

European best practices to support children
with high potential and to access training
for gifted children with disabilities

– GIFTED (FOR) YOU –

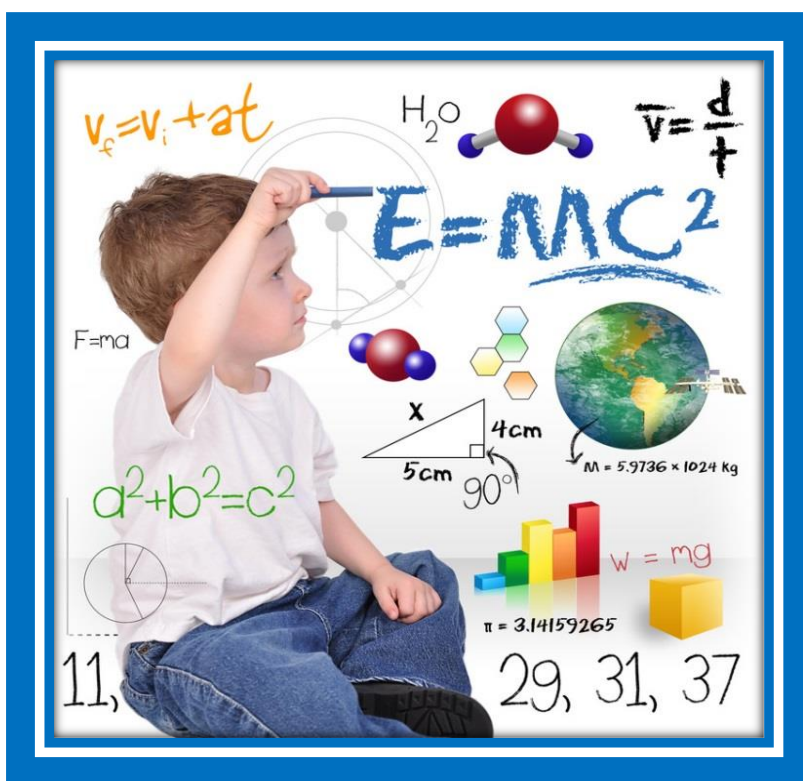


MITRAN DUȚU LIANA MARIA

ADRIAN ROMEO COZMA

STOICA FLORICA

ȚÎRLUI ILEANA



GIFTED CHILDREN

Guidebook for teachers and parents

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Coordinators:

- **Florin VERZA, PhD Professor – *University of Bucharest, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences***
- **Doru Vlad POPOVICI, PhD Professor - *University of Bucharest, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences***

Authors:

- **Liana Maria MITRAN DUȚU – Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, Romania**
- **Romeo Adrian COZMA – School Inspectorate of Bucharest**
- **Florica STOICA - “St. Mary” Special Middle School for Hearing-Impaired, Bucharest**
- **Ileana ȚÎRLUI - “St. Mary” Special Middle School for Hearing-Impaired, Bucharest**

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Preface

Giftedness is a special multifaceted human manifestation, with exceptionality as a common element, emerging as a happy combination of intellectual abilities and outstanding skills with certain features of personality (within a favourable social, cultural and family environment). Gifted children are not a homogeneous population group. We cannot speak of a unique psychological profile. However, the gifted are a particular group, differentiated through their features of personality, style of learning, way of interacting with their fellowmen, etc. They should be considered as special needs persons, for the simple reason that they are special.

A gifted student is a subject with an above average intellectual capacity (at psychometric level above 130), with cognitive differences both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The importance of early identification of the gifted is paramount and it consists in the fact that most explanations about the differences between potentiality and giftedness direct their family factors and educational-professional opportunities towards the substantial differences in the early favourable environments.

There are various obstacles that may prevent a specialist from identifying a high-potential child, and the latter may pass unnoticed, due to stereotypical expectations for high performance, false expectations, the student's lack of motivation to engage in formal education, his attempt to hide his high ambitions, his weaknesses, inappropriate behavior and shyness.

All of us should know that being gifted is not the same as being the best in school. There are many children with such intelligence who get bored when at school, because they do understand so many things and they feel there is no use to show that they have understood the textbook; quite often, some of these children may have difficulties in writing due to the fact that their mind is faster in processing the information than is their ability to write it down. Some of these gifted children think of several things at a time and seem not to pay much attention in school. They are familiar with a lot of information, because they have read it before, and what they are being taught in school is already outdated.

However wonderful they may be, they are also equally hard to understand. They could change the world with their fantastic superior intelligence, but they could just as well become failures if not helped to find their place. They sometimes feel misunderstood and isolated, risking to fall into depression, as they know themselves to be different from the ones around them.

CHAPTER I

MAIN FEATURES OF THE GIFTED CHILD

"A gifted or talented child is a young individual who, at kindergarden, elementary and secondary school, has proved the potential ability to achieve a high level of competence in the intellectual, artistic, academic fields, in visual arts, theatre, music, dance, as well as leadership skills, and therefore needs activities which are not usually possible in a school".

American Congress

Skill-training systems through sustained drills have yielded other educational derivatives for the cultivation of specific skills.

By and large, they have generated the educational forms and mass instruction which are to be found in the state/ government educational systems:

- in the programs that maintain and cultivate the order of the social or economic system;
- in the social-cultural programs where certain agreements are observed;
- in the model of industrial, military education;
- in many other state-organized and financed types of education .

The modern concept of giftedness illustrates the three forms of expression in the **model of the three rings** proposed by **Joseph Renzulli**, an American psychologist, by:

- a) active intelligence in identifying and solving problems;
- b) creativity;
- c) *the power to fulfil a task to the end (self-motivational)*

We can easily identify the three educational roots that lead to these modern derivatives of the **concept of „ giftedness”**; we can also understand the methodologies in the **„education of gifted children”**, which are, in fact, the direct followers of the three types of learning techniques.

Personal skill training is an undeniable aspect of human development.

As this kind of training is as old as the history of mankind, there are major differences between people on the three component parts of the Renzulli model. If, for the great majority of people, the educational techniques of personal skill training are enough, for a particular part, who are endowed with superior abilities, there are different needs, larger spaces for personal development, as well as a thirst for knowledge and other features that exceed the current social norm.



IDENTIFICATION OF GIFTED CHILDREN

1. *Albert Einstein first spoke when aged 4 and read at age 7;*
2. *Isaac Newton was a poor grader in elementary school;*
3. *As a child, Thomas A. Edison was told by teachers that he was too stupid to learn anything;*
4. *A newspaper editor fired Walt Disney for not having enough ideas;*
5. *Enrico Caruso's music teacher told him that he could not sing, as he had no voice;*
6. *Lev Tolstoi was expelled from university;*
7. *Luis Pasteur was considered as mediocre in chemistry when he graduated from Royal College;*
8. *Winston Churchill was a retained student in 6th grade.*



MYTHS ABOUT GIFTED CHILDREN

They are the “cream” of the class

Not necessarily. They sometimes may manifest various types of learning disabilities which may remain undetected initially. In this case, as time passes, it becomes more and more difficult for them to excel in learning.

