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## The Identification and Education of the Gifted Child in the Regular Classroom

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THE IDENTIFICATION AND EDUCATION OF THE  
GIFTED CHILD IN THE REGULAR CLASSROOM

by

Charles M. Chapman

A study submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education,  
in the Graduate School of the  
Central Washington College of Education

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND PHILOSOPHY

The intelligence of human beings has been, since the beginning of time, one of their most important attributes. It has also been one of the most neglected factors in determining the course of education for those who deviate upward on the intelligence scale.

For generations it was rather generally believed that the very bright or gifted children were characterized by physical deficiencies, eccentricities, and emotional instability. These children were often shunned or regarded with a measure of suspicion. There are still remnants of these unfortunate attitudes today, but the spread of scientific knowledge in the field of mental testing is gradually changing these stereotyped concepts.

#### The Problem

It is the purpose of this study to prepare the way for a better understanding of the mentally gifted child and how his needs can best be met in the regular classroom. The writer will attempt to define the gifted, show how he may be identified, and outline the responsibilities

of the school in meeting the needs of those students who have been blessed with superior mental ability.

### Development of a philosophy

The development of an understanding of gifted children is becoming increasingly important in present day schools. The most crucial factor in determining the success of our society is the provision of adequate machinery for capitalizing on our greatest resource, the ability of our people. If the regular classroom teacher can be adequately trained to detect individual differences among her students and will provide stimulation and enrichment for the most capable students she can be a healthy influence in guiding our best minds.

A democratic society has an obligation to provide opportunities for individuals to develop and use their talents, and the interests of society require that such opportunities be made attractive. The role of education in this connection is to equip the individual to use the opportunities that will best utilize his abilities and to guide him in making intelligent decisions that will serve both his own interests and those of society.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association of the United States and the American Association of School Administrators, Education of the Gifted (Washington, D. C.: National Education Association, 1950), p. 3.

The democratic ideal can be most fully attained when every individual has opportunity for educational experiences commensurate with his abilities and for vocational responsibilities commensurate with his qualifications.<sup>2</sup>

The gifted child is a potential genius. He should be discovered and given every opportunity to develop to the extent of his abilities; at the same time great care must always be taken to protect and develop his physical body and to improve his social relationships. There are between two and three million children in the United States who need this training. Few of them are receiving the attention they deserve. Their education is both a challenge and an opportunity.

Harvard president, James Bryant Conant, says, "Most U. S. educators are so busy tailoring curriculums for the average and least able that they have largely neglected the most able, i.e., the top ten per cent intellectually."<sup>3</sup> One significant reflection of the neglect is that fully half of the top ten per cent never get to college.

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2. Ibid., p. 4.

3. Time, 55:90, June 12, 1950.

Even though one child in ten possesses qualities which can make him one of tomorrow's leaders, we cannot be sure that society will be benefited by these talents. These talents must be effectively used and guided to secure the approval of society. The great majority of gifted children never develop to the point of achieving eminence. We are wasting the country's greatest asset by failing to discover and develop those children who, if properly guided, could make positive and lasting contributions to the general welfare of all mankind.

Literature is filled with dozens of examples of great achievements by young thinkers; achievements which have made lasting contributions to society. Galileo, Voltaire, Goethe, Braille, Coleridge, Michaelangelo, Mozart, and many others made conspicuous contributions to society during their formative years, in fact, the story of the world's gifted could be continued at great length but the important factor to consider is that the people who contributed most were the ones who started earliest.

The training and guidance for tomorrow's leaders must be carefully planned and thoughtfully administered. The future may rightly accuse us if we fail to develop those whom nature has endowed with superior native ability.

The notion that this superior ability will manifest itself without guidance is wrong. A tremendous amount of potential leadership has been lost entirely by being ignored. Of course there are numerous examples of those who have achieved success despite lack of help but history has failed to record the tragedy of those thousands of potential leaders who were thwarted by insurmountable economic or social handicaps. It is the responsibility of the public schools to give the gifted child an opportunity to develop his abilities as adequately as other children are permitted and encouraged to develop theirs.

