

FROM GUEST EDITORS

Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Students

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What does it mean for teachers to understand their students? For those of us who teach gifted and talented students, we strive to understand how they think differently than their age-peers typically do. We develop curriculum that fosters what is unique about their thinking. But to understand our students fully, we need also to understand how they feel—feel about their learning, about their talents, about their place in the classroom. Because if we make them feel safe to learn, to experiment, and to be wrong, we make it easier for our students to be happy about who they are—and about who they will become.

The cognitive and social/emotional needs of our gifted students have been described as two sides of the same coin. But perhaps water is a more adept metaphor. Hydrogen is fascinating, oxygen is fascinating, but when they come together, it is something entirely new. The two elements cannot be separated and remain anything remotely like what you had when they were together. Similarly, we cannot separate the social/emotional and cognitive needs of our students because every academic lesson carries a social/emotional message. The following collection of articles has been compiled to help us guide gifted and talented learners to feel safe and happy as they meet academic rigor and daily challenges.

We are pleased to bring this special issue on social and emotional development of gifted students to the readers of *Gifted Child Today* (GCT). As we have observed increasing challenges of growing up gifted in these complex times, we are pleased that other scholars and practitioners in the field are also recognizing them and working to support talented children in their psychosocial development. We are especially delighted to introduce GCT readers to several new voices in the field. This special issue features authors appearing in print in GCT for the first time and they have provided us with a strong collection of articles to support teachers and counselors working with gifted students.

GCT readers will benefit from the article by *Emily Mofield* and *Megan Parker Peters* who explore common causes and solutions to perfectionism in gifted students and highlight practical implications from recent research studies. The authors offer practitioners strategies to guide gifted children toward developing self-awareness and working toward a mindful pursuit of excellence.

Amy Gaesser describes how educators can help gifted students in coping with anxiety-provoking stressors in their lives. The author reviews concepts from neuroscience that may be integrated into classroom environments to assist children in their learning. Gaesser specifically examines Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), an evidence-based anxiety management intervention that has proven to be effective with gifted students.

Encouraging gifted girls to pursue and succeed in science and engineering is the focus of the article by *Jilana Boston* and *Andrei Cimpian*. The authors explore why gifted girls shy away from such fields. They highlight how exposure to negative stereotypes about women's intellectual abilities and stereotypes about scientists as eccentric loners may undermine gifted girls' interest and confidence to succeed in these fields. Boston and Cimpian offer research-based strategies for inoculating girls against these stereotypes and boosting their confidence.

Matthew Zakreski offers GCT readers an article on the collision of emotional intensity and cognitive rigidity occurring in gifted children. The author highlights how the intersection of these two traits in gifted children may influence their personal, social, and emotional growth. Zakreski describes a case example from his mental health practice and explores potential interventions for counselors and teachers.

Kristen Seward and *Amy Gaesser* describe a recent research study that examines career decision making with gifted rural students. Through the study, the authors describe a number of significant social and emotional challenges that complicate important developmental tasks of adolescence for this population. The study highlights the voices of gifted rural students as they share their concerns regarding K-12 career education, and attachments to family and community. The authors discuss important considerations for school counselors and teachers who work in rural settings.

The collection of articles in this special issue makes the point that whenever our students' minds are engaged, their social/emotional needs are engaged also. Separating them out is like separating hydrogen from oxygen—you no longer have anything approximating the whole, be it water or the gifted child. We hope these articles help you to address the complete needs of your students.

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