

written 11/13/74

The "Gifted" Child

"Your child is gifted." Do you feel a warm blow of pride, a heightening interest in what your child does? A new appreciation for his uniqueness? A resolve to be more aware of your child, to bring to him and take him to opportunities for learning and a promise to yourselves not to impose upon him your conclusions but to let him creatively seek to discover for himself with only guidance from you? Do you anticipate pleasant discussions with your mate as you plan how best to nurture this marvelous child you have created together? Then you are so right! Your child is indeed gifted... he has you!

A child's being gifted is not a matter of test results. Assuming, hypothetically, that two children are born equally intelligent. One child may achieve to the apogee of his potential and the other become a mediocre individual. I maintain that the difference is in the home, first, and the school, second.

Is your principal task as a parent to keep your child safe, warm, and well-fed? Your house is always clean and neat and your careers are in good order? How much time does this leave for your child? Meaningful time? Twenty minutes ^{of story time} before bedtime when you'd really rather be watching M.A.S.H.? Twenty minutes tossing a ball and then the NFL is on with a big game. Parents work hard at their careers. Don't they "owe it to themselves" after having secured a comfortable income and a safe haven for their child to think of themselves? And aren't there marvelous programs on the telly?

No. A child is not a Meissen vase to be dusted regularly, occasionally washed and kept protected from breakage. A child is a quixotic, frustrating, delightful, dreadful, living, breathing, growing enigma which can endure on minimal attention and can flourish with intelligent attention.

Rather than thinking of a child's being passively "gifted" let us think of a child's being "academically talented" or of "superior ability potential. Bookstores are full of books by experts that tell you what your child is, should be, can be, and I decry none. Consider all advice and then...parent and teacher alike... learn with the child using your greater experience and expertise wherever possible to unveil, to intrigue, to open up the world for him. ~~My~~ Two cautions: a parent or teacher cannot simulate an interest he does not feel, and do not push a child. If a child is ready for more advanced ex eriences he will tell you so in his way and an experienced teacher will readily recognize this. A pushed child is never pushed forward, only backward.

Tami is only three but she speaks clearly in compound sentences, recognizes letters, nu erals, shéapes etc. and Tami can reason. Some of the older children are very impressed. "Tami is smart. She can open her thermos by herself and pour and not spill a drop." Tami's bread dough stuck to her fingers, it fell to the flour, and the apple slice that should be shrouded by the dough kept poking through. She asked for help. "I'm smart," said Tami with no apology whatever in her mien, "but I'm not that smart."

But she will be! Think of it this way...your child and a teacher's pupil is not "gifted"...he is the gift!