Little is known concerning the best means of developing the gifted child's abilities and personality to the fullest extent and little has been done to determine effective educational programs. The public schools leave much to be desired in recognizing the gifted and providing the most favorable circumstances for nurturing their talents. "The real retarded students in our school systems are not the slow learners but the gifted who remain undiscovered or are not sufficiently challenged at school."<sup>4</sup>

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4. Gertrude H. Hildreth, Educating Gifted Children (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), p. 15.

### Concepts of giftedness

The term "gifted child" refers to a child who possesses a high intelligence quotient as determined by standardized intelligence tests. The word high has many connotations as used in this reference and may allude to children with intelligence quotients ranging from 110 upward.

Bentley, in his publication, Superior Children, classified as gifted all those whose I.Q.'s exceed 110. Goddard was a little more selective; he chose all who exceed 120. Norris and Danielson considered the students above 125 I.Q., Dr. Hollingworth and Dr. Baker concur on 130, and Dr. Terman believes the truly gifted are not found below 140 I.Q.<sup>5</sup>

There is no general agreement among educators as to how high the child's intelligence must be for him to be considered gifted, but it is generally conceded that the upper ten percent of any unselected group may qualify as gifted. The difference between the gifted and the ungifted is not discrete. Teachers may find it advisable to distinguish between the highly gifted and the

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5. Walter S. Monroe, Encyclopedia of Educational Research (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950), p. 506.

moderately gifted. In this arrangement, the term "highly gifted" will include individuals in the top one percent and the term "moderately gifted" will apply to all others within the top ten per cent.

Dr. Leta S. Hollingworth, one of the real pioneers in the study of gifted children, conducted countless experiments during her extensive research in this field. Although her experiments were directed to children possessing I.Q.'s in the upper one per cent of the population, she implied a broader concept of giftedness when she wrote, "By a gifted child we mean one who is far more educable than the generality of children are. This greater educability may lie along the lines of one of the arts, as in music or drawing; it may lie in the sphere of mechanical aptitude; or it may consist in surpassing power to achieve literary and abstract knowledge. It is the business of educators to consider all forms of giftedness in pupils in reference to how unusual individuals may be trained for their own welfare and that of society at large."<sup>6</sup>

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6. Paul Witty, editor, The Gifted Child (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1951), pp. 80-81.

### Summary of definition

At the present time there is no general agreement as to just how high a child's intelligence must be for him to be considered gifted. Terman places the lower limits so high (I.Q.-140) that less than one per cent of an unselected group can qualify. Bentley places the lower limits so low (I.Q.-110) that approximately twenty-five per cent of an unselected group can qualify. However, the tendency among educators is toward Terman's classification rather than Bentley's. Norris and Danielson use 125 as an I.Q. necessary for the major work classes in Cleveland and the special classes in the New York area follow the suggestion of Hollingworth, using 130 I.Q. as the lower limit for qualification as gifted.

It has been proposed that the concept of giftedness should include not only mental superiority but also the physical, social, moral, and educational status of the individual in addition to the relative development of special gifts or abilities. With a relatively broad conceptual basis for grouping, the classroom teacher would be more likely to develop an awareness of the deviates who qualify for special guidance and education.

## CHAPTER II

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE GIFTED

#### Introduction

Giftedness appears in every cultural group and at all levels of society. It is the primary source of power which has contributed most in the progress of civilization. Yet, like any other of the world's resources, it must be discovered and developed if the world is to be benefited by its power.

Hollingworth noted the interest of early philosophers in the identification of the gifted when she wrote, "Plato in The Republic speculated upon ways of identifying the intellectually gifted, in order to educate them for leaders in his Utopian state; and he concluded that some method must be devised for identifying the gifted while they are still children:

We must watch them from their youth upwards, and make them perform actions in which they are most likely to forget or to be deceived, and he who remembers and is not deceived is to be selected, and he who fails in the trial is to be rejected. That will be the way."<sup>7</sup>

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7. Leta S. Hollingworth, Gifted Children (New York; The Macmillan Company, 1926), p. 23.

