

## Theoretical and Practical Reasons for Parents' Education of Gifted Underachievers

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### Abstract

This article is centered upon the Romanian parents' education for reversing underachievement of gifted pupils. Strategies of training, parents counseling and a behavioral guide alphabetically structured are some solutions that we conceived. Our definition used for gifted underachievers is not reaching the optimal level of performance because of the negative conditions from educational framework, family context and social environment. Always social context affects the development of teenagers, especially of those from disadvantaged area. Features, abilities and behaviors are essential characteristics of performance and parents can contribute a lot in their development. Difficult situations of families with gifted child represent a subtle aspect into literature. Most of the unrolled programs aim at psychological counseling and initial training about special characteristics and information on curricula programs designed for gifted teenagers. But from multitude of solutions for reversing of underachievement, it can be observed that most of them are projected on development of social, meta-cognitive abilities and cooperation. Mostly, in our country, diversity of programs for this kind of problem is rather low and frequency is almost naught. All this are caused by low number of specialists in the field and also because of the limited number of governmental and nongovernmental associations regarding giftedness. As for gifted underachievers, situation is more special as long their problems are very succinct approached into literature.

Keywords: giftedness, underachievement, nurturing parents

### Nurturing parents of gifted underachievers

Analyzing the results from counseling sessions with pupils, teachers and parents, process developed when I worked as a counselor, more than 12 years, I consider necessary to carry into effect a counseling program having as beneficiaries: gifted children, their parents and teachers. As a rule, counseling process for gifted, and especially for underachievers, is guided by specialized counselors who make use of different strategies as: individual counseling, group counseling, training teachers, peer counseling, involvement in educational intervention, special programs for personal development etc.

Regarding conceiving, preparing and organizing a program designed for parents with gifted children, most of the experts appreciate that it must be structured on five areas: teachers, curricula, training process, colleagues/friends group and specialized services. Specialized services for nurturing parents have a decisive role on many registers: identification process, understanding the excellence, knowing different strategies for cognitive incitation and positive answers, and all these because no parent wants for his child to fail and to have a low self-esteem; on the contrary the parent aspires to develop as much as possible his potential. Different approaches based on theoretical frames have been developed and experienced. Intervention programs designed for gifted underachievers have success because of their efficiency. Usually, these programs don't focus on a single component, but also on many-sided problems that require a research on many levels. From it emerges the need of these programs for families with gifted underachievers.

The experts of the giftedness (D. Colangelo and D. F. Dettmann, 1983; Sylvia B. Rimm, 1991; Emerick, 1992; S.M. Baum, J. Renzulli and T. Hébert, 1995; Willings, 1998) assert that for a good integration into abilities development strategies and decreasing underachievement programs of a gifted underachiever is imperative the parents' agreement. This way they are informed on his child progress and can take part in these programs for reasons as a better understanding of excellence and implication on supporting learning process of his child. Through these programs it's also important to increase the ~~behavior role in development~~ of a positive and non-regressiveness attitude. Examining the literature, most of the specialists long for the next strategies in decreasing the school underachievement of gifted pupils:

- developing control on learning;
- settling goals that can be achieved;
- supplying of opportunities for excel;
- increasing incitation and complexity of tasks;
- developing meta-cognitive abilities;
- encouraging positive relationships,
- improving colaboration and cooperation process.

All these strategies parts of overtaking the underachievement can be reached only by gathering the efforts of all those involved: pupils, teachers and parents. These must be focused on developing social and cognitive abilities, leadership attitude, on analyzing the relationship between school resources, education process and school achievements; and also on periodically progress.

A successful approach for reversing underachievement is drawing off attention from unfunctional aspects and focusing on positive strategies' conception of fellow's abilities. Must be kept the fact that underachievement at teens doesn't go in one day. In starting these phenomena it matters individual factors, school and family. All these aspects attached with socio-educational background develop gradually underachievement. Regardless of educational actor which will be involved and act for decreasing of underachievement, it will succeed in reversing this phenomena. However, for producing this reversing is not enough only the knowing of the strategies. For getting this long- expected change is imperative to act for using these strategies.

The understanding and identification by parents of psychological profile of gifted underachievers can have as result a maximum development of their high potential. Sylvia B. Rimm (1987) conceived a nurturing program for family, developed

on eight work-sessions. Practically, it's a course for supporting gifted teenagers in taking success and a positive self-esteem. Tackled problems of this course are regarding general aspects of child personality and especially on gifted child's features. So, the courses are structured on eight major themes:

- 1) praise and criticism;
- 2) reward and punishment;
- 3) dependence and domination;
- 4) easy games and "trap" games;
- 5) unattached habits;
- 6) pattern making tasks;
- 7) perfectionism, stress and pressure's colleagues;
- 8) opportunity provided by community and educational environment.

In 1990, P.L. Supplee developed a program in which were involved parents of young, primary and teenagers gifted. Development of learning abilities was the main goal of the program and was focused on activities which could be carried on school in different subject matters.

Another well achieved strategy is parents' counseling of gifted children. W. Gray and Marianne Gray (1996, pp. 471-477) drawn up a this kind of strategy. They recommend to be a high level of cooperation between parents and child, because the parents will play the role of mentor for their own child. Four steps describe this strategy:

1. First stage is writing the proposal. Based on his private experience, the parent as mentor identifies into the project what he wishes to let in on the child, what the protected role carries out till 8 to 12 weeks.
2. The second stage is making up from adoption of an outline project both the mentor and protected child.
3. Fulfillment of the project is the third stage.
4. Setting up, making-up and ending the product compose the last stage of the strategy.