They are so clever that they can manage with or without special programs

They appear to be doing well by themselves, but they may get bored and will not obey the rules. These tendencies may increase with age, when tasks become more complex.

Giftedness and talent are one and the same

Not necessarily; there is no correlation rule between them. nu există nici o regulă de corelare între acestea. Great differentiations are made between “academically gifted”, “intellecually gifted”, “talented” and others. Gifted children need a customized curriculum and flexible educational programs, in a special intellectual environment. Any child can benefit by enriched programs, but the gifted and talented do have different educational needs.

They must keep up with school along with their generation

It is a true fact that the gifted should interact with their peers, but their chronological age does not correspond with their mental age, which can be much older. Placing a gifted child in the same class with other children of a younger mental age than his is both an ordeal and a torture for that child.

Giftedness is something to be envied

The great majority of gifted children feel misunderstood and isolated. They are often rejected by the company of their mates because of their too adult tastes and opinions. This can cause specific psychological problems such as ADHD/ADD or the like, which are more common in gifted children than in other children.

These are extra reasons for which gifted children require special attention.

CHAPTER II.

Stages in the development of intelligence (Jean Piaget)

J. Piaget's theory was built and tested by using observation data collected from children of various ages, and a free query method – the clinical method. Based on this theory, **Piaget described the development of intelligence in a number of stages** which, in their turn, are divided into sub-stages.

The child passes through each of these stages successively and at different speeds. He must be able (in terms of maturity) to progress to the next stage. These stages are:

- Stage of sensory-motor intelligence (0-18 months/2 years);
- Pre-operational stage (2-7/8 years);
- Stage of concrete operations (7/8-11/12 years);
- Stage of formal operations (11/12-15/16 years).



I. Stage of sensory-motor intelligence - age 0-2 ani, the child's intelligence originates in perception and action.

The child absorbs all information through the senses (visual, auditory, tactile) and the motor perception. It is an experienced intelligence, linked to the child's real action, based on summoning the sensory-motor patterns and their coordination until finding the efficient alternative. In the course of this period there is a decentring which causes the child to detach himself from the world around.

II. The pre-operational stage is the most widely studied by Piaget. This stage is defined by two sub-stages which evince the progress registered in the child's evolution: the sub-stage of symbolic and pre-conceptual thinking (2-4 years) and the sub-stage of intuitive thinking (4-7 years).

The sub-stage of symbolic and pre-conceptual thinking appears at the end of the sensory-motor period, when a fundamental function is established for the evolution of subsequent behaviours – a function which consists in the possibility to represent a thing (a certain „signified“) by means of a differentiated „signifier“ which serves solely to this representation. This generating function of the representation is generally called a symbolic function and linguists call it a semiotic function. The child can mentally represent absent objects or events by means of symbols. This possibility of representing things symbolically can be found in the following five behaviours, which appear almost simultaneously: the postponed imitation (achieved in the absence of the model), the symbolic or fiction game, the drawing, the mental image (which appears as an internalized imitation) and, especially, speech, which allows the verbal evocation of events. It is obvious that four out of the five forms of behaviour are based on imitation, which constitutes a prefiguration of the representation.

From the appearance of speech to the age of four, Jean Piaget distinguishes a first period of development which he calls the period of pre-conceptual intelligence, characterized by the existence of pre-concepts and, at the level of the reasoning taking shape, by transduction or pre-conceptual reasoning.

„Pre-concepts are those notions associated by the child with the first verbal signs, the use of which he is acquiring. The peculiarity of these patterns consists in the fact that they remain at halfway, between the generality of the concept and the individuality of the component elements, without attaining either“. The reasoning that connects such pre-concepts was called **transductive**. It is a kind of primitive reasoning

which does not connect the component elements by inference, but by immediate analogies. The sub-stage of intuitive thinking is the one in which we witness the gradual coordination of representative relationships, therefore a growing conceptualization. This will guide the child from the symbolic or pre-conceptual phase to the threshold of operations. However, this intelligence remains constantly pre-logical, because it still substitutes the imperfect operations for a semi-symbolical form of thinking, namely intuitive reasoning.

After Piaget, the main limitations of thinking in the pre-operational stage are:

1. Egocentrism, which refers to the child's inability to see things from the point of view of the others, with himself remaining prisoner of his own perspective;
2. Centredness, which involves orientation towards a single feature of the situation and ignorance of the others, irrespective of their relevance;
3. Mixture of the real with the imaginary;
4. Irreversibility, which expresses the child's inability to perform reversible mental operations in the pre-operational stage. Reversibility is considered by Piaget as the main feature of human thinking and it expresses the capacity to perform mentally the same action in two senses.

III. The stage of concrete operations emphasizes the fact that reversibility of thinking manifests itself around age 8. The child now realizes that to each action corresponds a reverse action, which permits returning to the previous state. Being capable of reversibility, the child will also perceive the invariance, i.e. that which is constant and identical in things. He will, therefore, gradually perceive the conservation of substance, weight and volume. Piaget argues that the process of conservation appears in a definite order: the conservation of substance at age 8, conservation of weight at ages 9-10, and conservation of volume at 11-12 years. From one cultural environment to another, the ages at which conservation is acquired can be different, but the order of the acquisition is constant. The operations are defined by Piaget as follows: „actions that are internalized or apt to be internalized, reversible and coordinated in total structures”.

They are characterized by being thoroughly and necessarily reversible. The child who, without having handled the plasticine ball, says that deformation of the ball has not altered the quantity of plasticine, considers this deformation to be reversible. The quantity of plasticine constitutes the invariance of this reversible transformation which is the deformation. Any reversible transformation contains an invariance. Operations are also characterized by the fact that they are always organized into structures.

IV. The stage of formal operations emphasizes a substantial progress in the child's thinking.

His thinking will be freed of the concrete, because the transition to pre-adolescence and adolescence will ensure him the capacity of formally correct reasoning, following hypotheses, i.e. statements which they do not know to be true or false. Formal thinking is also a hypothetical-deductive thinking which allows examination of the consequences arising necessarily from the assumptions. The first outcome of this detachment of the thinking from the objects consists in the release of the order relationships and the classifications from their concrete, intuitive connections. The operational patterns develop, become more mobile, more extensive. The substitution of real or imaginary manipulation of objects with verbal statements means the superposition of a new logic, the logic of the sentences, over the logic of the classes and relationships. This means an increase in the number of possible operations. The combinatory logic of sentences, which implies second degree operations (permutations, combinations) and the group of the two reversibilities (coordination of the reversibilities by inversion and by reciprocity) are the most important acquisitions of this period.

