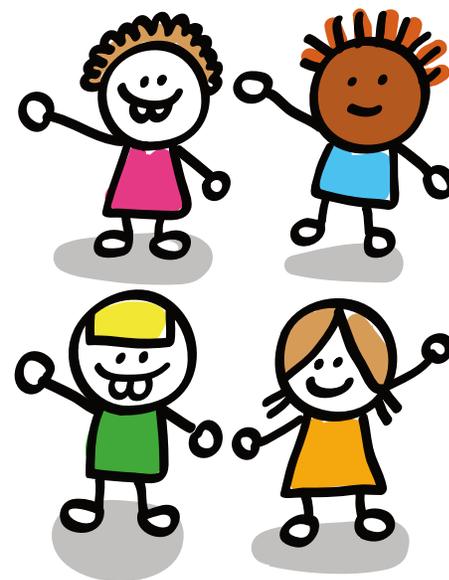


ABCs of Being Smart: S is for Supporting

By Dr. Joanne Foster



Some time ago, I invited *PHP* readers to think about their own versions of the “ABCs of Being Smart.” Judie Becker sent me a scintillating submission that I’m super-satisfied to showcase. I’ve structured her superb suggestions with subheadings so each section speaks to a specific set of strategies.

Support Self-Confidence and Skill-Building

- **Soothe**—Calm the spirit while educating the mind so both work in harmony.
- **Separate**—The giftedness from the child. Even though he may master a subject like an adult, he’s still a child.
- **Sensitivity**—Practice it 24/7, especially when dealing with the social-emotional side of being gifted. Sometimes it’s a struggle, particularly during times of transition, or when a child has difficulty trying to fit in.
- **Space**—Make sure your child has plenty of downtime, including opportunities to relax and daydream.
- **Safe**—Assure your child that whatever he thinks, it’s safe to express himself with you.
- **Stretch**—Encourage your child to expand her comfort zone and to try something she’s never done before, whether she thinks she’ll be good at it or not.
- **Spotlight**—Many strengths and successes lie outside the academic realm, in activities like volunteering or singing in the choir. Encourage your child to become involved, and to share these times with friends.
- **Surround**—Encourage your child to play and connect with a wide circle of children, not just his academic peers.
- **Signals**—Watch for signs that your child is ready for something more challenging.

Support Schooling

- **Share**—With other parents what does and does not work as you move through the gifted education maze.
- **Strengthen**—The bonds between home and school so your child knows that all the adults in her life are working together in her best interest.
- **Search**—Keep looking for the right kinds of interventions to keep your child motivated to learn, such as acceleration, differentiation, ability grouping, curriculum compacting, among others.
- **Synthesize**—Sometimes homework seems fractured. Try weaving the thematic threads together to help your child see the big picture.
- **Spearhead**—If your school district has a parent support group for gifted education, join it. If not, organize one. There’s power in numbers.
- **Simplify**—You can’t change the entire system in a single semester or school year. Prioritize. Decide what’s really important, and work on that first.
- **School**—Make the world your child’s classroom, whether it’s the grocery or the hardware store. There’s an old saying, “A child educated only in school is an uneducated child.”
- **Skill**—What special skill can you offer at your child’s school? Perhaps you could start a student newspaper or an art club.
- **Study**—Be prepared with facts, figures, and a possible plan of action before complaining that your child’s needs are not being met.
- **Sensible**—No one likes a ranting, raging, red-in-the-face parent, so be sensible in your dealings with teachers and administrators.
- **Sounding Board**—Be willing to listen to the parents of other or younger gifted learners who may seek your ear, advice, and recommendations.

Supportive



Support Success!

- **Savor**—Enjoy the uniqueness of your child's giftedness, whatever challenges it presents.
- **Stimulate**—Most machines wear out from rust, not over-use. And so, too, does the brain!
- **Sideline**—Put aside wanting to live through your child's accomplishments. Make sure whatever you're pushing for is what's in his best interest, not your ego's.
- **Show up**—Even if you don't understand robots or you hate chess. Be there for your child when she wants your input, needs your support, or exhibits her special talent.
- **Sureness**—Don't be so sure that you know what's best in every situation. Open your mind and your heart to new ideas from various sources.
- **Speak up**—When you have an opinion, concern, or good idea, let others know. Don't assume that they can read your mind.

- **Sojourn**—The journey of helping your child reach his potential is a very long road. Appreciate the scenery when you reach a pleasant spot along the way.
- **Smile**—Your child's future is vitally important to you, but lighten up. You can accomplish a lot more with a smile than with a furrowed brow.
- **Salute**—You deserve one for advocating strongly and appropriately for your gifted child. ☺

Joanne Foster's article "R We There Yet?" was first published in Parenting for High Potential in 2006, which became the springboard for the "ABCs of Being Smart" series of columns. Back then, Judie Becker, an insightful and enterprising parent from Leawood, KS, responded to the invitation for PHP readers to choose a letter and write a guest column. Judie selected the letter "S." Her submission was subsequently published in PHP in 2007. The content is as originally written, although Dr.

Joanne Foster added subheadings and reorganized the many points accordingly.

Author's Notes

Joanne Foster, Ed.D., is co-author (with Dona Matthews) of *Beyond Intelligence: Secrets for Raising Happily Productive Kids* (2014, Anansi) and the award-winning *Being Smart about Gifted Education* (2009, Great Potential Press). As 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 teaches at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, and writes and presents extensively on a wide range of topics at conferences and learning venues across North America. Her book *Not Now Maybe Later: Helping Children Overcome Procrastination* (Great Potential Press) will be released in early 2015. Visit her website at www.beyondintelligence.net or contact her at joanne.foster@utoronto.ca.