



Bexley City School District

To provide educational experiences that engage, equip and empower each student.

QUARTER 2 NEWSLETTER for FAMILIES of GIFTED LEARNERS

October 25, 2021

Fall Is Finally Here!

It seems like it took forever, but fall is finally here. The weather is a little cooler, the leaves have changed colors, and the school year is into a solid rhythm and routine. At the end of the first quarter, it is not uncommon for students who are gifted to feel a little stressed. Sometimes they are doubting themselves because classes that started off requiring little to no effort suddenly pose a challenge that need a little extra effort or practice to master. Sometimes students have been going full steam ahead since day 1, and it has caught up to them, and they are tired. The result of both situations looks the same, but the response from caring adults should be very different. This month, the focus is on grit: knowing when to show it, and knowing when to take a breather. Hopefully you will find some tips to use when guiding your child through this season and on to the next.

Have a great fall!

Sincerely,

Dr. Colleen Boyle, Director of Curriculum and Gifted

Getting “Gritty”

Grit is one of the latest “buzzwords” in the field of education. It is discussed by mental health professionals. It is even a domain on the Panorama survey we administer to students in Grades 4 through 12 in Bexley. For all the talk about grit, it is helpful to understand what we really mean. The concept of grit includes perseverance when facing a challenge. It is sticking to a goal even when encountering a roadblock. It means working through and past momentary frustration to continue to work toward the goal or solution. Grit requires individuals to be able to identify resources that may be helpful in overcoming obstacles or solving problems. A person with grit practices self-regulation to feel frustration and then regain control of emotions. And, at the heart of it all, a person with grit possesses the confidence to believe one is capable of finding success, even if it isn't easy.

Sometimes, as adults, we assume that the gifted learners in our midst are able to rise to any challenge before them. After all, they are gifted. But, grit is something that is developed over time as students

have opportunity to put it into practice. So, the longer it takes for gifted learners to experience a learning obstacle, the later it will be before they develop grit. Based on my observations, the older they are when they first encounter that learning struggle, the harder it is to get past it.

So, how can we help students develop grit? There are lots of opinions on this topic, but there are a few consistent themes:

- *Provide opportunities that result in a struggle.* Encourage them to be in classes that pose a challenge and may require effort to understand the material. Support their involvement in a sport or artistic pursuit that is new to them and requires practice over time to develop new skills. The idea is to allow them to experience the feeling of not getting something right the first time and having to practice and deal with frustration in the process. Sometimes a loving caregiver's first reaction is to rescue their child from a struggle. But that denies the learner the opportunity to develop persistence and self-management skills to persevere.
- *Emphasize situations where they have shown growth or improvement.* When a student is in the moment of frustration due to a challenge, it can be difficult for them to see that they CAN be successful. In those moments, first acknowledge the challenge and the struggle and the frustration. Then, guide your learner to remember a time they had to practice to get better at something. It may be a video game that took hours of play to advance to new levels or learning to follow the directions for a Lego build or many tries to master painting a dog's face. You can even remind them that it took time to learn to walk, ride a bike, or drive. This helps them see that they have worked through a challenge before and can do it again.
- *Set realistic expectations.* Sometimes, in our desire to see our gifted learners make the most of their talents, we unintentionally communicate an expectation of perfection or that school should be easy. Family members may need to be deliberate about communicating their true expectation of effort and hard work rather than an expectation of straight As or top honors.
- *Model grit.* Finally, one of the most powerful learning experiences is via observation and mimicking. It is how children learn to talk, behave, and to do most things. As you encounter a challenging situation that requires grit, allow your gifted child to see that. Share with them when something doesn't come easy and requires you to deal with frustration and regroup and try again. Talk about the strategies and mental talk you use to help in those moments.

The November family session via Zoom will explore this topic in more depth. Information about that is toward the end of this newsletter.

For additional readings on this topic, visit the links below:

- [Grit and Giftedness: Four Ways to Encourage Perseverance in Gifted Children](#)
- [If At First You Don't Succeed, Quit: Gifted Kids and Grit](#)
- [Grit and Giftedness: Nurturing Perseverance in Gifted Children](#)
- [The Grit-Talent Dichotomy: Creating False Expectations for Gifted Children](#)

Taking a Breath

Providing opportunities for our gifted learners to experience productive struggle and develop grit is key to long term success and independence. But it is also important for caregivers to be sensitive to when a meaningful and appropriate challenge crosses the line and becomes an overwhelming burden that hinders long term mental health. Momentary frustration, sadness, or even anxiety or anger are part of daily life, and our children can learn valuable coping skills in those moments. But when those feelings are constant, it is time to change the situation. That could take many forms, such as keeping one or two advanced level classes and taking traditional level courses for all other subjects. It may mean dropping one or more extracurricular activities or other non-essential commitments. It may even mean seeking professional help to regain equilibrium and skills to manage those emotions moving forward. While we do not want to remove our gifted learners from all challenging experiences, there are times when reducing, but not fully eliminating, the time spent in such situations can give the student space to breathe, regroup, and regain confidence and focus.

