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Between the Lines

Dorothy Knopper

Do you have a degree?:

“BA Gifted Parenting
Major: Common Sense”

There is no university that issues a degree in parenting. The skills for that very special profession must be learned by experience.

And if we happen to be parents of gifted and talented children, that role is even more difficult! Just as gifted children have very special needs, their parents require special support and a special understanding of parenting techniques.

This letter is directed to those of you living with a small person who possesses a large mind and an abundance of creativity.

I hear you saying, “Help!”

Parenting the gifted child is common sense parenting. It’s not easy - but it is worthwhile!

Love, laughter, listening ... These are the key elements not only of parenting the gifted but of parenting all children!

Love ... because gifted children need affection, caring, touching. Their emotions are intense and they need to know they are loved, and to express their love. Love is the primary ingredient of all parenting.

Laughter ... because you can’t survive the parenting of a gifted child unless you have a sense of humor. You have to laugh at them and with them, and at yourself.

Dorothy Knopper is the mother of three grown and successful gifted children and an ardent gifted supporter. She is the founder of the Beyond Giftedness conference, now in its 19th year, and the developer of the current Understanding Our Gifted Journal which will begin its 25th year this fall.
Listening. . because gifted children, who have so much to say, need to be listened to, and they need to listen to others. This is difficult because many gifted youngsters never stop talking. But whoever said parenting was easy?

Parents of gifted children have several roles, in addition to the supportive parent role. The role of working with your child’s school is crucial to quality parenting. Keep in close touch with your school. Know your child’s teachers. Offer to help if possible. Be supportive. Above all, be positive (even if you don’t always feel that way). Your child will be influenced by your positive attitude. Help to improve education for all children.

Another role of parents of bright children is that of an advocate for gifted and talented education. Read about gifted education; be knowledgeable. Support your local parent group; attend meetings. It’s comforting to know there are other parents who share your concerns. You’re not alone! Be informed about what’s going on in your state, and support legislation for gifted education. Again, maintain a positive attitude, not an adversarial one!

Whether or not your child’s needs are being successfully met in school, you, as a parent, can do much more to enrich his or her learning. Investigate your community; there are many free and inexpensive resources that you can enjoy together. Take advantage of your local library. Reading is exciting! Provide a messy place for your child to create - to glue, paint, take apart.

As productive adults we lead busy lives, but it’s the quality of parenting that’s important. Include your child in the dinner table discussion, share family responsibilities, be consistent, and be honest. Gifted children need to know why. They may not agree but at least they’d understand if you explain why. Don’t forget the sunset at the end of the day; take time to enjoy it with your child!

Don’t expect your child to be gifted all the time. Let your child be a child. He doesn’t always have to be learning. Don’t pressure. Gifted children put enough pressure on themselves. Treat him as an individual, with strengths and weaknesses, who also happens to be gifted and talented. Let your gifted child become rather than making him be.

Relax and enjoy your child.

While none of us will achieve the above imaginary degree, we can provide our gifted and talented child - indeed all our children - with challenge, support, encouragement, motivation, love, and the opportunity to develop to his or her full potential.
Making Connections

Listed below are links to websites featuring information on assessment. We hope you find them informative.

• There is a Tiger comic strip featuring two little boys and Stripe, the dog. First little boy says “I taught Stripe how to whistle.” Second boy listens to Stripe and says “I don’t hear him whistling.” First boy responds “I said I taught him. I didn’t say he learned it!” We weren’t able to reprint the comic due to copyright issues, but you can see it on the University of Connecticut’s website. To see their explanation of “Why Assessment?” visit www.assessment.uconn.edu.

• The Duke University Talent Identification Program (TIP) offers a Testing section in its Digest of Gifted Research. Of particular interest are Testing Your Gifted Child: A Springboard for Effective Advocacy and IQ Tests & Gifted Children links. http://www.tip.duke.edu/taxonomy/term/1230

• A comprehensive list of assessments and tests can be found on Hoagies Gifted website at http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/tests.htm#wj.

