

**Gifted and Talented Parent Meeting**  
**La Porte Independent School District**  
**Fall, 2021**



## COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY WITH YOUR GIFTED CHILD'S SCHOOL

### Preparing to meet with the school

- Begin with your child.
- Collect background information.
- Find out what kinds of program options exist in your child's school.

### Communicating with the teacher

- Always begin with the teacher.
- Plan in advance what you are going to say.
- Keep the discussion focused on the specifics of your child's needs and characteristics rather than on hypothetical or philosophical debate about gifted education.
- Start out thanking the teacher for giving you this time to talk.
- Get straight to the point.
- Be diplomatic, but firm.
- Avoid communicating in a way that makes the teacher feel criticized or misunderstood.
- Expect the teacher to be reasonable and understanding, no matter what you've heard from the other parents or your child.
- Listen carefully to what the teacher says.
- Work for a consensus.
- Before you leave, make sure all your questions have been answered and that you both know what has been resolved.
- Have a timeline for any follow-up steps.
- Thank the teacher for giving you her time and say that you will stay in touch.

### Determining how well your conference went

- Your child was the main focus of the conference, not opinions or agendas.
- Both of you listened to each other and considered each other's point of view.
- You negotiated for solutions that will meet your child's needs without disregarding the teacher's responsibilities or your knowledge of your child.
- You came to an understanding, even if you had different opinions.
- You both agreed to work on a solution that will help your child and to continue to work together.
- You both made commitments and scheduled actions.

### Following up

- Talk regularly with your child and the teacher to see how your child is doing.
- Don't let the burden of the extra work fall entirely on the teacher.

***One more important point to remember:*** The process of advocating for your children will teach them the value of determination and creative problem solving—skills all children need to negotiate the obstacles to their continued progress and achievement. Never underestimate your power! Determined parents have helped to make gifted education what it is today.

Dr. Joan Franklin Smutny, Director of the Center for Gifted at National-Louis University in Evanston, IL

**GT KIDS AND BEHAVIOR:  
SEVEN STRATEGIES TO HELP KIDS (and PARENTS) COPE**

By Christine Fonseca, Online, SENG Community, July 2012

Gifted kids are a unique and challenging group—for teachers and for parents. They view the world through an entirely unique lens, one that is best summed up in one word: *intense*. This intensity refers to how gifted individuals approach life. At its best, intensity is the driving passion that enables some people to achieve amazing things—in any domain. But at its worst, it is the turmoil that has the power to consume these same individuals from time to time as they learn how to manage that aspect of their personality.

Intensity comes in the form of cognitive intensity—those aspects of thinking and processing information that all gifted individuals use to problem solve. It relates to the attributes of focus, sustained attention, creative problem solving, and advanced reasoning skills. Most people think of cognitive intensity as intellect, or “being smart”—all good things.

But a gifted child’s intensity does not stop there. The emotional aspects of a gifted individual are also intense. Emotional intensity refers to the passion gifted people feel daily. It also refers to the extreme highs and lows many gifted people experience throughout their lifetime, causing them to question their own mental stability from time to time. This type of intensity is a natural aspect of giftedness. However, in my experience, it is also one of the most misunderstood attributes—and it is the reason gifted kids sometimes struggle.

Typically, emotional intensity results in a range of behavioral outbursts that can be internal (including moodiness, anxiety, and depression) or external (yelling or crying, temper tantrums, and physical expressions of anger or frustration). Regardless of how a gifted child chooses to demonstrate his or her intensities, there are a lot of things parents and educators can do to help lessen the outburst and help teach their children and students coping strategies.

1. Start early by helping the child talk about his or her emotions. Trust me, they may not want to—but taking the emotions from some raw feeling to a tangible thing that can be defined is an important first step in learning to control the behavior. Further, the development of an emotional vocabulary can assist in providing a common language with which to discuss emotions and behavior.
2. Help the child discover his or her unique escalation cycle. Likewise, know your own. Gifted kids have considerable talent for pushing a teacher’s or parent’s buttons. Knowing the things that push you over the edge will enable you to remain calm during emotional outbursts, whatever form they may take. Further, helping children discover their escalation pattern will give them a chance to learn to manage and redirect their feelings and emotions before they become too overwhelming.
3. Once the child can identify his or her pattern of escalation, work with him/her to make a plan for what to do when he/she is overwhelmed—when life becomes too intense. This plan should include a way to relax and redirect his/her energy away from the emotional throngs of intensity.
4. Should the explosion happen anyway, it is important to remain calm and create a distance between your emotions and the child’s. Anger and frustration always beget

## Tips for Parents

From Jean Peterson, Ph.D., Purdue University, author of Gifted at Risk: Profiles in Poetry and the Essential Guide to Talking with Gifted Teens

