



**Bexley City School District**  
To provide educational experiences that engage, equip and empower each student.

# QUARTER 1 NEWSLETTER for FAMILIES of GIFTED LEARNERS

October 16, 2020

## One Quarter in the Books

It is hard to believe the first quarter of the year is already complete! It's been a busy time for all of our learners as they have engaged in classes virtually and on site. While academics are an important focus and primary purpose of school, I want to focus this newsletter on topics related to social-emotional needs of gifted learners. That has been a theme I have started to see in some of your outreach to me. I hope you find the information in this edition of the newsletter useful.

Have a wonderful weekend and a great start to the new quarter!

Sincerely,

Dr. Colleen Boyle , Coordinator of Curriculum and Gifted

## The Theme of Change

The body of research about gifted learners and gifted education highlights the ability of gifted learners to make connections and to think about abstract ideas a little earlier than typical peers. Ideal curriculum for gifted would provide opportunities to make links between their learning across content areas and big ideas and themes. We are going to begin working on how to do that in our classes, and there are things that can be done at home to build those connections, as well. As we share examples, we will focus on the theme of *change*.

Change can be a hot button topic. Some people dread change of any sort, and others embrace change simply for the sake of change. Regardless of our feelings about change, it is inevitable. And that has not been more evident than what we have experienced in the past year or so. For many gifted learners, change can raise anxiety levels; we are pattern-seeking beings, and change breaks those patterns. While it takes a variety of strategies to support any social-emotional outcomes related to change, we can help students be more open to change by building their understanding of the concept early on.

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A simple tip to build conceptual understanding about change is to discuss things that come up throughout the day and explore their connection to a generalization about change. For example, when shopping for new shoes, make the connection that the new shoes are due to growing feet - a form of change that is inevitable and expected. Then explore how that change is positive (a sign of growing up and healthy development, an opportunity for new shoes) and negative (costs money to replace shoes). Or, while reading a book together and the character experiences a change or when discussing a current event, explore how that change aligns to one of the generalizations below.

Here are some generalizations for focus on the topic of change:

- Change is inevitable.
- Change is necessary for growth.
- Change can occur in cycles.
- Change can be either positive or negative.
- Change generates additional change.
- Change can be planned or spontaneous.
- Change can be expected or unexpected
- Some change is a result of passive actions or interactions.
- Some change is systematic.
- All change leads to some form of transformation but all transformations are not permanent.
- Change can be evolutionary or revolutionary.

As your students build their understanding of the nature of change, they will better understand and be able to prepare for the impact change may have in their own lives.

## **Overexcitabilities and the Gifted Learner**

Next month's gifted family meeting will focus on the social emotional aspects of giftedness, focusing primarily on asynchronous development and overexcitabilities and the impact of those on various aspects of life and learning. As I've talked with teachers, students, and families these past few weeks, I've seen how overexcitabilities, in particular, are having an effect on our students. So, here is a little preview of what will be shared during our session on November 12.

Overexcitabilities are a type of intensity in one or more of five domains:

- Intellectual - An intense curiosity and need to know and analyze
- Emotional - A sensitivity to the emotional situations an intense emotional response
- Sensory - A heightened sensitivity to sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures
- Psychomotor - Excess motor activity (not accompanied by distractibility)
- Imaginational - Tendency to ponder what could be in creative and/or analytical ways

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While anyone can experience an overexcitability, gifted individuals are thought to be more prone. Gifted individuals can have one or more, in any combination, or none at all. And, the experience of overexcitabilities can begin even in infancy and continue on through adulthood. They do not go away but may intensify or seem to dissipate some as the individual learns to manage them. Sometimes, overexcitabilities are misdiagnosed as a disability or mental health disorder, and other times they are co-occurring. In any case, I would encourage teachers and family members to become familiar with overexcitabilities to help gifted learners adapt their surroundings and learn to use them to their benefit.

Some tips:

- Identify the overexcitability for what it is - not as good or bad, just as a characteristic of the person.
- List the positive aspects of the overexcitability. How can it be an asset?
- Plan ahead for times when the overexcitability may be problematic. Brainstorm and, if appropriate, practice strategies that could be employed for those times.

Gifted individuals are aware when overexcitabilities bother them. But, gifted children often don't realize that their experience due to overexcitabilities isn't typical. So, they can get frustrated when others are not experiencing those same things or reacting in the same way, or they may assume others are creating an overexcitable situation to intentionally bother them. Students may realize they are processing differently than classmates and may become self-conscious, frustrated, or anxious about not fitting in. In any case, they need to be taught by adults about what overexcitabilities are, how an overexcitability may or may not occur the same way for others, that an overexcitability is neither defect nor privilege, the benefit (or "superpower") that comes with overexcitabilities, and strategies for coping with the challenges of an overexcitability. Join us on November 12 for more specifics about the types of overexcitabilities and strategies for each.

*Resources About Overexcitabilities*

- [Five Unexpected Intensities in Gifted Children](#)
- [Truth About Overexcitabilities Blog](#)
- [Overexcitability and the Gifted](#)
- [Living with Intensity by Susan Daniels and Michael Piechowski](#) (book - there is also a teen version and parenting teen version)

## **Upcoming Family Engagement Opportunities**

Thank you to those who attended our September family meeting related to resources for gifted learners. Thank you, also, to those who completed our interest survey about topics for future sessions. We've used that feedback to plan the schedule below. We will meet again via Zoom in

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November to discuss social emotional dimensions of giftedness. Details about future meetings will be shared shortly before they occur. Slides and recordings of previous sessions will be posted on the district's gifted website at [www.bexleyschools.org/GiftedEducation.aspx](http://www.bexleyschools.org/GiftedEducation.aspx).

- *November 12* - Overview of the Social-Emotional Needs of Gifted Learners - 6:30-7:30pm - [Join via Zoom](#)
- *January 14* - Understanding and Supporting Executive Functioning - 6:30-7:30pm - location TBD
- *April 8* - Anxiety, Depression, and Giftedness - 6:30-7:30pm - location TBD

You are also invited to (virtually) attend the Ohio Association for Gifted Children's Parent Day this Sunday, October 18. National and state speakers will talk about social emotional development of gifted children and how giftedness impacts families. For more information and to register for this event, [download the registration form here](#).