• For an indepth look at how assessment issues affect the identifying of gifted minority students look at this article from The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/nrcgt/reports/rm95204/rm95204.pdf

• The College of William and Mary provides a good description of Formative Assessment and why it’s important on their website http://education.wm.edu/centers/ttac/resources/articles/assessment/forgottenart/index.php

• John Wasserman gives parents recommendations on the subject of assessment on the Davidson Institute for Talent Development’s website http://www.davidsongifted.org/db/Articles_id_10405.aspx
Understanding the Benefits of Assessment

Lisa Conrad

“Genius is what one accomplishes in life, not the score one makes on a test of mental ability.”

~ William E. Benet, Ph.D., Psy.D.

“All children are gifted” is one of those phrases that send shivers down the spine of a gifted advocate and probably yours, too. Yes, all children may possess gifts, but not all children are academically gifted. That alone is one of the strongest arguments for having your child assessed by a trained professional if you believe they may be gifted. The Department of Education in New Zealand (TKI) defines assessment as, “the process of gathering, analyzing, interpreting, and using information about students’ progress and achievement to improve teaching and learning.” In essence, this is the same goal of a gifted assessment.

There are many aspects to being gifted which is why a full-scale assessment is recommended. It is much more indicative of a child’s overall ability. Unfortunately, parents cannot rely solely on their child’s school to do this. It simply is not economically feasible for most school districts to provide this service; and if they do test your child, placement too often boils down to one test and one number … 130. An IQ score above 130 and they’re in the gifted program; under 130, they’re possibly denied any services at all. It’s not supposed to be this way. And to be clear, IQ tests are used to measure intelligence within the general population, not only the gifted population. Should a child receive the highest ‘possible’ score, the results may be meaningless. A better means of testing is using out of level tests similar to those used in Talent Searches.

Lisa Conrad is the author of “Gifted Parenting Support” (blog) and frequent contributor to Global #gtchat on Twitter. She has been a gifted advocate for the past 15 years and is the parent of two gifted young adults.
One of the first challenges parents of a gifted child face is to understand the importance of having a comprehensive assessment of their child to determine appropriate school placement. Some of the factors a parent may want to consider before proceeding with a full assessment are:

• What does this type of assessment encompass?
• Will it make a difference in my child’s educational placement?
• How will the findings be used?
• How will it affect my child’s future?
• Am I prepared to respond to the results of an assessment?

**What does this type of assessment encompass?**

It should include a variety of different types of assessments such as standardized tests (IQ and achievement tests), performance assessments (writing prompts, open-ended questions, portfolios), and checklists. Interviews with the parents and child may also be conducted, but they should not be weighted as heavily as other formats due to potential bias on the part of the interviewer. It is important to remember that any test must produce defensible data – information based on facts. Those who produce the test must be able to prove they are valid and reliable in how the results are reported. It is equally important that the tester is trained in dealing with gifted children. (NAGC)

**Will it make a difference in my child’s educational placement?**

If your school district does not accept outside findings and your primary goal is simply entrance to a G.A.T.E. or TAG program, then this must be taken into consideration. Otherwise, you will need to accept the school’s testing model. However, if your school is open to the idea or you are considering alternative placements, this is definitely the way to proceed.

There is a wide array of possible services to be considered when implementing a program based on your child’s assessment, but availability differs greatly between school districts. Pull-out programs, acceleration, ability-grouping with intellectual peers, dual-enrollment during high school, early entrance to college, and independent study are all potential options.

**How will the findings be used?**

Information from a formal assessment can be an excellent tool for gifted administrators and teachers who are responsible for writing your child’s education plan. It can assist in determining grade-level placement, the need for enrichment beyond the regular classroom curriculum, and knowing which teaching strategies will achieve successful outcomes.

**How will it affect my child’s future?**

All these things can have a profound affect on your child’s life if they are properly implemented after assessment. Consider the difference between a child sitting in a
classroom bored day after day and one who is challenged on a daily basis by a teacher who understands their needs and mentors them. To borrow terminology from Special Education, a parent wants their child in the Least Restrictive Environment.