- Help them know that their being loved doesn't depend on their performance or achievement. Assure them with your actions that your love is unconditional.
  - Be a parent, but also a human being—imperfect, vulnerable, sometimes insecure, sometimes strong, sometimes weak. They need permission to be human, as well.
  - Value them as sons and daughters, not just as fulfillers-of-dreams or as central to your self-esteem. Value them for “being,” not just “doing.” Have enough of a life not to be dependent on, or to overvalue, their accomplishment.
  - Support effort. Give extended, not terminal, feedback.
  - Encourage activities that aren't “graded.” Beware of over scheduling. Help them learn to conquer boredom themselves.
  - Model play. Model balance. Model appropriate risk-taking—i.e., in areas where you are not sure you can be “excellent.”
  - Model kindness to yourself when you make mistakes.
  - Model clear expressions of feelings. They need to know that feelings don't have to be feared, denied, or displaced.
  - Be a parent-friend, not a peer-friend. Above all, be a parent. Let them be kids.
  - Encourage them to talk with someone when they feel they can't talk with you.
  - Model a good level of assertiveness. Know where you “begin” and where you “end.” Be clear about what is their responsibility and what is yours. That will help them to take care of themselves when you are not available.
  - Model good coping—with stress, challenge, competition, “mountains.” You are an important teacher of coping skills.
  - Beware of over functioning. Let them make mistakes, “fail,” create their own style, arrange their own room, learn to problem-solve. These are important, educational experiences. You will be contributing to their resilience and self-confidence.
  - Take note of your negative, critical messages. They are heard and have impact.
  - Know that it is normal for them to be angry with you at times, especially during adolescence. It helps them become “separate—but connected” eventually.
  - Model respect for others, other kinds of intelligence, other views.
  - Model support for the system. Help them to understand the system. Teach them how to advocate for themselves. Be wise advocates when you feel the need to intercede.
  - Encourage them to be “selfish” regarding the system. They need to have it work for them. You had to learn how to deal with your world, and they also can use their intelligence to figure out how to deal with theirs.
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## FAQs from Parents of Gifted Students

### ***What can I do if my child is an underachiever?***

- Consider whether you're constantly pushing him to do more than he's comfortable doing. If he feels he can't possibly live up to your goals for him no matter how hard he tries, he may simply stop trying.
- Some gifted children resolve conflicts within themselves by mentally "dropping out."
- Some gifted children find that underachieving can be a good way to get even with parents, especially near the teen years. Counseling might help a family like this to confront some deeper issues. However, sometimes even counseling won't help. Students have to ultimately make their own choices.
- Work with your child on developing organizational skills. Help him strike a balance between being creative and being organized.

### ***What kinds of activities are best for my child at home?***

- Read a story and leave the ending unfinished so your child can complete it.
- Compare and contrast two different TV programs, create a different ending to a program, or evaluate the worth of a particular program.
- Suggest your child group or classify collections in different ways.
- Encourage her to think up different uses for household objects or new inventions to solve old problems.
- Allow even young children to choose between two clothing choices and ask her why she made that choice.
- Share your hobbies and interests with your child. Share the wonder of the world in the form of books, trips, and people. Discuss ideas.

### ***My daughter is always saying she's bored at school. How can I tell if the work is inappropriate or if she's just lazy?***

- Start by talking to your child's teacher.
- Explain to your child that life is not always fun. Everyone gets bored at times, and there are things we have to do that we don't want to do.
- Teach your child to fool around with mind games, puns, or other challenges to keep her mind busy when there is "down" time.

### ***My very bright son wants to read all of the time. What should I do?***

- Let him read a great deal of the time when he wants to, but also introduce him to the joys of going for a walk, playing a game, and playing with other children.
- Work to make certain that he maintains a balance of physical and mental activity.

### ***My very bright child never wants to do anything but work at the computer. What should I do?***

- Get him books and magazines about subjects he likes.
- Make time to go for a walk and talk about his interests.
- Plan outings and enjoy physical activity together.
- Be sure to monitor what he is doing on the computer and with whom he is communicating.

### ***I think that my child is smarter than I am. Is there anything special I need to know or do?***

- Don't be intimidated by your child's IQ, even if it is astronomical.
- You've lived longer than your child, and you have more wisdom. You need to be the one who is in control.

## Gifted Websites for Parents

[www.gifted.uconn.edu](http://www.gifted.uconn.edu) University of Connecticut Renzulli Center, a leader in giftedness, creativity and talent development

[www.hoagiesgifted.org](http://www.hoagiesgifted.org) An all-things gifted site for kids, parents and educators

[www.mensaforkids.org/play/games](http://www.mensaforkids.org/play/games) Array of advanced games designed for all levels

[www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org) The National Association for Gifted Children

[www.sengifted.org](http://www.sengifted.org) Nonprofit network that supports and guides GT and twice-exceptional students

[www.texaspsp.org](http://www.texaspsp.org) All you need to know about the Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP)

[www.txgifted.org](http://www.txgifted.org) TX Association for the Gifted and Talented website includes information about publications, policy and upcoming events