It can be hard to know when to support the child by encouraging the struggle and when supporting the student means pulling back challenging experiences. A student may indicate a need for either action as evidenced by dropping grades, emotional outbursts, or withdrawing. The best way to know if the need is to develop grit or give space to take a breath is through talking. Ask questions that help your learner express what they are thinking and feeling without putting words in their mouth. For example, ask questions such as the following:

- “What are you feeling at school, in this extracurricular, with friends, at home?”
- “When do you most feel anxious/frustrated/overwhelmed (or feeling they express)?”
- “What are situations where you do NOT feel these things?”

These questions and any followup questions can help identify if there are particular situations that require support or if the student is generally overwhelmed and needs space. Please also do not hesitate to reach out to teachers, coaches, counselors, or others who work with your student for more insight or perspectives on the situation.

Finally, this burnout can be prevented. Balancing the schedule is the key. It is important for all people, including gifted individuals, to have down time. That means saving space in each day that is unscheduled, unstructured, and available to be used as the individual chooses - playing games, reading a book, drawing, riding a bike, doing absolutely nothing at all. It also means that ample time is allotted for sleep. Gifted individuals may need less sleep than most OR they may need significantly more sleep than most. And, sleep may not come easily to the gifted person as their brain constantly races into the night. But making sure there is free time and quality sleep time can help ward off burnout before it begins.

Looking for More Information About Gifted Education?

Do you have questions about gifted education in Bexley? Wondering about processes or timelines? Planning ahead and wondering what to expect as your child gets older? Looking for resources related to raising a gifted learner? You can find answers to these questions and more by [visiting our website](#). Not only is much of the information available on the various pages linked to our site, we also have a [comprehensive gifted handbook](#) available to download from the main page. Check it out!

Upcoming Family Engagement Opportunities

We continue to hold quarterly sessions for parents and guardians to come together and learn a little about how to further support their gifted learners. Mark your calendars and join us for the events listed below. Slides and recordings of previous sessions, including September's session about supporting the whole child, are posted on the district's [gifted website](#).

- *November 30* - Developing Grit in the Gifted Child - 6:00-7:00pm, [Join via Zoom](#)
- *January 25* - Topic TBD - 6:00-7:00pm, Virtual
- *March 29* - Gifted Family Support and Collaboration - 6:00-7:00pm, Location TBD

As shared in September, we are currently conducting a gifted program review. The goals of the review are to consider the effectiveness of our existing services and to ensure there is a match between the services and supports available in Bexley City Schools and the needs of our gifted learners within the context of best practice research and state rules. Thank you to all the families, students, and staff who shared their perspectives via our survey. The results of the survey and other data have been reviewed by the Gifted Review Team, and they are using that information to guide their work. Anyone can review the team's meeting notes and materials and can provide feedback by visiting [our website](#). The team will develop their recommendations by the end of November and will share those with the Board of Education in December.

OAGC Parent Day Recordings

The Ohio Association for Gifted Children held their annual conference last week, including their Parent Day sessions. Those sessions were open to parents and guardians, educators, and community members with an interest in understanding and supporting gifted children. Two of the breakout sessions were recorded and are available to view for free online along with some past events, as well. Visit [OAGC's YouTube channel](#) to view these recordings.

Scholarship Opportunities (School Age and College)

The Ohio Association for Gifted Children has three different scholarship programs to support the pursuits of gifted learners in Ohio. These programs are for both school-ages and rising college freshmen. [Visit their website for applications for the three programs described below:](#)

- *2021 OAGC Susan Faulkner Arts Scholarship* - Deadline is **November 15, 2021**. Scholarships will be awarded to students currently in grades K- 12 who are applying for a special program or activity to further encourage or nurture an interest or talent in an area of the visual or performing arts
- *2022 OAGC Student Scholarship* - Each year OAGC offers scholarships to K-12 Ohio students for special activities that extend their special talent/interest areas. Note: The deadline is **February 15, 2022** for applications.
- *2022 OAGC College Scholarship Award* - For any student who is about to enroll in his/her first year of college and/or a student currently enrolled full time in an undergraduate program of an Ohio college. The extended deadline is **April 15, 2022**.

The Jack Kent Cooke Foundation also offers two programs to support students, one a college scholarship and one a program from current 7th grade students.

- The *2022 Cooke College Scholarship Program* is an undergraduate scholarship program available to high-achieving high school seniors with financial need who seek to attend and graduate from the nation's best four-year colleges and universities. The application is open until **November 18, 2021**. For more details, [visit the website](#).
- The *Cooke Young Scholars Program* is a selective five-year, pre-college scholarship for high-performing 7th grade students with financial need. It provides comprehensive academic and college advising, as well as financial support for school, Cooke-sponsored summer programs, internships, and other learning enrichment opportunities. [Applications will open February 7, 2022](#). For more details, [visit the website](#).

Finally, *Support for Talented Students* (STS) is a local organization that provides scholarships for gifted students in grades 3 through 12 to access summer programs aligned to their talents and interests. Awards are based on financial need. The application window typically opens in DEcember or January. For more details and the application, [visit their website](#).