**Am I prepared to respond to the results of an assessment?**

For years, parents have deferred to schools to decide how their child will be educated and also be the sole provider of that education. Times have changed since you were in school. Parents need to be proactive in requesting appropriate accommodations. It can be a difficult process.

In a report from the U.S. Department of Education, entitled “National Excellence: A Case for Developing America’s Talent” (U.S. Department of Education), it was determined that “The United States is squandering one of its most precious resources – the gifts, talents, and high interests of many of its students.” It went on to say, “Today, researchers know that intelligence takes many forms and therefore requires that many criteria be used to measure it.” That report was written in 1993. Eighteen years later, we are still in the same situation; if not worse.

Identification is a means to an end. It provides a basis for building self-esteem and self-identity for a gifted child. Parents must take the lead in requesting appropriate assessments and then follow through by advocating for their child. Advocacy has stagnated in part because parents have not been willing to raise the bar. The way forward has been known for more than fifty years and is well documented in voluminous studies. Will gifted children continue to languish in classrooms which are ill-prepared to meet their needs or thrive in educational settings where they are free to soar?

**References**

http://www.assessmentpsychology.com

TKI, Te Kete Tpurangi
http://assessment.tki.org.nz


Stephen Schroeder-Davis
has coordinated gifted programs in Elk River, MN for 31 years and teaches in the Saint Mary’s Gifted Certificate Program, which he created. Steve’s Master and Doctoral degrees focused on gifted issues, and his dissertation won the John C. Gowan Doctoral Research Award at NAGC’s forty-third annual conference. Steve writes and presents frequently on issues relevant to gifted students and their advocates.

Content Standards: High Stakes Anti-Differentiation

Stephen Schroeder-Davis

Author’s Note: This column is dedicated to those students whom I perceive to be our most at-risk population: intellectuals.

In 1963, Richard Hofstadter elucidated the crucial distinction between intelligence, which “works within the framework of limited but clearly stated goals,” and the intellect, which “examines, ponders, wonders, theorizes criticizes, imagines.” Hofstadter went on to observe in education, “it has never been doubted that . . . the development of intelligence is a goal of central importance; but the extent to which education should foster intellect has been a matter of the most heated controversy, and the opponents of intellect in most spheres have exercised preponderant power.”

Psychologist Raymond Catell drew a similar distinction in cognitive capacities, describing crystallized intelligence as the ability to use skills, knowledge, and experience, and fluid intelligence as the capacity to think logically and solve problems in novel situations, even in the absence of previously acquired knowledge. Crystallized intelligence relies heavily on accessing information from long-term memory, whereas fluid intelligence requires more divergent, creative thinking, the capacity to make new connections between and across previously unrelated ideas.

For the purposes of this article, I would like to simplify these distinctions and consider intelligence to be essentially convergent thinking, the kind of “one correct answer” aptitude primarily assessed on standardized tests, and intellect as complex problem solving, metacognition, higher levels of Bloom, and divergent thinking. Currently, American schooling, driven by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and
standardized tests, emphasizes development of intelligence. Because of this, teachers must heavily emphasize acquisition of foundational information (facts) in lectures, assessments, and of course, time-consuming test preparation, at the expense of intellect, that constellation of thought processes teachers are being told will be necessary in the 21st century.

The pernicious emphasis on domain-specific intelligence and content knowledge, and the concomitant neglect of developing intellect and critical thinking, is easily illustrated by examining the kinds of questions that appear on (and are absent from) these high stakes assessments. The following examples typify the nature of the questions appearing on standardized tests. These are from the 10th grade Language Arts Massachusetts’s Comprehensive Assessments:

Which of the following is the best definition of the word serendipitous as it is used in paragraph 14?
A. fun
B. profitable
C. worthy
D. lucky

What is the message of the first verse of “The Times They Are A-Changin’”
A. Changes in society are about to occur.
B. Changes in society can cause confusion
C. Most people will embrace changes in society.
D. Creative people can make changes in society.