Even though these words of wisdom concerning the identification of the most able were written over two thousand years ago, it was not until the beginning of the present century that they began to be realized in practice.

Soon after the turn of the century the subject of mental measurement began to receive serious consideration by some of the eminent psychologists and Alfred Binet, after fifteen years research in child psychology and mental testing, completed a series of mental tests which could be used to separate the least able from those of average ability.<sup>8</sup> It was from these beginnings of separating the least able from the average that the need became apparent for the identification of those children whose intellect was far superior to the average. It was not until about 1920 that psychologists were able to offer convincing evidence to educators, showing that superior students' needs were quite different from average students' needs. Since that time considerable knowledge has been accumulated concerning those who test exceptionally high on the intelligence scale. This knowledge has been gained mainly by testing. However,

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8. Ibid., p. 23.

even reliable tests have serious limitations in identifying giftedness at the early age levels. These limitations need to be considered because the early age levels represent the area where identification of giftedness can be most effective in guiding the progress of the student during his formative years.

#### Advantages of early identification

Hildreth<sup>9</sup> maintains that the study of the gifted should begin in the nursery years as a prevention against those problems commonly associated with brilliant children not discovered until their deviation has caused marked maladjustment. Perhaps the greatest advantage in early identification of superior mental ability is the information and guidance which can be given parents in the home training. If an awareness is not developed by the parents of gifted children the basic needs of these children may not be recognized and nurtured. These basic needs are freedom from exploitation, a calm, well regulated life, ample scope for experiment with materials and equipment and sympathetic handling when tensions arise. If these needs are not met the child may fail to emerge in adult life as a well-balanced individual.

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9. Hildreth, op. cit., p. 10.

"The advantages of early discovery of those with capacity for developing intellectual leadership may be summarized as follows:

1. Intelligent guidance can be provided for them by well trained, professional teachers and advisers.
2. Gifted children can be placed during their formative years in an environment that will introduce them to ever-widening fields of knowledge.
3. Training in work and study habits that will ensure better outcomes from creative effort can begin early.
4. Opportunity can be given for social living that promotes the learning of group adjustments and opportunities for leadership.
5. An environment can be provided that arouses interest and challenges ability, that may result in devotion to learning and study, investigation and thoughtful reflection.
6. School cooperation with the child's parents is made possible that will lead to earlier understanding of the child on the part of his parents and ensure wholesome training at home as well as in school."<sup>10</sup>

#### Identification by tests

Identification through a testing program, while it leaves much to be desired in the early years, may be quite dependable at later ages and can be used to supplement a program of identification through experience.

Tests that measure the kinds of ability needed

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10. Ibid., p. 11.

for academic progress are fairly successful, though far from perfect. These tests, commonly called intelligence tests, are useful in identifying children of superior intelligence although they should test general ability rather than specific abilities. Since various abilities tend to correlate, the child with very high intelligence is somewhat more likely to be gifted in many fields than the child with low or average intelligence; the relationship, however, is certainly not high enough to warrant reliance on intelligence tests only in a program which has as its goals the recognition of superior ability.<sup>11</sup>

The man-in-the-street may believe that superior ability in children will almost invariably be reflected by superior accomplishment in school. Actually this is not the case. Terman and Oden found that when school marks in the various subjects were compared with scores on reliable and valid achievement tests, large discrepancies were found; that in every school grade there were gifted children whose achievement in one or more subjects was rated as average or below for the grade but whose achievement test scores showed them to be as

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11. Witty, op. cit., p. 174.

much as two years above their grade norms in those same subjects. It would seem, then, that standard achievement tests have a real place in identifying gifted children as well as intelligence tests.<sup>12</sup>

Baker<sup>13</sup> warns of selection on the basis of intelligence tests only, contending that use of this criterion alone would tend to segregate individuals with a high type of verbal fluency. He served as chairman of a committee to select major work candidates in several Detroit schools and rated the candidates on the following ten-item scale:

1. General behavior
2. Effort as related to ability
3. Group intelligence rating
4. Rating of age for grade
5. Height ratio for age
6. Weight ratio for age
7. Rating for comprehension in reading
8. Rating on recent scholastic marks
9. Rating on number of permanently erupted teeth
10. Rating for participation in school activities

This scale was used in rating approximately 2500 students in 4 elementary schools and each candidate was rated on a 5 point scale, 50 points constituting the

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12. Ibid., p. 18.

