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PARENTAL SUPPORT - TIME AND ENERGY

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In order for a gifted student to develop his talents to the fullest, the youth must be eager to seek appropriate intellectual challenges. This is especially true for the highly able mathematical reasoner desiring to accelerate his education progress. Above and beyond this necessity, the most effective students have very supportive parents: support in this instance is the willingness to help their son or daughter obtain an educational program that is both satisfying and stimulating. Without active help from parents in translating appropriate aspirations into reality a bright, well motivated youth may turn into an ineffectual, bored, even mediocre student who is unable to live up to his potential. One goal of SMPY is to show parents how they can assist their children in attaining proper intellectual stimulation. First, it is crucial for the highly able secondary school student to *want* to move ahead educationally. This decision can be made only by the youngster, not by a parent, teacher or counselor. SMPY has found that after such a decision is made, it is important for the parent to intercede on the child's behalf. Listed below are a few hints that may assist parents who desire to help facilitate appropriate educational experiences for their sons and daughters.

1. It is important to remember that parents of a bright child need to spend as much time nurturing his or her talents as they would meeting the special needs of a slow or retarded child. The stereo-typic statement that "the bright child will get along fine without any special assistance" is *false*.

2. In dealing with the school or school system be sure to plan ahead. Make an appointment in advance with the person who will be most sympathetic toward meeting the needs of your child. For example, if the development of an appropriate mathematics program is in order, then the mathematics chairperson may be a good place to start.

3. Use tact and finesse. *Don't* blunder into the school unannounced. Be sensitive to other people and their responsibilities. This doesn't mean that you should be put off by arguments such as "your child is the exception," "we don't have any gifted," or "all of our students are bright and talented." Often times well-meaning school personnel will suggest *not* moving ahead academically because of stereotypic arguments based on misinformation and prejudice. Be skeptical of their claims that acceleration may damage your child's social and emotional development. (See Myth No. 2 article in this issue of ITYB. Pp. 10-11.)

4. In planning your child's educational future be sure to consult him or her. Long-range plans that include several options are much more appropriate than are stop-gap plans for one academic year. This means that planning must be started early enough in the school year (preferably at the start of the third quarter) for alternatives to the standard uniform lock-step grade process to be realized.

5. If there are other parents with students in similar situations, present your cases to the school as a group. Cooperate and enlist each other's assistance.

6. *Do not demand*, but ask. If you sense that a school official is about to say "no," ask him or her to think about the alternatives for a time, then meet with that person again. If

a lower level administrator doesn't want to make the decision, talk with the next level person. Many times a person may agree, but feels that as an individual teacher, counselor, or principal he or she does not want to take the final responsibility for making the decision, especially in favor of educational acceleration. Remember, too, acceleration includes many more possibilities than just grade skipping.

7. *Be prepared.* If documented evidence of ability is available, be sure to present that information in the conference. Ask for diagnostic testing to determine what your child knows and doesn't know in a particular area. Often a small amount of instruction on specific topics of weakness will complete mastery in a given subject, thereby allowing a student to advance to the next level.

8. *Flexibility is crucial.* Suggest alternatives. It may take many hours of discussion with school personnel before a decision can be reached as to an appropriate program for your child. Your time and effort will determine the level of your child's education. Remember, there is no ready-made solution. Dialogue among parents and child and among school system and parents is the key.

9. *Beware of labels.* The terms "enrichment," "creativity," "higher level thought processes" may simply cover up a reality of busy work or a postponement of boredom till later.

10. Course credit should be given for what a bright child has learned. This is not an automatic process, and therefore nothing should be assumed. Sometimes, examinations or a simple request that credit be given will suffice.

Using these hints will not guarantee your success at creating an appropriate educational program for your child. It does, however improve the chances. It is our strong belief at SMPY that parents bear considerable responsibility to their children to provide them the best possible education. Time, energy, a listening ear, and support are crucial variables in helping the gifted.

TYPING AND FAST NOTETAKING: ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Because their brightness often far outstrips their physiological development, many intellectually talented youths find writing by hand fatiguing. This makes some of them reluctant to do a number of activities that are in accord with their advanced mental abilities. To us at SMPY it seems highly desirable that, as early as feasible, able boys and girls learn *touch* typing systematically and well, and use it as much as possible in lieu of handwriting. Concerned parents should seek out a suitable personal typing course that meets on a convenient basis and adapts its procedures to the physical realities of the individual child or perhaps hire a qualified tutor to do the instructing. Such parents should also provide the gifted youth ready access to a typewriter, preferably the child's own.

In addition to typing skills, youths need to learn how to take notes fast via some simple system. Part of this may also consist of learning how to use recording equipment well.

Parents who give careful thought to these aids will help their intellectually talented children make better use of their potentialities than most such persons can without the training. They should begin early, taking care to motivate the youths to take full advantage of the opportunities presented.

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXTBOOK FOR APP CALCULUS EXAM

We have on hand a few copies of the introductory college calculus textbook that Professor Richard F. McCoart of Loyola College has used so effectively for two years in the Saturday morning supplemental calculus class he conducted for high-school students wanting to improve their performance on the Advanced Placement Program (APP) Level BC calculus exam that is offered nationwide each May. It is the following: Louis Leithold's *The Calculus with Analytic Geometry - Part I* (Second Edition), published by Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 793 pages.

If you would like a copy, send \$12.50 to Mr. William C. George, SMPY, Department of Psychology, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, 21218.