Writing Prompt
In many works of literature, a character must adjust to life in a new environment. From a work of literature you have read in or out of school, select a character who must adjust to life in a new environment. In a well-developed composition, identify the character, describe how the character adjusts to life in a new environment, and explain how the character’s adjustment relates to the work as a whole.

These assessment questions demand algorithmic thinking rather than heuristic thinking. The On-line Dictionary definition of algorithm is “a finite set of unambiguous instructions performed in a prescribed sequence to achieve a goal.” Algorithmic thinkers follow a defined set of steps to reach a “right” answer. In contrast, the On-line Dictionary defines heuristic as “of or constituting an educational method in which learning takes place through discoveries that result from investigations made by the student.” Heuristic thinkers explore relationships to develop deep understanding and come up with novel solutions. The assessment items above are the wrong questions to be asking if we want our students to become heuristic rather than algorithmic thinkers.
Let’s examine the kind of thinking these test items require. The first question—What’s the best definition of serendipitous in paragraph 14?—provides the context for the answer (the test taker needs to consult paragraph 14), and offers four competing possibilities. Aside from the fact that a guess would identify the correct answer 25% of the time, there is one and only one “best answer,” obtained by scanning the paragraph to get the context, and then comparing the apparent meaning given there with the word meaning stored in personal memory. The second question—What is the message of the first verse of “The Times They Are A-Changin’?”—is similarly closed, as there are four options, and only one is “correct.”

Come gather ’round people
Wherever you roam
And admit that the waters
Around you have grown
And accept it that soon
You’ll be drenched to the bone.
If your time to you
Is worth savin’
Then you better start swimmin’
Or you’ll sink like a stone
For the times they are a-changin’.

An interpretive question with one right answer and no opportunity to defend a response diverging from some assessor’s opinion should discomfit those wanting students to think outside the box, as some students’ responses may differ from the “answer key,” but these students have no means of explaining their interpretation; their answer is simply “wrong” because it differs from the test constructor’s opinion. The third question, the writing prompt about a literary character’s adjustment to a new environment, is a marginal improvement, but still allows for only limited creativity, as the structure of the response is dictated to the student. Worse, the people scoring the writing cannot assess the depth, perceptiveness, or quality of the student-respondent’s analysis; they can respond only to the overt structure and quality of the writing itself. The assessors must rely on their own algorithmic thinking to score the quality of the essay.

In sum, the first two test items above call for crystallized intelligence and/or an ability to guess what the test designers want for an answer. The writing prompt provides the following algorithm: “select, identify, provide, explain,” rather than a truly open-ended prompt, such as “In what ways can a change in the setting of a story engender changes in the characters in the story? Provide an example that illustrates your response.” The astute reader may note the above alternative test question suggests it is possible for a standardized test to facilitate evaluation of heuristic thinking, but the time necessary to score such an evaluation, and cognitive sophistication of the evaluator, must both increase. Here are two questions that don’t appear on standardized tests because they would be too expensive and too time-consuming to “correct,” and more to the point, have no one “correct” answer:

There are currently two versions of the classic novel Huckleberry Finn in
publication. One is the original version by Mark Twain, the other an alternative version published by New South Books, which has created an enormous publication controversy. Research the issue, and write a commentary supporting one of the two versions, and be sure to include your opinion of the potential ramifications if your view was to prevail.

Answer one of these questions from your personal perspective:
Discuss how prejudice and discrimination are not only harmful to the victim, but also to those who practice them.

Or

Is it possible to grow to adulthood without harboring some prejudice? Why or why not? Apply your thinking to yourself.

Even if we were to allow that tests like the Massachusetts’s MSA assess something of value, it is only one of several such tests students must take, and combined with the test preparation most schools and students must endure, time is all but eliminated for teachers and students to “examine, ponder, wonder, theorize criticize and imagine.”

Ironically, the accountability movement, championed largely by American business leaders, negates what these same leaders purport to desire from high school graduates, namely, the ability to create, innovate, communicate, collaborate, think critically, and problem solve.

