

PARENTS IDENTIFYING GIFTEDNESS

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Gifted children need assistance and a differentiated curriculum to meet their educational needs. Some children, especially if from minority cultural or language backgrounds, may not be identified by schools. Some children hide their abilities to meet teacher expectations or to fit in with peers. Parents' suggestions that their child is advanced or bored are often met with skepticism, typified by the comment "All parents think their child is gifted".

PROPOSED SOLUTION/ INTERVENTION

Take parents seriously if they ask for more challenge or for investigation of their child's abilities. Some parents are hesitant to make the first move, so invite all parents to give information about their child's strengths, special interests or skills as part of the school enrolment process or via a note or questionnaire to parents as the school year begins. Translations may be necessary for parents from language backgrounds other than English. Interpret parent information with reliable characteristics (and myths) of giftedness in mind.

THE THEORETICAL RATIONALE – HOW DOES IT WORK?

Effective identification of giftedness uses information from multiple sources rather than a single opinion or assessment. Teachers and parents may see different aspects of the child. Although parents do not always know how advanced or unusual their child's traits or skills are, they know what interests and motivates him or her outside the school

environment. Teachers trained in the characteristics of giftedness can use parent information about relevant strengths not evident in school as a trigger to investigate a child's ability and achievement levels.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY? WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE FOR ITS EFFICACY?

There is consensus that multiple sources of information about a child allow more opportunities to reveal exceptional abilities. Research has shown that teachers tend to doubt parents' judgments about their child's ability and that some parents do over- or underestimate. Yet, since the 1970s parents have been shown to be more effective than teachers in identifying giftedness, especially in young children. Training in the characteristics of giftedness increases the accuracy of teachers' identification of gifted children.

CONCLUSIONS

Teachers and parents have valuable roles in identifying giftedness. Welcoming and being able to evaluate parents' knowledge of their child assists teachers to identify and cater for gifted children.

THE MUSEC VERDICT: USE WITH CONFIDENCE

Key references may be found at:
www.aces.mq.edu.au/musec_co_brief.asp

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