13. Harry J. Baker, Introduction to Exceptional Children (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950), p. 283.

highest possible total score. The minimum total score necessary for selection ranged from 37 to 39 points; however, a few were selected for trial below this level.

The great danger in attempting to identify the gifted child without an intelligence test is that educators often overlook the very bright child who is a failure in his school work, the troublemaker, the one who harbors an intense dislike for his teacher, or the one who is shy. Failure to identify these children in time to provide favorable conditions for the development of their potentialities can only mean a great loss both to the individual and to society.

#### Identification by teacher

The classroom teacher occupies an advantageous position in identifying giftedness. Whether she capitalizes on this position or not depends on training and genuine interest.

Without the use of standardized tests most teachers are likely to be inaccurate in estimating the intelligence of their students. Hollingworth<sup>13</sup> cites one elementary teacher with five years experience who was asked to choose the five most intelligent pupils in her class

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13. Hollingworth, op. cit., p. 46.

of forty. Of the five chosen by her, tests revealed that two were superior, two average, and one was actually dull. Obviously the teacher had failed to consider the age of the students and simply pointed out those whom she considered were doing the best work in the regular classroom assignments.

Terman<sup>14</sup> offers further evidence of the inadequacy of teacher appraisal of superiority when he says, "if one would identify the brightest child in a class of thirty to fifty pupils it is better to consult the birth records in the class register than to ask the teacher's opinion. This finding has a very high reliability as it is based on the nominations made by approximately six thousand teachers."

"When teachers' estimates are used, the teachers should be given specific instructions for making such judgments. Certain errors tend to creep into these judgments. They are:

1. Failure to note overageness and thus to rate the pupil too high
2. Failure to note underageness and thus to rate the pupil too low

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14. Lewis M. Terman, and Others, Genetic Studies of Genius: Vol. I, Mental and Physical Traits of a Thousand Gifted Children (Stanford University, California: Stanford University Press, 1925), p. 33.

3. Tendency to overrate a pupil with bright sparkling eyes and a happy face
4. Tendency to underrate the surly, cross, trouble-makers
5. Tendency to underrate the poorly clothed, uncared-for urchin
6. Tendency to overrate the child who likes the teacher and does everything possible to help her.
7. Tendency to underrate those who obviously dislike the teacher and who do everything in their power to make life miserable for her."<sup>15</sup>

The teacher should be especially watchful for characteristics indicating superiority.

"As the result of classroom experience and research, we are able to characterize bright pupils for the purposes of teaching. The bright youngster possesses greater energy and more curiosity; he is sociable and active, more capable of dealing with abstractions; he perceives relationships more clearly and quickly; he prefers to work under his own planning and initiative and likes to explore new and more advanced areas; he becomes bored more quickly with simple routine tasks; he learns mechanical processes much more quickly than an average pupil; he dislikes tasks he does not understand and rote memorizing, though he is superior at it; he is good-naturedly critical of dullness and dull people; he has confidence in his own abilities; he appears lazy

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15. Arch O. Heck, The Education of Exceptional Children (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1940), p. 407.

if given uninteresting things to do and so is likely to seek short cuts, and he possesses a wide range of worthy interests."<sup>16</sup>

The teacher can evaluate her pupils on the characteristics listed in the preceding paragraph and thereby determine the most likely candidates for special consideration.

In the writer's viewpoint, a combination of testing and teacher evaluation offer a sounder basis for identification of superiority than either method alone.

#### Identification by parents

Gifted children are seldom identified as such by their parents but parents can often furnish valuable information to the school in the process of identification.

