

## Acceleration Options For Gifted Children

“Homeschooling allows the ideal educational program for a highly gifted child to unfold, by providing maximum flexibility in the spirit of the best traditions and the strongest research bases we have in the field of gifted education. This includes the use of acceleration, intense and focused enrichment, flexible pacing, mentorships, internships, early college, and summer programs.”

**Kathi Kearney**, founder of Hollingworth Center for the Highly Gifted

Gifted education researchers have designed an IQ chart, with attendant monikers, for describing the cognitive abilities of gifted children. Abilities vary between these levels, with the general characteristics of giftedness increasing in intensity as the IQ rises.

### **IQ Score Chart**

130+	gifted
130-145	moderately gifted
145-160	highly gifted
160-180	exceptionally gifted
180+	profoundly gifted
200+	sometimes jokingly referred to as terminally gifted

### **How The Gifted Learn**

Because many gifted children, especially high IQ children, hate to write, spell badly, and love to play with math, there are specific accommodations and strategies parents may use to facilitate their child’s academic success from an early age. Very abstract children may need special accommodations in other subjects, as well. The following list addresses some tips and strategies:

- Allow your child to dictate stories to you
- Do not force him to write, it may be either painful or frustrating for him
- Sloppy handwriting is not a sign of laziness
- Some young gifted children enjoy practicing lovely handwriting as an art form, but develop bad handwriting once writing is used as a means of communication
- Speak well! Many gifted children learn proper grammar through conversation
- Horrible spelling is often the calling card of the highly gifted
- Remediation exercises for bad spelling and poor handwriting may make your child feel stupid
- Alpha Smart word processors are being used widely in school systems as an accommodation for handwriting difficulties
- Buy a typing tutorial computer program for your gifted child
- Typing is an acceptable substitute for handwriting
- Very abstract children may need help gathering their thoughts aloud to parents or to a tape recorder before beginning an outline for a paper

- Writing outlines may be VERY difficult for some abstract gifted children to accomplish (even verbally fluent children)
- Allow your child to dictate math solutions to you
- Allow your child to skip “showing his work” in math problems as long as he gets the answer right
- Do not force your child to use the “school” method of functions and equations if he can utilize his own method for the same problem
- Allow your child to do math work that is not in sequential order
- Trust that the child who is flirting with algebra, trigonometry, or calculus “before he is ready,” is ready
- Drill and kill is an inappropriate pedagogy for gifted children
- Allow your child to read above grade level
- Do not force your child to write summaries about every story or book he reads; he processes so many thoughts about that story that retrieving those thoughts after the fact may be maddening for him
- Encourage your child to chat about what he reads, thereby providing you with an informal summary of his reading without frustrating him unduly
- Provide him with reading material that is commensurate with his interests
- Allow him to choose books from the adult section of the library, even if he only looks at the pictures
- Encourage him to read adult-level magazines about his favorite subject (don’t provide only children’s magazines on the subject)
- Read to him, even after he can read for himself
- Textbook reading material may be boring and superficial, read library books on key subjects instead
- Don’t be afraid to let him read a book that is “too hard for him” if he picks it
- If he drops a book after only a cursory pass at reading it, don’t panic, he is flexing his mental muscles and gearing up for the next pass
- He may not re-approach that book for a year or more, let him take his time

## **Compacting**

The following quote from “Curriculum Compacting: A Necessity for Academic Advancement,” by Del Siegle, of the University of Connecticut, provides a working definition for compacting.

Curriculum compacting is one of the most common forms of curriculum modification for academically advanced students. It is also the basic procedure upon which many other types of modification are founded. Compacting is based on the premise that students who demonstrate they have mastered course content, or can master course content more quickly, can buy time to study material that they find more challenging and interesting (Renzulli & Reis, 1985)... Sometimes, academically advanced students may not have mastered course content, but they are capable of doing so at

an accelerated pace. They may have some understanding of the content and may require minimal time or instruction for mastery. In these cases, content compacting is useful.

## **Immersion**

Respected gifted education authority, Deirdre Lovecky, Ph.D. writes about immersion in her article, “Exceptionally Gifted Children: Different Minds.”

The literature also focuses on the immersion learning styles and breadth of knowledge exhibited by exceptionally gifted children. Feldman (1986) described the learning style of Adam as both nonlinear and omnivorous in his desire for knowledge. His style is further described as being “non-Western” and untraditional so that a regular school program did not work for him. Adam grasped concepts holistically and intuitively. Once he acquired the basic framework, he filled in the particulars. His parents thought he first developed theory, then learned basic facts and skill. Later, he questioned basic assumptions about theory. Adam had a number of ongoing interests which he explored at increasing levels of complexity including symbol systems (cartography and languages), music, science, and mathematics (Feldman, 1986).

## **Grade Skipping**

Leta Hollingworth, wrote in *Children Above 180 IQ (Stanford-Binet)*, “We know from measurements made over a three-year period that a child of 140 IQ can master all the mental work provided in the elementary school, as established, in half the time allowed him.”

## **Early College**

Many experts in the field of gifted education support early college classes for gifted children. Australian gifted education expert, Miraca Gross, writes in her article entitled, “Radical Acceleration: Responding to academic and social needs of extremely gifted adolescents” (found in *The Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, Vol. V, Number 4, Summer):

“Extremely gifted students may benefit from entering college several years early. There is a considerable bank of research evidence which suggests that not only are the academic achievements of early college entrants superior to those of regular college students and equally gifted students who did not enter early (Janos & Robinson, 1985b; Brody, Assouline & Stanley, 1990), but also that the experience of early entrance has no negative effects on, but rather enhances, the social and emotional adjustment of accelerants (Brody & Benbow, 1987; Noble & Drummond, 1992)” (Gross, 1994)