The merit of Piaget's theory is that it showed the way in which intelligence evolves, the fact that its origin is in the sensory-motor interactions of the children with the environment, before the acquisition of speech. The operational structures of intelligence are not innate, they grow up until about the end of the first two decades of development. They evince a real constructive path, built in steps; at each step, we must reconstruct the results obtained at the previous step, before expanding and building something new. From this point of view, Piaget's theory is a constructivist one. It is also a genetic theory, because it focuses on explaining the genesis and the evolution of cognitive processes.

Types of intelligence and the features of giftedness

1. Instinctual intelligence

It is a form of intelligence common to every species, genetically imprinted, which all of us are born with. We notice it in habits which sometimes puzzle our own logic, but which we cannot control, as is the aversion of many people to snakes or spiders.





2. Intuitive intelligence

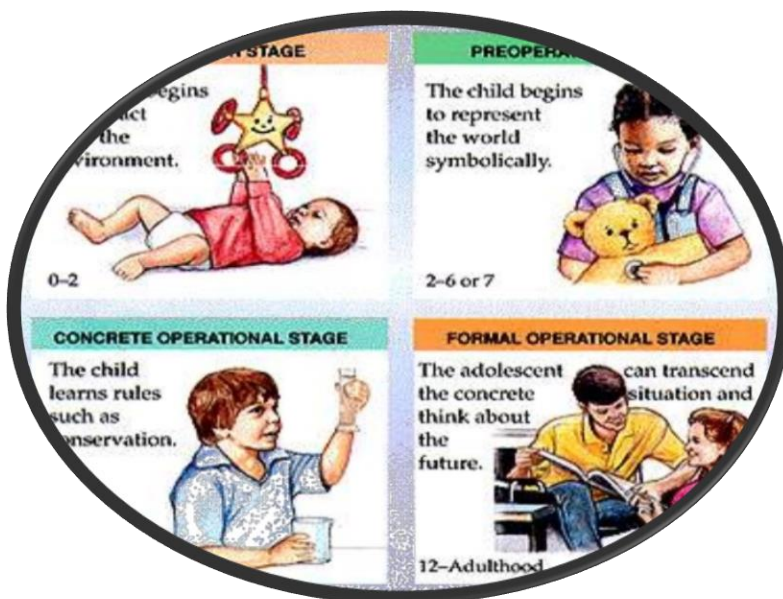
It is the ability to learn complex things and to solve difficult problems at the subconscious level. This type of intelligence ensures adaptation to a new, unknown environment, fast learning of a language, or the ability to survive in confusing, chaotic circumstances. This type of intelligence is often better in solving complex problems than is the sensory logical

intelligence.

3. Sensory intelligence

It is the ability to logically connect various knowledge and facts and it gives us the possibility to discover new rules and think methodically. It appears mostly at older stages in the children's development. This category is generally defined as intelligence, as it depends on conscious thinking, while other types of intelligence often escape psychological analysis.

Sensory intelligence is frequently used to detect the relationships and details of linear thinking and to record the child's traits of personality and thinking.



CHAPTER III.
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHILD'S GROWTH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL
DEVELOPMENT AT AGES 3-17

Psychological development in the child aged 2-3

At age 2, you will have to deal with a cranky, squeamish child, with a behavior you will find hard to understand, but which are natural within his psychological and emotional development. It is the age at which he is testing both your limits and your patience.



It is the age when he starts to be more independent, to show his curiosity and to explore everything around, in order to explain to himself things and terms which he could not otherwise understand. Knowledge is mediated especially by the sensory-perceptive level, where perceptions and senses play an essential part in his cognitive development.

One of the main characteristics of the psychological development at age 2 is the impulsiveness or lack of self-control which the child shows. This age is also characterized by the child's extreme behaviours: dependent – independent, aggressive – calm, etc.

It is the childhood stage when he gets angry easily and becomes aggressive when he dislikes something. Not being able to express his discontent in words, as his speech is not sufficiently developed at this age, he does it by means of behaviours which are not always pleasant. This is the way in which tantrums appear, representing just his manner of expressing the emotional states he is experiencing.

It is a childhood stage filled with fears, feelings of insecurity and confrontation with the adult separation anxiety.

He begins to empathize with the suffering of others, without understanding what empathy is, but continues to place himself at the centre of the universe and act selfish. He is not willing to share things with the people around, as he lacks the feeling of generosity or self-bounty.

The child is at an age when he substantially enriches his sensory-perceptive level. He is learning most of the things through direct experience or by exploring the environment. He makes use of his auditory, as well as his visual and tactile senses, in order to understand the world around.

Until age 3, the child's mental level develops considerably. His memory and attention take shape. Although memory begins to develop at age 2, attention is a new acquisition in the child's cognitive development. Only between ages 2 and 3 do attention and focus begin to take shape, especially if they are well trained and practised with the parents' help.

Psychological development in the child aged 3-6

The child's psychological, intellectual and moral development depends on the way the adult knows how to support him in building his own future. The "handiest" models that a child can have are to be found in his family.

Representations

At this stage, representations evolve mainly qualitatively, which leads to the development of thinking. "The entire range of representations is taking shape, both the evocative, completing, anticipatory representations and the fantastic ones" (Munteanu A., 1998).



Representations are, of course, of several kinds – representations of objects seen, events lived, but also representations of events evoked by the adult.

Thinking

Due to his supplementary daily activity, the preschooler child has much more possibilities to enlarge his cognitive experience. The first sequence, the preconceptual-symbolic one, evinces several specific characteristics: egocentrism, animism, nominal realism, rigidity of thinking, etc.

Egocentrism/ self-centredness means perceiving the world solely from one's own perspective, i.e. at

this age, the child cannot understand that other people see the same things in a different way. This has nothing to do with selfishness.

Animism means attributing to inanimate objects certain features of the living beings. This happens because, at this point, the child cannot operate a clear distinction between what is live and what is inanimate. For example, the child considers that the table suffers/hurts when he hits it. This distinction will take place gradually, in the course of the pre-operational period. At the beginning every object is considered to be living, then only the objects that move (e.g. a leaf), later on, those which move spontaneously and, eventually, life is attributed only to human beings, plants and animals.

Towards age 6 the child becomes capable to analyze and classify objects by certain criteria, but he meets with difficulties reorganizing a classification after other criteria. A child aged 5-6 also lacks the capacity to infer that a situation can be reversed. It was also observed that perceptive experiences are not sufficient for the notions of speed and distance to take shape, so that these notions remain unclear during the child's early age.

Intuitive thinking is more refined than in the previous period, even though it still remains centered on the object. Due to the concrete aspect of thinking, the preschooler needs to see images in order to understand various stories. The role of pictures is, therefore, very great.

