



# Bexley City School District

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

## QUARTER 4 NEWSLETTER for FAMILIES of GIFTED LEARNERS

March 25, 2022

### Homestretch!

Welcome back! I hope everyone had an enjoyable spring break. As our world continues to figure out its “new normal” and people begin to gather more, I thought it might be a good time to talk about helping gifted children establish and navigate relationships with others. We will take a look at how some of the social-emotional facets of giftedness might impact relationships and consider strategies students can use to strengthen their relationship skills. Consider taking a look at past newsletters or family sessions for more information about those social-emotional traits. Meanwhile, I hope you and your family enjoy the spring weather and make the most of the days to come.

Have a great spring!

Sincerely,

Dr. Colleen Boyle , Director of Curriculum and Gifted

### Giftedness in Relationships

Giftedness can be a blessing in many ways. It can open doors of opportunity and facilitate success. But, it also can come with social-emotional challenges that impact day to day life, including relationships with others. Things like asynchronous development, overexcitabilities, and introversion can result in the gifted individual participating in relationships in a manner that may differ from others' expectations.

#### Asynchrony

Asynchronous development is the uneven developmental patterns experienced by gifted children. Their cognitive or academic skills may be more advanced than their chronological age. This also can affect language development, which is the means by which people build relationships (you have to communicate to relate). Similarly, emotional development that either is more advanced or lags can create a mismatch when interacting with others. As a result, an age-based world at school and in extracurriculars may make it difficult for a gifted child to find peers with similar interests or

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communication skills. In Bexley, our high rate of gifted identification makes this less of a challenge, as anywhere from 25-40% of students in a grade level are gifted. While the developmental differences may be more evident at younger ages, by upper elementary and middle school, students are very self-aware and may try to hide their differences to fit in with others. Sometimes, this asynchronous development may also prompt a gifted student to interact more productively with younger children than they do with age mates. This may be because they expect a younger child to act or communicate differently and do not get as frustrated by those differences as they might with age peers.

### **Overexcitabilities**

In a previous newsletter, we reviewed Dabrowski's five types of overexcitabilities. Gifted individuals may experience one or more of these in their day-to-day living. They can be superpowers that heighten their interactions with the world around them, but they can also create challenges that require flexibility, including in relationships. Intellectual overexcitability, or that need to know and think deeply, can make a gifted individual a great conversationalist; it can also prompt a hyperfocus on specific topics or ideas a child might bring into discussion that may not appeal to others. Emotional overexcitability can produce great joy and empathy as the gifted child engages in friendship, but it can also lead to intense responses when the gifted individual perceives something as hurtful or unfair. Imaginational overexcitability can create space for fun and whimsy during playtime but might also lead others to perceive the imaginational child as odd. Sensory overexcitabilities may prompt the gifted child to take notice of and appreciate the small things about those with whom they interact. However, heightened sensory responses might limit the child's tolerance to noise or chaos or lead to pointed responses to observed individual differences. Finally, psychomotor overexcitability may urge the gifted learner to willingly engage in active play, but it may also result in a more physical response to frustration. Being aware of any overexcitabilities your gifted learner experiences and being prepared to help them make the most of those can help them navigate relationships.

### **Introversion**

It is believed that a higher percentage of the gifted population is introverted than what is found among the general population. Introverted individuals still like and need human connection. But, they may only have one or two really close friends rather than a large social circle. They may also need time away from people to recharge, which may lead them to decline invitations from friends or withdraw from family events. Consider the introvert/extrovert tendencies you possess; if you are an introvert, be careful not to set those extroverted expectations on your introverted child. Your student may also need help navigating time and situational management to balance necessary alone time with time needed for engaging with others, such as with family or special occasions, in order to nurture valued relationships.

### **Strategies**

Think about how we, as adults, form and sustain new relationships. We typically connect with people who have common interests or passions, are in a similar stage in life (although not identical in age),

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have had similar experiences, or are within our community. We may be able to foster many acquaintances and a few close relationships, plus we navigate family in some manner. We have relationships that have been with us forever, some for a while, and some that are for a momentary purpose. When supporting gifted children as they develop relationships, try to create those same opportunities.

- Allow your student to interact with others within a broader age range. Of course, get to know those potential new friends and supervise as needed, especially as pre-teens and teens interact with older youth. But, allow space for the gifted child to find connections outside of their specific grade level.
- Enroll your child in an extracurricular activity that involves an age range and is connected to an area of interest. This will put your child in a community of individuals who will share interests that will lead to conversations and connections.
- Roleplay conversation scenarios, including starting a conversation, engaging in dialogue (and not just a monologue), responding to a disagreement, and reconciling after a hurt.
- When possible, host playdates or hang time in your space to observe your gifted learner's relationship skills. Make note of what they do well and where they might need support. Consider things like sharing talk time or belongings, navigating conflict, or encouraging others' values and goals. Use those observations to discuss and, as needed, coach your child later after the friend has left.
- Recognize if your child is an introvert. If so, make space for down time where it is acceptable for them to withdraw and recharge. This may need to occur right after school after spending the day with people or at the end of a particularly active weekend.
- Talk with your student about the traits they value in friendship. Help them identify one or two people who seem to embody those traits and cultivate relationships with them. Similarly, encourage them to demonstrate the very traits they value.
- Deliberately talk about the role of individuals within your family unit. Discuss the role each person plays supporting others via household responsibilities, emotional support, personal care, and presence for important events. Help your child see the role they play in supporting other family members, including friends who are like family, as well as the ways they can be supported by others.
- Model, role play, and debrief conflict resolution. Practice phrases that help communicate the presence of a disagreement, a willingness to hear and consider other perspectives, and steps for finding common ground or at least mutual respect within the disagreement.

Relationships are complicated, and giftedness adds another layer of complexity. With some acceptance of self and others and practice in relationship-building skills, gifted individuals can contribute to and benefit from meaningful connections with others.

For more information about this topic, visit the following

- [Play Partner or Sure Shelter: What Gifted Children Look For in Friendship](#)

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- [5 Tips for Helping Gifted Children Make Friends](#)
  - [Introversion: The Often Forgotten Factor Impacting the Gifted](#)
  - [Family Life with Gifted & Talented Children](#)
  - [Living in the Gifted Family](#)

## Gifted Identification and Service Verification

Annual notices confirming gifted identification and any relevant service eligibility for the 2022-2023 school year have been sent to all families via email. High school notices went out in January, middle school in February, and elementary last week. If a student identifies as gifted in a new area or becomes eligible for a new gifted service based on testing that occurs between now and the end of the school year, we will send additional notification home. If you have questions about gifted identification or services in the district, please visit the district's gifted website at [www.bexleyschools.org/GiftedEducation.aspx](http://www.bexleyschools.org/GiftedEducation.aspx). A recording of the overview provided at February's family meeting can be viewed [here](#).

## Summer Opportunities

Summer is a great time for your gifted learner to engage in activities that fuel an existing passion, spark a new one, or allow for low-risk exploration into the unknown. Take a look at our collected list of summer programs throughout Ohio and beyond. The list includes programs for all ages, some specific to gifted and advanced learners, others for all students. Program options include both virtual and in person experiences on topics across all disciplines. [You can find the list here](#).