Terman and Oden<sup>17</sup> in their follow-up studies of gifted children found that early indications of superior intelligence as reported by parents were quick understanding, insatiable curiosity, extensive information,

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16. Harl R. Douglass and Calvin Grieder, American Public Education (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1948), p. 279.

17. Lewis M. Terman and Melita H. Oden, Genetic Studies of Genius: Vol. IV, The Gifted Child Grows Up (Stanford University, California: Stanford University Press, 1947), p. 25.

retentive memory, large vocabulary, and unusual interest in such things as number relations, atlases, and encyclopedias. The parents of the gifted also reported unusually early mastery of language ability, walking, and muscular coordination. Of course, these traits were observed in a control group whereas the ordinary parent would not be likely to exercise as much care in observation.

Generally speaking, parents are not competent judges of their child's intelligence. The natural parental love for the child tends to bias their judgment in the direction of overestimating his intelligence. Then, too, parents do not have an adequate standard of comparison because they have little opportunity to compare their child with a group the same age. Even gifted parents have failed to recognize a gifted offspring because they attributed his superior achievements not to superior intelligence but to superior education. Evidence would indicate that parents are not very successful in identifying gifted children.

#### Recommended program of identification

The most reliable methods of identifying intellectually gifted pupils ranked in order of their popularity are: ratings on intelligence tests, results

of standardized achievement tests, teachers' estimates of students' ability, observation of emotional stability and social maturity, teachers' marks and age-grade status. The intelligence quotient is seldom used as the sole criterion for selecting the gifted. The most favorable method is a combined rating based on mental and educational tests plus teachers' judgment.<sup>18</sup>

The identification of gifted students on the basis of intelligence test scores and teachers' appraisal serves a double purpose. The immediate purpose is to assist the school in providing adequate instruction for the superior students in order that they may make the most of their school experience at each level. The long range purpose is to assist the pupils, their parents, teachers and counselors in intelligent guidance of educational and vocational planning.<sup>19</sup>

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18. Witty, op. cit., p. 201-202.

19. E.P.C. Report, op. cit., p. 45.

## CHAPTER III

### EDUCATION OF THE GIFTED

#### Introduction

One of the most significant of modern tendencies in educational administration is revealed by the efforts of many schools to adjust the subject matter and methods of the school to meet the varying needs and abilities of the children enrolled. In order to minister to the needs of our deviates the adoption of a flexible program is imperative. Evidence of this flexibility has long been apparent in the areas of the lower mentality groups and certainly there are few objections to what is being done to make life less burdensome for those children who are mentally handicapped. However, this same flexibility can, and should, be applied to those deviates who are endowed with superior general intelligence.

Education of the gifted in public school classes was begun in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1901. Selected children from all over the city were given an opportunity for education by superior teachers.<sup>19</sup> This was the

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19. Heck, op. cit., p. 393.

beginning of special classes for the gifted. Today we have many special classes for the gifted and a few entire schools which enroll only children who possess superior mental abilities. The quality of instruction in these special educational units is far superior to the type of instruction offered in the average classroom because of the selectivity in securing teachers and in providing equipment. Due to the widespread dearth of teachers, classrooms, and financial assistance, these outstanding examples of special education for the gifted are necessarily limited to the more densely populated sections of the nation.

The United States Bureau of Education reveals that 1400 cities reported special classes for all types of exceptional children, including the mentally retarded; only 15 of these cities reported special classes for the gifted. The total in all special classes was 441,000 children; the total in classes for the gifted was only 20,000 and most of these were concentrated in New York, Los Angeles, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh.<sup>20</sup>

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20. Katherine Glover, "Are We Wasting Tomorrow's Leaders?" Parents Magazine, 27:48, June, 1952.

The arguments in favor of special educational provisions for bright children are favorable both to society and to the individual. Society is the loser when its most capable members are only partially developed and the individual child, whether he be subnormal, normal, or gifted, has a right to the kind of education that is best suited to his abilities and needs.