Memory

The capacity of memorizing after age 4 is particularly active. This can be noticed in the ease with which preschool children memorize poems, stories, etc.

In preschool children, involuntary memorizing of a material included in an activity shows greater productivity as compared to voluntary memory. However, voluntary memory will gradually occupy more and more ground. The fact that these children can voluntarily memorize a text is emphasized by their capacity to render the text in their own words. Excitability leaves its mark upon memory, too.

Memory has also an intuitive-concrete character – we can memorize more easily when there is also a visual support. Verbal-logical memory occurs later.

Imagination

The activities performed in kindergarten, the games, stories and fairy tales contribute to the development of imagination. After age 2-3 certain artistic abilities develop as well, that is why it is very important for parents to encourage their children if they notice such propensities in them.

Imagination and creative thinking is manifested not only in play, but also in drawing, music, dance, painting, etc. An efficient way of communication from the part of the child is achieved through drawing. Around age 4-5, there occurs “*the ideoplastic drawing, characterized by intellectual realism, which already expresses moods*” (Bonchiş E., 2000). At this age, in the child’s drawing the arms and legs are attached to the trunk, the mouth is simple and usually oval, clothing items appear. The capacity for fabulation is also particularly active at this stage, the child is making up all kinds of stories. He can build stories after images and dialogues, in puppet shows.

Psychological development in the child aged 6-11

The child’s psychological development in school, when he is between 6 and 11 years old, witnesses a continuous progress. It is a period filled with a lot of new emotions and feelings which he must learn to control and use to his benefit. His intellectual development also reaches its climax with his entering school.



Here are the main characteristics of the psychological development in schoolchildren aged 6 to 11:

At age 6-7

Intellectually and psychologically, the child is just starting out in terms of intellectual or cognitive acquisitions. With the beginning of school, he has the opportunity to learn lots of new things, which stimulates his intelligence and adds to his general knowledge.

From age 6 onwards, the child will also experience new emotions and feelings which he will have to cope with and control efficiently.

Emotionally, it is an age still dominated by insecurity and fears, at times unjustified. He is incapable to accept criticism or punishment and take the blame in the circumstances that demand it. It seems to him that he is right in everything and that he deserves everything. It is impossible for him to make choices, because he wants everything for himself. He tends to be rigid and negativistic in thinking, and the outbursts of anger may still appear in his behavior. Under the pressure of stress specific to his age, he can develop stuttering, which may affect his intellectual development. However, in most cases, this is a passing condition, which will last until the child adjusts himself to new situations and experiences. Memory begins to be more and more organized and he can even learn reading and writing.

Age 8-9

At age 8-9, your child starts to have his first secrets and to feel a greater and greater need of intimacy. This is the moment when, if you have not done it yet, to have to provide him with a personal space, his own, and with some time of his own, in his own intimacy. He has got great expectations from his own person and he is passing through the period in which self-criticism is at its peak. He has the impression that nothing that he is doing is OK and he even says that quite often: *I'm good for nothing, I don't do anything well*, etc.

Curiosity will persist in his emotional development, too. The child will be more and more interested in the causes or reasons for which some things happen. It was noticed that, at this age, the child asks very many questions about pregnancy and giving birth. This is the period when he fully expresses his affection, offers his help, is happy and joyful but, just as well, has moments when he is nasty, selfish, with unreasonable demands, and wants to display authority in the relationships with the others. The fears which were predominant in the previous stage begin to fade and decrease in intensity. He is still afraid of certain things but, these are reasonable fears, justifiable at this age. He often opposes your requirements or instructions that you are offering but, with patience and efficient disciplinary methods, he will ultimately give in to your demands.

Age 10-11

At age 10-11, the child experiences transition to puberty, a new childhood stage, marked by significant emotional changes. Puberty changes lay a great mark upon his psychological development. Firstly he starts being more interested in his own image, the way he is dressed, the others' opinion about him. He demands more and more intimacy and is preoccupied with his relationships with friends and other children. School activities cover more and more room among his interests. His talents emerge, while hobbies and interests for certain activities are only temporary. However, native talents should be cultivated from the very first moments they are noticed in the child.

Aggressive outbursts begin to slacken. The child acquires greater self-control. This is not a stage dominated by aggressivity, but rather by sensitiveness. The child is passing through a sensitive period and needs his parents by his side, to help him handle his feelings and the changes he is experiencing.

Psychological development of the child at ages 14 and 17

The psychological plane undergoes profound changes at adolescence. The child may be calm or agitated, with spectacular downgrade. The anxiety between the teenager's aspirations and his possibilities to fulfil them, between what he desires and what he can afford, between the way in which he sees society and the way society sees him, is very intense.



Thinking and intelligence allow the coherent shaping of one's outlook on life and the world. The operability of thinking is consolidated and structured on formal-logical criteria. Intellectual tools become more diversified: the capacity to argue and counter-argue, to make assumptions, to demonstrate conclusions, to make use of concepts. The systematic character of thinking is taking shape now. Visual perception reaches its peak, as does the fine hand-eye coordination. Auditory sensitivity and orientation are highly accurate. Musical hearing attracts the interest in listening to music. Sometimes the sound volume is high, either from nonconformism, or from identification with the music, the desire to "feel" it. Motions become very precise, smooth and adroit. The critical view of the world of values, the establishment of truth, the confrontation with appearances, ignorance, all this is effective in logical reasoning and later becomes a way of approaching problematic situations. At ages 16-18 they

develop the „pleasure” taken in discussions and dialogues. The need for a „group” subsides. They are now turning towards the couple and a close circle of friends.

CHAPTER IV.

LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENT. ASYNCHRONOUS DEVELOPMENT OF GIFTED CHILDREN.

With each component of the development of abilities there are stages corresponding to the complexity of thinking at a given moment. These components are:

- intellectual – expressed through various forms of thinking;
- affective and emotional;
- spiritual, social,
- interpersonal,
- intrapersonal,
- artistic,
- kinesthetic,
- sensitive,
- empathic to the environment, etc.



These stages are expressed through the models of the universe which children conceive at different moments, their models of perceiving reality, the type of information they exchange among themselves and their knowledge horizons.

When developing their abilities children pass from the stage of accumulative perception to the:

- a) topological stage,
- b) critical-analytical stage,
- c) stage of synthetic-structural thinking,
- d) stage of complex and dynamic thinking.

These stages of thinking can be perceived along all their directions of development, but *in gifted children an additional phenomenon occurs*, called „*asynchronous development of personality*”

Asynchronous development in gifted and talented children is a seemingly paradoxical phenomenon which causes the special needs that characterize them.

Many of the psychological features of gifted and talented children are due to this asynchrony of development.

Gifted children are often characterized by their family or school with nicknames which point to their low degree communication with the social environment: nerds, cocky, freaks, etc.