Tragically, NCLB and its myopic clone, Race to the Top actually establish a race to the bottom, leaving virtually everyone behind: Teachers, deprived of autonomy

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Write for Understanding Our Gifted

*Understanding Our Gifted* is published quarterly as an online publication. The schedule and themes for upcoming issues are:

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*Understanding Our Gifted*, Fall 2011
and higher purpose, are left to “master” test preparation, and students, also deprived of autonomy and purpose, are left to “master” test taking. While laws can enforce compliance, they do not foster engagement, so it should surprise no one that the first victims of our current assessment debacle are the intellectuals—both teacher and student—who long for time to move beyond simple convergent thinking to divergent, creative, and critical thought.

What Do Schools Currently Assess?

Before addressing the question above, it should be emphasized that the content standards and standardized tests accompanying NCLB are being superimposed on a structure that is already breathtaking in its degree of standardization: Because students are placed in grades irrespective of their readiness level, teachers are forced to teach to an age-based median in classes that encompass virtually the entire range of human differences, and then are expected to see that all students in all tested areas are “proficient” at the same time! The patent absurdity of such an expectation has finally dawned on the staff in the Federal Government, as Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recently stated to congress, “By mandating and prescribing one-size-fits-all solutions, No Child Left Behind took away the ability of local and state educators to tailor solutions to the unique needs of their students.”

The late, brilliant, and sorely missed Gerald Bracey evidenced considerably more prescience when he addressed NCLB in his blog on June 20, 2002: “The No Child Left Behind Act is a trap. Its purpose is to ensnare public schools and kill them. Districts and schools that fail to make AYP—and that will be virtually all of them—are subject to increasingly severe—and unworkable—sanctions.” Nine years after Bracey’s blog, Secretary Duncan projected an 80% school “failure” rate, according to his report to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce this past March. There are many inherent flaws in NCLB, and Bracey and many others have addressed these eloquently. My focus here is the fact that standardized tests and state standards are content-based, and therefore cannot effectively prepare students for their future, even without NCLB’s flawed timetable and proficiency expectations.

If schools are to prepare students to thrive beyond high school, they will have to reconcile two of the most powerful and counterpoised contemporary educational initiatives: rigid content standards that assume all students need to know the same things at the same time to the same degree of proficiency; and differentiation, which promotes the idea that students have markedly different readiness, interest, and learning style profiles.

Standards are the wrong answer to the question, “What do our students need to succeed in their future?” I don’t think education can succeed until teachers are allowed to go beyond content standards and focus on the thinking processes that
will allow students to succeed in whatever future awaits them. Educator Marion Brady calls this an “Any Century Curriculum” (www.marionbrady.com). In Brady’s vision, standards wouldn’t determine what to teach, but what teaching should produce: vibrant, curious, creative, entrepreneurial, problem-seeking and problem-solving critical thinkers.

In a 2008 article published in Education Week, Brady described four different ways schools can assess students:

1. Find out how many answers students know
2. Find out what students do when they don’t know an answer
3. Determine what students can actually do with their answers
4. Determine what students do when no one knows the answer

The latter two assessments would be both authentic as well as transferable, and the fourth in particular would require the intellect that Hofstadter (Dewey, Gardner, Daniel Pink, Sternberg, McTighe, Wiggins, Dagget and many, many others) have advocated for decades.

**What Should Schools Assess?**

The types of assessments, and therefore the kind of curriculum, our students need have existed since Socrates and can be described very generally as “inquiry-based.” The following are examples of what I believe would begin to constitute an excellent curriculum, and the assessments derived from that curriculum would allow our students to succeed in any century.

From Robert Sternberg:

• Physics: Discover the fundamental physical principle that underlies all of the following problems, each of which differs from the others in its “surface structure.”

• Architecture: Render practical a proposed design for a building that will not work in the aesthetic context of the surrounding buildings, which are over 100 years old.

• Science: What responsibility do we have, if any, to future generations to act on global warming now before it gets much worse?

• History: Are wars ever justified?