### **Behavioral guide "ABC" for parents of gifted underachievers**

Therefore, we think it right to build up a behavioral code, named "ABC guide for parents of gifted underachievers teenagers". This one should be applied by those parents who have an underachiever and further it should be care on with special programmes and educational interventions.

This ABC guide is alphabetically structured and it contains a number of behavioral ways to understand the underachiever and help him to develop his potential.

As a counselor, knowing the characteristics of gifted underachievers and the social and school development in relation with their parents can improve their educational strategies for a better nurturing talent. From counseling practice, we'd like to set up this instrument into all future actions designed for parents of gifted underachievers. The novelty of this instrument goes out from personality' characteristics and abilities of gifted underachievers.

Alphabetically order, here are some types of behavior which should be externalized by family having as goal reversing or decreasing underachievement.

#### **A**

Aim at his strong points and fortify them! Allot time for listening him!  
Always equip yourself with good will!  
Arm yourself with a lot of trust and patience! Avoid "verbal pushing" to read or learn!  
Attention and affection needs don't keep on age. And must not be considered that is enough till a certain age.  
Attract the child into more and different contests and competitions!

#### **B**

Balance affection and expectations! Be a good example for your child! Be flexible!  
Beware of excessive criticism! Bless your child daily!  
Build up a secure family environment!  
Build up together a work discipline!

#### **C**

Chance for developing his abilities depend on your way of socialize him.  
Checking and leadership abilities must be developed for helping the young teenager into its own construction of a strong personality!  
Create visual games or intellectual challenges!  
Creativity means an essential side of giftedness!

#### **D**

Demonstrated particularity in resolving tasks must be appreciated! Develop into him an attitude of responsibility!  
Direct his resources into a constructive purpose!  
Discreetly supervise his activities!  
Diversify the demonstration possibilities of his cognitive, artistic, psycho-motrics abilities etc. Don't criticize his judgments!  
Analyze them through a positive manner!  
Dreams! Do not try to fulfill your own dreams through your child! He has his dreams!

**E**

Encourage him in taking responsibilities for his actions!

Encourage him to develop his talent, creativity, imagination and his special abilities! Encourage him to respect the others rights!

Encourage him to spend free time by making sport for health! Energize your child into solve family and school problems!

**F**

Facilitate more ranges of knowledge! Fit in your family style! Focus on resolving tasks!

**G**

Give him chance to excel! Guide him! He needs a guide!

**H**

Help him in acquiring and developing social abilities!

Help him to have trust into its own person and on his capacities for touching the performance! Highly sensitiveness is another differentiating criteria from his colleagues!

"Horizons" of knowledge are unlimited. Let him FLY!

Humility is not a solution for rectifying his mistakes! Humor can help in talking about touchy problems!

**I**

Impress him through a responsible attitude regarding school and family tasks! Interaction with other teenagers can stimulate him!

Involve your child in as many activities giving him chance to show what he likes to work!

**J**

Joy together!

**K**

Keep high standards, but not exaggerated on targets' establishment on long term and on solving problems!

"Kilometres" of stress and tiredness gathers at your work don't pour on your child!

**L**

Lead the learning process to maximum development of his cognitive interests! Learn him how to socialize without giving up at his personality!

Learn him methods of paraphrase regarding the way of assert his point of view!

**M**

Mentorship can be a source of models!

**N**

Needs of your teenager don't confine only at material category or physiological needs. Noise is part of teenager's life.

**O**

Offer him as many opportunities and alternatives for maximum development of abilities! Oneness of your teenager emerges from his behavior and ideas! Originality of his ideas must not be neglected!

**P**

Perfection and tenacity represents essential features of giftedness! Persuade him to end tasks in which he's involved!

Play with the utility of his ideas!

Positive family tonus can uphold the teenager into solving tasks! Prove consistency in applying family rules!

Proved independence must be rewarded!

Provoke induction of opportunities for developing adaptability capacities. Prove understanding and love!

**Q**

"Quasars" must be supported by each of us!

**R**

Respect him!

Reward him for obtaining achievements!

Restlessness from school doesn't mean that he hates school, it is possible to have a high level of vitality and to be bored by teaching style or redundancy of information.

Restrict yourself on enforcement his freedom!

Right administration of time must be part of nurturing process for a work system of your child!

**S**

Self-esteem might declines, sometimes with after-effects on future career! Show him affection!

Support him into touching his ambitions! Stimulate him into touching his ideal!

Stress caused by not ending certain tasks in which he is involved can unleash unstable health! Support him to participate also at extra-curricula programs!

#### **T**

Take first step in finding ways of spending free time into the family or with his group of friends. Take part in special meetings regarding your gifted child personality!

Talk about his targets!

Talk together all decisions! Transpose into your teenager place!

Treat your child with tolerance and tenderness even if his attitude is wintry! Together determine family decisions!

#### **U**

Unity level of your family reverberates on life style of your teenager!

Uphold him in priorities' settlement because this has multiple and different interests, culminating with not ending tasks!

#### **V**

Value his contributions!

#### **W**

Weekends can be spend learning *in* and *from* the nature! Work in team and learn him to cooperate!

Worries are reflected in behavior, interests and school efficaciousness!

Worries can be caused by yourself not only by external factors.

#### **X**

Xenophobia, especially at teens, must be fight against with strong reasons!

#### **Y**

Yens, pounds, euro have a certain value, but do not forget that your child has an invaluable value and therefore, do not neglect him!

#### **Z**

Zeal, trust, unusual are more peculiar at this age!

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