<u><i>Using the intelligence quotient we can determine the following levels for giftedness:</i></u>
85-99: Normal level
100-114: Higher level
115-129: Smart
130-144: Gifted
145-159: Very gifted
160-180: Highly gifted
180-.... Brilliant/ Genius

Despite their outstanding intellectual abilities, these children do not always get school grades as expected, because their field of interest is different from the one promoted by school; consequently, they get bored at school, the school curriculum not matching his interests in any way.

To a gifted child who learned reading at age 2 or 3 by asking the adults what the sign of a letter stands for, reading and writing in primary school become uninteresting; he will often make mistakes in writing, as his field of interest is displaced as compared to his peers.

If the gifted child who learned to read at age 2-3 had been initiated in spelling and grammar at the moment when he showed an interest developed in that direction, he would have acquired correct writing skills. Instances of difficulties in reading-writing with gifted children are quite frequent and, in order to correct these problems, methodologies are being developed which would draw reading and writing closer to these children's field of interest. In this way they will learn reading and writing correctly in a record time.

The same asynchronous development in gifted children determines the existence of fields of interest in which they exercise surprising abilities and hobbies, school subjects in which they excel, often surpassing their teachers, and school subjects at which they barely pass the grade.

Gifted children manifest a certain innocence in their opinion about people, which shows that their development is not completed in all directions or coupled with interest horizons projected into the future; consequently, their tendency towards asynchrony is permanent.

In ordinary children the development of intelligence follows an asymptotic curve.

At age 10, these children have already developed approximately 95-98% of their I.Q.-measured intelligence. The remaining percentage will develop later, while the accumulation of experience and the higher progress of the same abilities identified at age 10 will become part of their subsequent development.

By contrast, gifted children who, due to asynchrony, are perfectionists, will continue to improve their intelligence through their entire life – especially those whose intellectual and emotional qualities are high.

This will often produce forms of inadaptability to a monotonous social environment and the search of a social environment where they could expand their abilities (science, cutting edge technology, etc).

Although gifted children are randomly distributed in all social or cultural milieux, gifted adults who managed to get socially integrated are to be found mainly in specific areas of activity.

This characteristic feature of asymetry, present in high-ability persons, has made certain educational programs to be targeted towards those social areas where gifted children would not commonly enter and where there is the need for special cognitive abilities and contextual analysis, such as „leadership”.



CHAPTER V.
PERSONALITY FEATURES OF THE GIFTED CHILD

The following features of personality will allow understanding the child rated as “gifted”:

- *He uses an appropriate vocabulary;*
- *Is efficient in verbal or written communication;*
- *Shows a special interest in something for which he feels motivation and passion;*
- *Has good results in any domain;*
- *Understands what is good or evil in an activity;*
- *Has got a particularly good memory;*
- *Likes structures, order, consistency;*
- *Thinks critically;*
- *Has got many hobbies;*
- *Evaluates by testing;*
- *Has got extraordinary humour;*
- *Thinks beyond his own self;*
- *Learns very fast;*
- *Is a perfectionist;*
- *Can focus his attention for a very long time;*
- *Is sensitive;*
- *Is hyperenergetical;*
- *Prefers the company of adults;*
- *Is very creative;*
- *Reads from an early age;*
- *Has a thirst for knowledge;*
- *Tends to challenge authority;*
- *Has abilities in using the numbers;*
- *Has good reasoning, being a good thinker;*



- *Has many ideas to share with others;*
- *Is a brilliant thinker;*
- *Is absent-minded and inattentive to unimportant details;*
- *Can easily tell the important and relevant details from the others;*
- *Gives unusual and unexpected answers to problems;*
- *Can reach high levels of abstract thinking;*
- *Communicates his own self by various means (verba, kinesthetic, body language, etc);*
- *Gathers a large amount of information in his fields of interest;*
- *Recalls facts very fast;*
- *Is frequently perceived by others as a leader;*
- *Is cooperative within groups;*
- *Accepts responsibilities;*
- *Adjusts himself easily to new situations;*
- *Is confident in schoolmates and in opinions about people;*
- *Likes changes;*
- *Asks for little guidance from the teachers;*
- *Is more interested in questions like “how” and “why” than in other types of questions;*
- *Can work independently much earlier than others;*
- *Is often diagnosed as hyperactive;*
- *Is interested in unusual or strange things;*
- *Shows a special interest in intellectual or artistic activities;*
- *Perceives easily the similarities, differences and anomalies;*
- *Often tackles complex materials, dismantles them into simple component parts and analyzes them systematically;*
- *Is a fluent thinker, capable of generating possibilities, consequences or related ideas;*
- *Thinks flexibly, approaching an issue by several ways;*
- *Is original and often unconventional in problem solving;*
- *Can find out relationships between unrelated objects, facts and ideas;*
- *Is keen on complex understanding;*
- *Often builds up hypotheses of the type “what if...?”;*
- *Is sensitive to beauty and attracted to artistic values.*





CHAPTER VI.

EVALUATION OF GIFTED CHILDREN

Evaluation of gifted children includes multiple procedures, instruments and methods:

- meetings with the parents, children and teachers;
- observations;
- questionnaires;
- lists,
- standard tests, etc.

I. Observation

represents a basic method, a modality of study, lying at the basis of any type of experiment. During observation are done the faithful recording and noting of the phenomena, as they unfold in reality.

In laboratory experiments, observation is subordinated to their purposes and will pursue obtaining additional data to help us explain the modifications occurring in the dependent variable.

The purposes of observation are:

- 1) to see events, actions, norms and values through the eyes of the subjects;
- 2) to describe the contact and the persons observed in order to allow understanding of what is happening there;
- 3) to place the events observed in a social and historical context, so that they could be understood correctly;
- 4) to integrate, to see social life as a process of interrelated events;
- 5) to avoid premature use of theory and concepts before the respective phenomenon is truly understood;
- 6) to offer a flexible research design which will allow an investigation open to unexpected and unpredictable aspects.



The essential feature of observation is its **non-intervention nature**.

The observer follows the flow of events, but does not intervene to modify them.

Characteristic features of observation:

- 1) has a flexible nature;
- 2) structuring may vary from a higher degree to a situation free of any attempt at systematic pursuit;
- 3) observation can focus on specific narrow aspects and dimensions, or can have a general character.

As regards **awareness of the observer's presence**, from the part of the subject(s) of the observation, there are several modalities:

- 1) observer – present and uninvolved (e.g. attending a class);
- 2) observer – present and involved (e.g. replacing the respective class teacher);
- 3) observer – hidden and uninvolved (e.g. the one-way windows used in police inquiries).

In point of the explanations offered to participants, there are:

- the complete explanation of the purposes of the observation, as well as of the aspects pursued;
- false explanations or failure to provide explanations.