From Marion Brady’s free Connections curriculum:

• List some patterns for (a) interpersonal communication, (b) automobile traffic, (c) wind, (d) the behavior of a close friend.

• Do some societies have ideas and values that are superior to those of other societies? Explain and give reasons for your explanation.

• Do all societies share some “universal” ideas and values? If so, what are they? How do you know?

I would like to close with a question posed by Marion Brady to illustrate the kind of open-ended, inquiry-based questions that students would enjoy addressing and assessors – if they are anything like me – would love to examine as part of an on-going dialogue with students.
Question: How can buying a pair of socks be a life or death decision?

(Brady’s answer): If the socks purchased are knitted in an emerging country that uses fossil fuel to run machines the fossil fuels contribute to global warming which contributes to unstable weather patterns increasing natural catastrophes that destroy infrastructure reducing the money available for health care which can ultimately result in increased mortality, which is a life and death issue! (an intellectual, divergent thinker would come up with additional responses, as there is no one right answer to the question).

References
Brady, M. “A ‘21st century education’: What does it mean?” Education Week, February 27, 2008.
Sternberg, R. J. Educational Researcher, Vol. 32, No. 8, pp. 5–9, Nov. 2003
Fordham Institute Releases New Study

On September 20, 2011, The Fordham Institute released a study by Yun Xiang, Michael Dahlin, John Cronin, Robert Theaker and Sarah Durant titled *Do High Flyers Maintain Their Altitude? Performance Trends of Top Students*. This study, produced in partnership with the Northwest Evaluation Association, follows student progress from elementary through high school. The findings suggest that while many high flyers maintain their status, a large enough percentage falls below the 90th percentile to cause concern. To view the report, visit the Fordham Institute website.

The report has sparked comments from supporters and critics alike. Here are some links to both points of view:

Those in Favor:


On The Other Hand:

http://greatlakescenter.org/docs/Think_Twice/TT_Lee_HighFlyers.htm

http://www.edweek.org/media/fordhamcrit-blog.pdf
In The News

The College of William & Mary’s Center for Gifted Education (CFGE) recently announced the first issue of their new online newsletter. The goal of The Bridge “is to serve as a catalyst in efforts to ‘bridge the gap’ between the scholarly research that seeks to advance knowledge within the field and the teachers, administrators and practitioners who are on the ground floor interacting with gifted children.” To read the newsletter, click on The Bridge logo above.

Lawmakers Show Interest in Education Gap

October 5, 2011 featured a gifted education briefing on Capitol Hill. The briefing was hosted by the Council for Exceptional Children and the National Association for Gifted Children. The sponsors were U.S. Representatives Elton Gallegly (R-CA) and Donald Payne (D-NJ). Payne and Gallegly are cosponsors of the bill To Aid Gifted and High-Ability Learners by Empowering the Nation’s Teachers (TALENT) Act. Presenters Jonathan Plucker of Indiana University and Donna Ford of Vanderbilt University provided evidence that the gifted and talented students in the United States, particularly minority or disadvantaged students, are not receiving the support they need in the classroom to fully develop their talents. More information on the briefing can be found on the CEC website. This press release also provides links to additional information.
RtI and Comprehensive Assessment: Are they Opposed?

Cheryl Franklin-Rohr

Some parents and teachers are under the misconception that comprehensive assessment for identifying learning disabilities is not allowed under the Response to Intervention (RtI) framework. I want to explain how assessment works within RtI to help students with disabilities and to give some guidelines on how to understand this framework.

