



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

# QUARTER 2 NEWSLETTER for FAMILIES of GIFTED LEARNERS

January 4, 2021

## Halfway there!

Welcome back to school! I hope all had a restful winter break and enjoyed time with your inner circle celebrating the blessings of the season. The first semester has ended and we are gearing up for the second half of the year to begin this week. The New Year brings with it new hope and new resolutions to help make this year even better than the last. So, in that vein, this newsletter is centered on ideas to help you and your gifted learners refine or establish new approaches or scholarly habits.

Again, welcome back and have a great start to a new year!

Sincerely,

Dr. Colleen Boyle , Coordinator of Curriculum and Gifted

## Habits of a Scholar

Gifted students sometimes feel an unspoken expectation to always achieve at high levels. Sometimes those expectations come from within the child, and other times they are implied by adults' comments or reactions to performance in school or other areas of life. At an early age, gifted children can sometimes mistake this for an expectation of perfection or top marks in all they do in school, extracurriculars, or homelife. But, usually, when I speak with parents and teachers, the desire isn't for perfection, but rather for "scholarliness."

Being a scholar is not about straight As or being mistake-free. It is about how we approach learning. Dr. Sandra Kaplan outlined the following habits of a scholar in her curricular framework:

- Curiosity to ask questions about the unknown
- Pondering ideas discovered in learning
- Consideration of multiple perspectives
- Intellectual risk-taking
- Academic humility
- Saving ideas for future use

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- Goal setting
  - Preparation for learning
  - Use of varied resources
  - Perseverance during a challenge
  - Aiming for excellence (not perfection!)

Some people seem to innately possess many or all of these traits. Others may need a little more “coaxing.” But all individuals need opportunities to develop and reinforce these traits in order to become a lifelong learner.

There are some general strategies for promoting these habits within your children. First, provide positive reinforcement whenever they display one of the habits. Maybe they lost a lacrosse game but still gave it their best even when the team was down. Praise the perseverance and effort toward excellence. Or, when your rising high schooler wants to take that honors course in a subject that has historically been more of a challenge for them, praise the intellectual risk taking and use it as an opportunity for goal setting and perseverance. In addition to recognizing these traits within your student, point them out when encountering characters in favorite books, movies, or television shows, discussing eminent people in society, or even when sharing stories of family members past and present. These help establish role models for the habits for those times when your learner may be struggling. Finally, identify one or two habits to develop further in your child. Spend time doing activities that will give them a chance to exercise that specific habit and then talk through it or reflect on how your student used the habit afterwards. With enough deliberate practice, these will eventually become routine.

Some additional resources:

- [Poster of the habits](#)
- [Quick video for kids introducing the habits](#)

## Connecting in a Time of Containment

The past ten months or so have reminded us all of the value of relationships with others. Even for introverts, who make up a sizable portion of the gifted population, the initial joy of solitude has been replaced by the need for deep, meaningful connection with others who know and understand us. As we follow guidance to remain socially distant from those outside of our household, we can begin to feel alone and disconnected from those who are important to us. For our children, we are disappointed they can’t experience the social aspects school often brings through large group extracurricular activities, cooperative learning tasks in class, or even something as simple as a chatty lunch in the cafeteria. Whether your children attend school in hybrid mode or via e-learning, this new “normal” may have you concerned about their connection to others.

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When I get into a mode of frustration and disappointment that my current situation doesn't live up to my expectations, I find it sometimes helps to reframe and look for a new opportunity to do my favorite things differently. (I know - we have been looking for ways to do things differently for months now, and we may wonder how much creativity we have left.) Below are some ideas I have witnessed that have enabled youth and families to connect with others during these unusual times.

Some ideas:

- Connect with the people IN your home. As a family, play board games, do a puzzle, complete a household project, build something, reorganize the playroom, start a new book.
- Schedule a dinner via video chat with friends. Either everyone brings their own favorites or have families order in from the same restaurant to share the experience. If you live near each other, consider having everyone contribute one dish, divide it up among the shared households, and have one driver distribute the contributions before everyone joins virtually to enjoy the meal together.
- Make the same meal or bake treats with friends or family via video chat. (I had a friend whose family did this while prepping their Thanksgiving turkey and another whose daughter attended a cookie baking party this way.)
- Find a favorite board game and either play with friends remotely using the game's app or with the real thing via video chat (everyone needs to have the game to access cards/dice, etc. with one person controlling the board).
- Start a virtual book club. This is fun for any age! Older children can read the latest novel in their favorite series or genre. For younger children, have adults take turns leading a virtual story time for the child and their friends.
- Create a shared photo album online and have each person contribute one photo of a meaningful moment each day. It is a way to share life experiences and to reflect on what is important all while keeping a record for the future.
- Have kids or family start watching the same movie or TV show at the same time and chat while watching via video chat or text.
- Send postcards to a friend or drop off notes to a neighbor's door while taking a walk in the neighborhood.
- Have a long distant friend or family member become a penpal with an old fashioned exchange of letters.
- Call a loved one on the phone. If you want to be really nostalgic, use a landline. We've become so used to texting that we have forgotten the joys of phone conversations. (Remember the days of stretching the cord to the household phone around corners and under doors to try to have some sort of privacy?)

There are lots of ideas to be tried. Rather than looking for existing technology and trying to fit into that, start by having your child or family members consider what pastimes or hobbies they like to do with each other or friends. Then think about what can be done at a distance and replicate as much as

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possible. Thanks to modern technology, our kids can connect with each other outside of school doing the things they love more than we might expect.

#### *Additional Resources*

- [10 Ways Kids Can Connect With Friends During COVID-19](#)
- [How to Keep Kids Connected with Friends During COVID-19](#)
- [20 Ways To Digitally Connect With Kids During The Covid-19 Pandemic](#)
- [How to Help Children Keep Up Social Connections During Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Pandemic](#)

## **Upcoming Family Engagement Opportunities**

Thank you to those who attended our November family meeting as we discussed the social-emotional characteristics of gifted learners. We will meet again via Zoom in January to discuss executive functioning and gifted learners as we support developing scholarly habits. 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).

- *January 14* - Understanding and Supporting Executive Functioning - 6:30-7:30pm - [Join via Zoom](#)
- *April 8* - Anxiety, Depression, and Giftedness - 6:30-7:30pm - location TBD