Duration of observation may vary from a simple observation to multiple observations, under similar or different circumstances.

The more observations we have, the greater the accuracy of the conclusions formulated on their basis.

Recording of the observed aspects can be achieved by a simple note-taking or by using audio-visual devices, which will allow us repeated and independent tracking of the recorded materials.

In point of feed-back, the observer can opt for providing participants with a complete feed-back on the aspects observed as well as the findings, or can completely interrupt any contact with the subjects observed.

Types of observation :

- natural;
- systematic;
- self-observation.

II. The questionnaire

The questionnaire is the basic instrument used for data collecting. Its devising has a multi-disciplinary character, meaning that it requires knowledge from several sciences: economics, statistics, mathematics, sociology, psychology, etc.

Format of the questionnaire

The questionnaire must be devised in such a way that the reading of the questions, observation of the instructions and recording of the answers should be as simple as possible, both for the respondent and the investigator. After selection of the questions, there follows the choice of the questionnaire's format: aspect, length and sequence of questions.



- The questionnaire must have a carefully conceived title in order to attract subjects' attention and highlight the importance of the study.
- The questionnaire starts with an introduction on the purpose of the study, the way information is going to be used and an assurance of the confidentiality of the respondent's expressed opinions.
- The *brochure* or *booklet* type of format is preferred.
- The layout of the questionnaire must be *spaced appropriately*.
- Avoid having the respondent turn the page in the middle of a question or between the question and the response versions.

The generally accepted standard for the placing of response versions to a question is the vertical one, a manner that agrees with the persons' natural way of reading. The response versions to a question are placed in a single column, so as not to create confusion.

Types of questions

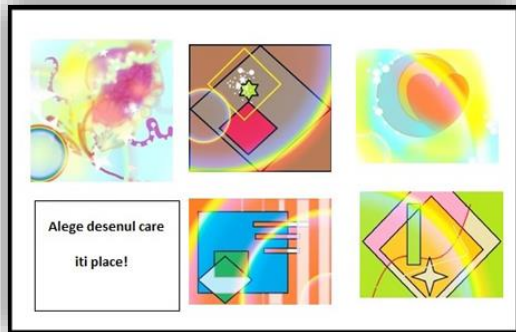
The questions actually materialize the structure of the questionnaire. There are three types of questions: open, closed dichotomous and closed with multiple choice.

- A) **Open questions** allow the interlocutor to express his own opinion freely. They require professionalism from the operator's part, ability to probe the subject, to encourage and stimulate him during the discussion. A skilful moderator can elicit a varied range of information and can determine the surveyed person to manifest his moods generously, thus shedding light on his motivations and moods.
- B) **Closed dichotomous questions** are those whose answer can have only 2 alternatives. These have a low informational share because the respondent is not given the chance to communicate the intensity of his feelings related to the topic of the question. They are usually used as filter questions.
- C) **Closed questions with multiple choice** have the advantage that they can be processed relatively easily. This type of questions do not appeal much to the respondent's memory and eliminates subjectivity of codification. The disadvantage of these questions is that the researcher wastes time enumerating the response variables.

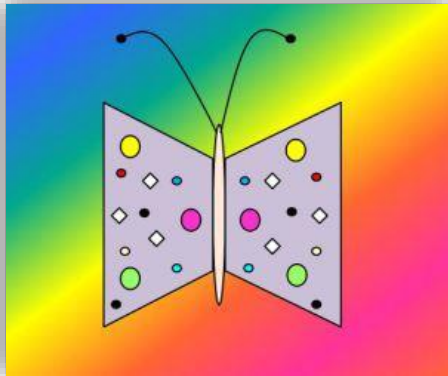
III. The test

Attempts at defining it are extremely varied, as they cannot grasp the essential aspects of this concept. L.Cronbach considers the test to be „**a systematic procedure to compare the behavior of two or more persons**”. It is a statistic, quantitative and qualitative comparison of an individual's results with those of another person placed in the same situation. Comparison is made on the basis of a standard, i.e. a metric reference system, and its purpose is to rate an individual within a quantitative or qualitative hierarchy (a typological one – based on a profile).

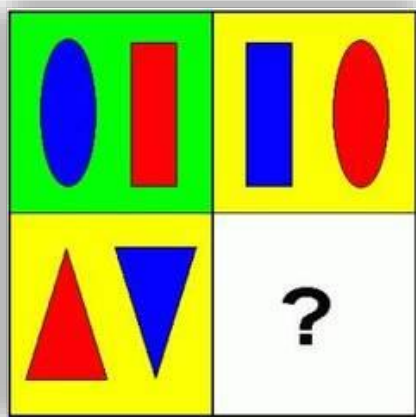
According to the objectives pursued, they are classified as :



✓ Attention (distributivity) tests;

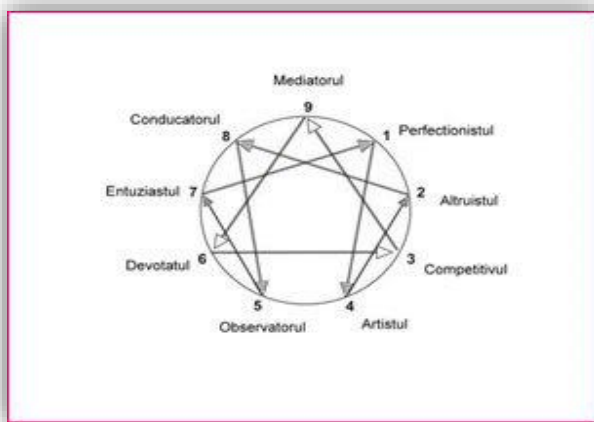
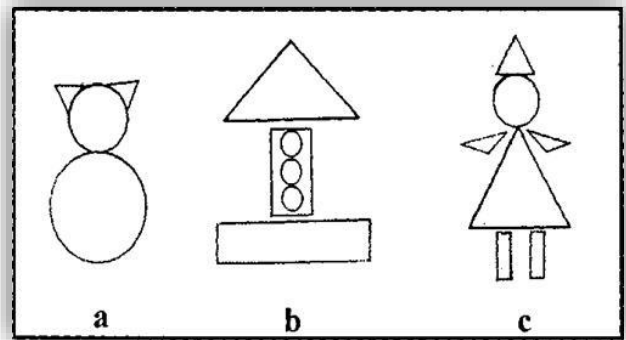


✓ Memory (numeric, verbal, topographic) tests;



✓ Intelligence (general, technical, abstract, figurative, emotional) tests;

✓ Docimologic (aquisition) tests;



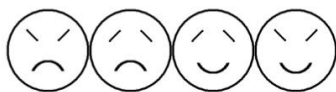
✓ Personality tests;

✓ Temperament tests;