Response to Intervention, or RtI, promotes a well-integrated system connecting general, compensatory, gifted, and special education in providing high quality, standards-based instruction and intervention that are matched to students’ academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. There are three levels to this framework (see diagram on next page). Tier 1 (or Universal) is at the classroom level, where research-based, first-time instruction and differentiation are delivered to meet the needs of all students. With high quality instruction plus appropriate differentiation, 80% of students will make progress, and their instructional needs will be met. About 15% of students do not make adequate progress in Tier 1, so they advance to Tier 2 (Targeted) instruction. At this level, students receive additional instruction in the specific area where skills are missing or adequate growth is not occurring. This instruction may happen in the classroom or in small group instruction with another teacher. Finally, approximately 5% of students require more individualized interventions, and they progress to Tier 3 (Intensive) instruction. Using this customized approach, teachers are able to scaffold material so that students with more complex needs can demonstrate adequate growth.
The above diagram is available on the Colorado Department of Education’s (CDE) website, and there is more information if you want to investigate further. (http://www.cde.state.co.us/rti/LearnAboutRtI.htm)

There is nothing in RtI that indicates that schools are not allowed to give assessments to determine specific areas of need. On CDE’s website, it mentions that parents can request a “Comprehensive Evaluation” at any time if they suspect their child has a disability, and schools must complete this assessment within 60 days. This request needs to be written and sent to the principal. Many schools will use the RtI process during that 60-day time period to evaluate the student’s response to a variety of instructional methods. From the CDE website:

“If a parent requests an immediate evaluation, schools should explain the problem-solving process and the services the child will receive during the documentation period. Schools may not talk parents out of requesting an evaluation; however, it is
expected that parents will be informed of what the current evaluation practices are. If parents request a traditional assessment, schools will not be expected to administer an IQ and Achievement assessment. Determination of a Specific Learning Disability will be dependent on information collected through a problem-solving process.” (http://www.cde.state.co.us/rti/downloads/PDF/QandA_RtIModel.pdf)

The main difference with previous assessment procedures and current practice is the purpose of the assessments. Previously, a battery of assessments was given, no matter what the problem seemed to be. Now, diagnostic assessments in the specific area(s) of concern are used to provide in-depth, reliable assessment of targeted skills. Their major purpose is to provide information for planning more effective instruction and intervention.

As a parent, you need to be mindful of this purpose when you request an immediate evaluation. If you have some data from a grade level cognitive screening, like the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) or the Naglieri Non-verbal Abilities Test (NNAT2), this can be used as part of the information. If the data is more than 3 years old, generally the school will want more current cognitive data. This cognitive data is important because most school districts require this data as part of their gifted identification procedures, even though it is not usually required for learning disability assessments.

One of the most frequent concerns voiced by parents is that districts refuse this request. Usually, this would indicate the school does not suspect the student has a disability. However, you should know your rights as a parent, and one resource for you is the Wright’s Law website at http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/advo.index.htm, Many times, parents will give up when they meet obstacles, but you should seek out support and make sure your questions are answered. As I told my sister when her son was having problems in school, “This may be the most difficult struggle you will ever have.” You can’t give up on your child, and your child cannot be left behind.

The purpose of RtI is to make sure that we don’t wait until our students are two years behind before we can look at identifying a Learning Disability. As a parent, you need to know your rights and how to best advocate for your child. The best way to do this is to be informed of the policies and procedures in your district.

Cheryl Franklin-Rohr is the Gifted and Talented Coordinator for Adams 14 School District and is on the Twice-Exceptional Cadre for the state of Colorado. She received her Masters in Gifted and Talented from UNC in 1986 and recently completed her Special Education Directors Licensure.
If you haven’t discovered Graeme Base, yet, you’re missing one of the greatest writer/illustrators of our time. Graeme Base is an Australian author who writes and illustrates children’s books (although there are those who would argue with the age limitations of that description) that are so much more than a story with pictures. Here are some of his books. For a complete list, visit http://www.graemebase.com/publish/index.html.

**Animalia** is an alliterative alphabet book containing twenty-six illustrations, one for each letter of the alphabet. Each illustration features a short poem utilizing the letter of the page for many of the words (Ingenious Iguanas Improvising an Intricate Impromptu on Impossibly Impractical Instruments). The illustrations contain many other objects beginning with that letter that the reader can try to identify. As an additional challenge, the author has hidden a picture of himself as a child in every picture. In 1987, Animalia won the title of Honour Book in the Children’s Book Council of Australia Picture Book of the Year Awards. [citation needed] In 1996, a tenth anniversary edition was released.

