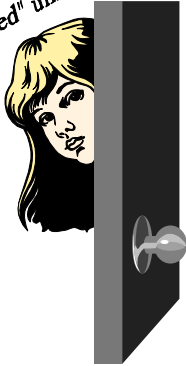


A MESSAGE TO PARENTS X: It's Not Always Gifted AND Talented

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It is commonplace today to rattle off the phrase, "Gifted and Talented." The words seem to go together like "bread and butter," "ham and cheese", and "left and right." In fact, it is altogether possible for a youngster to be "gifted" but not "talented."

Help the "Gifted" unlock their "Talent."



Consider how one expert defines the words "gifted" and "talented." In considering these definitions, also think about what they tell us about our responsibilities as parents and educators.

"Gifted" is a term that describes the student as having "untrained and spontaneously expressed natural abilities" which few others in his or her age group have. In contrast, "talented" is described as the "superior mastery of systematically developed abilities (or skills) and knowledge."

So if we accept these definitions, it is easy to see how someone can have a great gift, yet never develop it. While we can do little about the basic "gifts" that we, or our children, have, we can certainly do much to develop and refine them. It is even possible to have only a slight gift and through conscientious and concerted work, develop it to its fullest.

For example, the young man or woman who can throw a ball at lightning speed has the "gift" of strength to throw the ball. Unfortunately, the ball will go everywhere and anywhere without training. It is only with practice and determination that one learns to hold the ball in a certain fashion, or move the arm in a certain way to make the ball go where it should.

Academically, youngsters may be able to read early and understand what they read. But for many of these same youngsters, their reading ability will remain only adequate if they don't read more and more as they grow older. Their ability to read may be a gift, but it is a gift that must be nurtured as the youngsters develop and mature.

And "giftedness" in itself may not be limited to academics and sports. Howard Gardner of Harvard University has developed a theory of multiple intelligences over seven fields, including both mental and physical aspects of the human creature.

Schools have been doing very positive work in identifying and developing the gifted. But sheer numbers complicate their task. As a result, the schools have focused on helping groups of similarly gifted children.

As parents, you and I have a responsibility to our youngsters. How can we make sure that the gifts our youngsters have are fully developed to empower them to be highly effective individuals? Clearly, we need to supplement what they do in school!

So, as parents, we bring our children to little league and soccer, to dance studios, to music lessons and to scout meetings, even though the schools have sports, provide physical education, include music classes and encourage positive attitudes. So, too, many parents bring their children to Kumon even though their school has math and reading programs.

Why? Because children need more opportunities to develop their gifts than schools can offer. Kumon Math and Reading Programs supplement the schools, providing more practice and added opportunity to challenge one's ability. Without this extra effort, far too many gifted youngsters enter their adulthood untalented, and unaware of their full potential.