The four classical temperament types

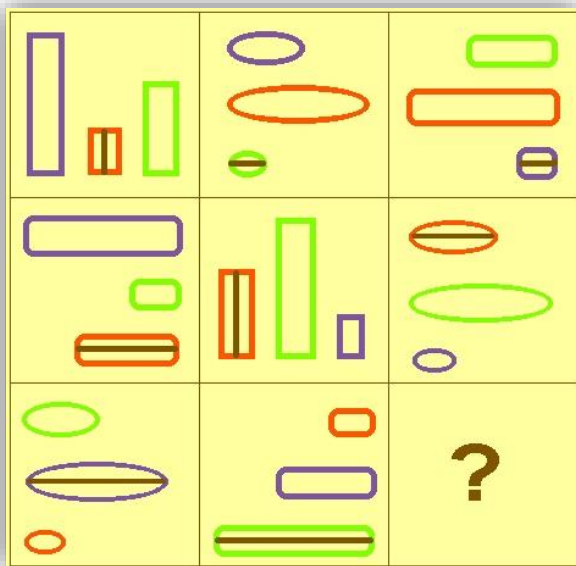
Cele patru temperamente clasice

- Sangvinic
- Melancolic
- Coleric
- Flegmatic



- Sanguinic
- Melancholic
- Choleric
- Phlegmatic

- ✓ Aptitude (mathematical, artistic, numeric, verbal) tests;



- ✓ Tests to identify character attitudes.

Parents' judgement has a great importance in evaluation, as they can watch their children in any circumstances. By discussions or various questionnaires, parents can report concrete examples of behaviors which drew their attention on the difference in their child's development as compared to other children.

Individual testing is the best instrument, though it requires a long time to perform.

CHAPTER VII. THE ROLE OF SCHOOL IN STIMULATING GIFTED CHILDREN

- Assistance and counseling for the planning, education and training processes;
- Professionalisation of teachers and auxiliary staff: program administrators, teachers, counsellors, by means of postgraduate / master degree programs;
- Professional development of the teaching staff by means of transferable professional credits;
- Development of the training system into a distance learning system;
- Development of academic routes / specific curricula for “gifted students”;
- Design and development of university research / investigations on a more effective educational support for the gifted schoolchildren and students;
- Sustaining partnerships in the field of advanced training / research for gifted students.

A. Improvement programs for intelligence have been applied to persons and children in difficulty or socially/culturally disadvantaged whose intellectual level is enriched after finalization of the program. Many of the results of the programs for disadvantaged children occur after the special attention granted to these children (the „Pygmalion” effect).



There are pre-school children endowed with such highly developed capacity, in contrast with their scanty language, devoid of comprehension and reasoning.

At psychometric level, it is certainly very difficult, if not even ridiculous, to establish a precise IQ point at which an individual should be considered as being „gifted”. Here we are facing the problem concerning continuity of scoring and selecting a point that would separate the gifted one from the not gifted, which should be done in a flexible manner.

B. The model of psycho-pedagogical and social enrichment (MEPS) is based on *studying the differences in the development and characteristic features of gifted children*, using multiple procedures, psychometric measures, observations, interviews, questionnaires, etc.

In this way, we could achieve orientation and intervention upon the following factors:

- cognitive,
- educational,
- emotional,
- motivational,
- social.

The high cognitive capacity se is recognized through differences both at the quantitative and the qualitative level. In this model, identification of the gifted individual is very important, which is based on:

- the psychometric tests for the measuring of intelligence;
- the information processes (visual memory, perceptive maturity, etc),
- the observation of metacognitive capacities in problem solving, at an early age,
- the learning and problem-solving strategies.

Observation of the child's development in point of precocity and talents is equally important.

C. MEPS is based on the following divisions:

Identification by evaluation of the child's or teenager's development level:

- ✓ preoccupations,
- ✓ motivations,
- ✓ personality,
- ✓ intelligence,
- ✓ processing of information,
- ✓ meta-cognitive capacities,
- ✓ valorisation of the child's or teenager's skills and talents,
- ✓ adaptation (school,family, social and personal),
- ✓ problem solving, etc.

D. Implementation through two areas:

1. cognitive development;
2. social and emotional development.

In the cognitive development area there are several basic aspects:

a) *thematic amplification or depth studies* through:

- conferences of interest to children and youth (biology, medicine, astronomy, etc.)
- studies on specific topics, of interest to children and youth

b) *improvement and development of the creative capacities and those for problem solving* (the children are taught to think) through:

- various work techniques:

1. programs,
 2. problem-solving strategies,
 3. techniques designed to develop creativity by performing activities which stimulate: fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration;
- motivation for investigation (independent study) through individual or small group work.

In the area of the social and emotional development there are four aspects:

1. group techniques:

- conflict solving,
- action by consensus,
- decision making, etc;

2. moral dilemmas ;

3. social abilities;

4. affective-sexual education.

E. Extracurricular amplification (enrichment) consists in devising a series of individualized educational programs applied in small groups outside school hours, which help up the student's integral development and a better conception of the curriculum; they include the study of the subjects and learning areas which cannot be put into practice during the usual classes, and can be used both at primary and secondary level.

Extracurricular amplification:

a) can be performed for a single individual or a group of individuals, by a single educator or specialist who may not be directly connected to the field of education, for a particular school subject or for general knowledge.

b) allows amplification of knowledge with some subjects which can or cannot be included into the usual school programme.

Enrichment classes need the presence of a specialist who could answer the questions put by the gifted students.

Planning for an enrichment class implies concern with the individuality of the students within the group, as well as with the differences between the groups

F. The MEPS evaluation (the model of psychopedagogic and social enrichment)

Evaluation refers to the review and analysis of the elements in the component programs.

To make an assessment of a gifted child's work, the teacher must collect data about that work and record it in file, then use a check sheet, to make evaluation easier (Alonso & Benito, 1992-apud Yolanda Benito).

G. Within the MEPS the following programs are developed:

1. At school level - as teacher support:

- teacher support programs;
- training specialists for the guiding teams, outer support, teachers for preschool, elementary, secondary education.

2. At extracurricular level – as student support:

- individualized and group educational programs, applied outside school hours, all along the school year;
- individualized and group educational programs as summer school;
- parent support programs;
- exchange programs and multilateral international meetings.

The first two ***programs, individualized and group***, sustain the student's full development and adaptation. They are useful for the improvement of the curriculum, as they contain and allow the performance of a series of activities which cannot be accomplished in a regular classroom.

Parent support programs permit allow information and training through school, as well as raising awareness concerning these issues (as was at the courses in Badajoz, Santander, Salamanca, Valladolid, Cádiz, Victoria), and participation in national and international congresses.