**The Waterhole** is a fusion of counting book, puzzle book, storybook and art book. Graeme Base takes the reader on a journey of discovery, from the plains of Africa and the jungles of the Amazon to the woodlands of North America and the deserts of the Australian outback. As one rhino gives way to two tigers, with three toucans waiting in the wings, the tale unfolds on many levels. Page by page the numbers increase as the animals come to their water hole to
drink. But at the same time, the cast of frogs frolicking by the water hole is diminishing. What is going on?

**The Eleventh Hour** contains a curious mystery. When Horace the elephant turns eleven, he celebrates in style by inviting his exotic friends to a splendid costume party. But a mystery is afoot, for in the midst of the games, music, and revelry, someone has eaten the birthday feast! Rhyming text and detailed illustrations provide clues to help readers find out who committed the crime. It has short puzzles with hidden letters, morse code, mirrors, substitution ciphers (A=1, B=2, C=3...) that are integrated into the illustrations.

**Jungle Drums** is a lesson of being comfortable with who you are. Ngiri Mdogo is the smallest warthog in Africa. The Bigger Warthogs tease him; the Other Animals disregard him (as well as the other warthogs). What happens when Ngiri receives magic drums from Old Nyumba the Wildebeest and starts making wishes wreaks havoc on both warthogs and the other animals resulting in a lesson about judging a book by its cover.

**Uno’s Garden** is a math lesson within a social/environmental lesson. Uno’s decision to live in the forest brings unexpected results when others follow. As a community grows, what happens to the plants and animals? Eventually, the jungle becomes a city. Can Uno’s decedents right the imbalance? And, what happens to the Snortlepig?

**The Sign of the Seahorse** is a Tale of Greed and High Adventure in Two Acts. Told in four-line verse, it is the story of Gropmund Grouper’s attempt to swindle the residents of Reeftown out of their homes and money. His plot is foiled by Pearl Trout, her brother, Finneus, and Corporal Bert of the Soldiercrab Army. The tale is involved and better for children seven years and up.

The beauty of Graeme Base’s books is not just the illustrations or clever stories, but the layers of both. Younger children will enjoy looking at the illustrations and hearing the stories. Older children will become involved in the hidden meanings, challenges, and mysteries that will keep even the highly gifted engaged and entertained.
Beyond Giftedness XIX

Join us at Beyond Giftedness XIX, the annual conference for parents, teachers and counselors!

As an attendee you will enjoy...

• Keynote by Lou Lloyd-Zannini
• Breakout sessions for parents, teachers, counselors and administrators
• Networking time with peers
• Browsing the exhibits
• Continental breakfast and lunch
• Information you can use with the gifted kids in your life
• Certificates of Attendance available

Keynote Speaker
Lou Lloyd-Zannini

Critical Connections or Hokey Hook-ups?

In an age when everyone seems to be worried about being totally connected, we often confuse the truly critical connections that make a world of difference in the lives of our gifted and talented kids with hokey hook-ups that do nothing but interrupt what’s important in life. So what are those connections that need to be made in order for those that we care so much about to be able to go beyond survival, beyond success, and beyond our wildest hopes for a great education, great careers, and great lives? We’ll focus on just a powerful handful, and we look forward to seeing you there.

Registration fees:
Prior to November 1, 2011: $99.00/person
November 1 – January 1: $111.00/person
After January 1, 2012: $121.00/person

Click HERE to register!

When
Friday February 24, 2012
8:30 AM to 4:30 PM MST

Where
Arvada Center for the Arts
6901 Wentworth Blvd
Arvada, CO 80003

Overnight Accommodations
Doubletree Hotel, Denver North
873 Yates Dr.
303.427.4000
Conference attendees are offered a discounted rate. If you need overnight accommodations, please contact the hotel directly and mention you are attending the Beyond Giftedness conference.

Meals
Continental breakfast and lunch are provided. Lunch will include a vegetarian option. For your comfort and safety, if you require special dietary foods, please bring your own preference for lunch.

Questions?
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