Among exchange programs and multilateral international meetings are those in ***Lisbon*** (Portugal), in 1995 or Iași (Romania), in 1996; international meetings, such as the meeting of the youth from 10 countries, organized in Valladolid, in 1994, by the „Huerta del Rey" in collaboration with Hayda, the City Council of Valladolid, etc. with over 60 youth participating from Portugal, Great Britain, France, Holland, Germany, Romania, Hungary, Russia and, of course, Spain.

The Lisbon Declaration complies with all the principles clearly stated and expressed for decades by the educational system of gifted children

Education of gifted children does not contradict the existing educational system, but overlaps and complies with it. It can enrich the educational offer of kindergartens, schools, high schools and universities, at their choice, and is based on:

1. a curriculum,
2. educational programs and methodologies
3. practice.

Sequencing of a differentiated educational program

In author Carmen Crețu's work "*A differentiated and personalized curriculum*"(1998) - we find the following sequences in devising a differentiated educational program:

Stages	Contents	Monitors
Awareness	Interest in the field Identification of relationships: common program - program for gifted students	Experts in the field, coordinators of similar programs, politicians of education, personalities with an impact in education, subjects in case studies
Information	Introduction in the theory of the respective field Presentation of similar programs	University staff, researchers, experts
Management	Choice of administrative forms, types of activities, planning of resources, time.	Program coordinator
Identifying and attracting staff	Opportunities of collaboration and agents. Transfer of experience.	Program coordinator, educational decision-makers, administrative councils, profile organizations

Application of program	Parcurgerea fazelor programului	Coordonatorul de program și colaboratorii
Evaluation of program	Application of evaluation strategies of the teachers' results	Practising teachers, managers of school units, school inspectors, psychodiagnosis experts, parents, collaborators, students themselves



CHAPTER VIII.

ADVICE TO PARENTS AND TEACHERS

It is obvious that **educating this type of child is not easy at all and the parents must be connected to what is happening to their child and maximize his potential.** One of the most important things would be the parents paying attention to whether their children get bored in kindergarten or school and, with the help of teachers, helping them jump a grade or two so as they may not lose interest.



Any gifted child should be motivated, stimulated and his curiosity for one field or another should be maintained and encourage. **His education should not be an elitist one, it should be achieved through accumulation and acceleration programs which would promote and develop his natural abilities.** Education of gifted children should overlap and comply with the existing educational system, but it should be completed with a curriculum, programs and educational methodologies, to enrich the offer of kindergartens, schools, high schools and universities.

The gifted child learns almost anything **very fast**; he **focuses his attention** for a long time; is **very sensitive**, lives intensely every moment; is **curious** by nature, thirsty for novelty; is always **persevering**; has a need of routine - having some excerpts of a story repeated, for example; has **no patience** for the routine or automatic abilities; is a **perfectionist and a vigilante**; his vocabulary is **rich and adequate**; prefers the company of adults; wishes to discuss materials he has read; spends time for his hobby and for special projects; his **school grades are particularly good**; is easily bored; understands what is good or bad in an activity and finds ways to optimize it; **finds out new meanings** in old ideas; **takes pleasure in intellectual activities**; thinks outside his own self; **is interested in what is good or bad, right or wrong**; shows compassion for the others.

Attention!, **Gifted children are born, they are not made.** However, *"irrespective of their giftedness, children do not develop their talents, their endowments, in absence of a parent or tutor who would encourage, stimulate and push them forward"*. (Winner, 1996).

The **"nature and nurture" principle** is fundamental in the education of gifted children: both the existence of high abilities and the feeding of high abilities are essential

REMEMBER !



When children live in criticism, they learn to condemn.

When children live in hostility, they learn to fight.

When children live in fear, they learn to be fearful.

When children live in mercy, they learn to pity themselves.

When children live in ridicule, they learn to be shy.

When children live in jealousy, they learn what envy means.

When children live in shame, they learn to feel guilty.

When children live in tolerance, they learn to be patient.

When children live in encouragement, they learn to be confident.

When children live in praise, they learn to appreciate.

When children live in approval, they learn to like themselves.

When children live in acceptance, they learn to find love in the world.

When children live in appreciation, they learn to have a goal.

When children live beside people who share everything, they learn to be generous.

When children live in honesty and rightness, they learn what truth and justice are.

When children live in security, they learn to trust themselves and the others.

When children live in friendship, they learn that the world is a beautiful place to live in.

When children live in serenity, they learn to have a peaceful mind.

Dorothy L. Nolte

It is important to note that teachers who teach gifted children must have certain qualities. Among them are: noticeable intellectual reliability; great flexibility; well-developed sense of humour, to allow getting in touch easily with students and making them relax during learning; self-control when the child challenges them and they find it difficult to cope, or when they do not know the answer the questions they are being asked; a joy to teach and always learn something new from other people, from books or new, meaningful experiences.



GLOSSARY

<u><i>Name</i></u>	<u><i>Meaning</i></u>
gifted	- Giftedness is a special, multi-faceted human manifestation, with exceptionality as a common element, a happy combination of special intellectual capacities and abilities and certain features of personality.
intelligence	- The faculty to discover properties of objects and phenomena, as well as their relationships, to which is added the possibility to solve new problems.
talented	- Gifted; endowed
gifted	- Endowed; talented
reasoning	- A logical succession of judgements, which leads to a conclusion
thinking	- A superior faculty of the human brain, which reflects in a generalized way the objective reality through notions, judgements, theories
symbol	- A sign, object, image, etc which indirectly represents (conventionally or by analogous correspondence) an object, a being, a notion, an idea, a quality, a feeling

reversibility	- The quality of being reversible, the fact of being reversible
behavior	- A manner of conducting oneself and revealing one's mental life
stage	- each of the distinct periods in the evolution of a historical, social, political process, etc or a phenomenon in nature; phase, level
congenital	- Inborn, native, hereditary
deficiency	- the loss, disruption, lack of physical or mental capacities, with a permanent or temporary character
formal	- apparent
habit	- custom, practice
disability	- physical, mental or intellectual state which limits a person's mobility, activity, receptivity
hereditary	- that which is transmitted through heritage; that which is inherited
informal	- that which takes place outside determinations and institutional, official, formal framework; unofficial, uncereemonial, familiar
impulsiveness	- quality of being impulsive; lack of self-control, violence
self-control	- A control exercised upon one's own person

kinesthetic	- All the senses of the human body, based on sensitivity, without the participation of vision
tactile	- Connected with the sense of touch; that which can be perceived by means of touch
apogee	- Climax in the development of a phenomenon, of an action
interpersonal	- (about relationships) between persons
to empathize	- A form of perceiving reality through affective identification
asynchronous	- That which does not overlap in time with another motion of another phenomenon
counselling	- The action of providing <i>consultation</i> , and its result; advice
sensory	- That which is perceived through the senses
therapy	- All the methods and procedures used in treating a disease /condition.

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