#### Needs of the gifted

Witty<sup>20</sup> reminds us that, "Wherever his gifts lie, it is important to remember that the superior child has the fundamental needs of all children--to grow physically, emotionally, socially, and mentally to the utmost of his abilities. He needs comfort, love and affection, challenging and creative activities, and a helpful and encouraging environment within which to grow. The good life is living fully and richly at each stage of development."

The needs of the gifted as outlined by Witty can be most effectively met by devising ways and means to meet the costs of adequate education for all American youth. More money is certainly needed but more than money is

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20. Witty, op. cit., p. 13.

necessary! Better techniques of identification and more effective use of techniques already available are needed. A change in popular attitudes toward gifted individuals is needed. For teachers, school and college administrators, and all other members of society who have a share in determining educational policy and practice, the greatest needs are a sharpened awareness of the problem and a determined effort to make American schools and colleges more effective agencies for the conservation and development of human talent.<sup>21</sup>

Meeting the needs of the gifted in the regular classroom

Although it is important to provide special opportunities for the gifted child where needed, it is equally important that nothing be done to precipitate him into adult patterns. He has a "right to be a child"-- to grow up unhampered by fears and unhurt by pressures, intellectual or otherwise. He should not be exploited because of his ability but rather helped to develop as a normal, participating, and functioning member of the society to which he has so much to contribute."

The needs of the gifted may be met in a variety of ways. Education in the special school and class has

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21. E.P.C. Report, op. cit., p. 81.

been advocated by some writers but the cost of this approach would be prohibitive except in densely populated areas. Besides being prohibitive from a financial point of view it would also be impractical in smaller schools where the incidence would be relatively low. The most logical approach would seem to be retention in the regular classrooms with instructors skilled in the provision of proper enrichment and stimulation. This type of careful supervision and instruction could furnish, for normal and subnormal children, stimulating and desirable leadership of the more gifted members of the group.

Our society today is faced with a problem not unlike the problem of educating the mentally superior. That problem is the productive use of leisure time. The people of our nation are continually striving for and, in most areas of labor, are successfully promoting shorter hours of work. The increase of leisure time has created a major problem in the field of guidance at all levels. Similarly, our gifted children are important guidance problems also. The gifted child is capable of completing the required work of the elementary grades in considerably less time than the child of average intelligence, yet many gifted children use the same amount of time and do

the work no better than the average child. If there is no incentive to utilize his potential he may work more slowly, concentrate briefly, and finally adopt very unsatisfactory habits of work and study. Other gifted students may complete their work quite rapidly and spend their leisure time distracting others and making general nuisances of themselves. Still another type is the superior student who becomes discouraged because he does not have enough work to do. There is a gradual loss of interest, and in many cases his education is terminated in favor of seeking more challenging activity.

Teacher training institutions recognize the need for special consideration of the superior students but few courses offer practical suggestions concerning the nature of the special considerations. Teachers need to develop an understanding of the two major methods of solving the education problems of the superior students,-- acceleration or enrichment of the curriculum.

### Acceleration

Acceleration, either by skipping gifted children ahead of their normal age-grade group or by giving them advanced instruction, is sometimes practiced as a means

of curricular adjustment for the gifted.<sup>21</sup>

The plan of permitting the brighter pupils to skip a part of the course has the major advantage of easy operation as far as the mechanics of administration are concerned but, if superior children are to be trained by regular classroom teachers, the skipping process must be carefully evaluated to determine if it is a sound method of meeting the needs of the child. There are several important aspects of this method which should be considered. The child is being pushed into a social group which is one year or more advanced. His "right to be a child" (Witty) is being jeopardized and his precipitation into too mature patterns would seem rather previous. Many times these children are penalized by thoughtless parents and teachers who rush them unduly. The younger the brilliant child, the greater is the disparity between his mental age, his social development, and his physiological maturity.<sup>22</sup> Acceleration by skipping would be acceptable if development of the mental capacities were the only

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21. Hildreth, op. cit., p. 259.

22. Conrad J. Seegers, "Teaching Bright Children," The Elementary School Journal, 49:511, May-June, 1949.

consideration, but if the whole child is to be considered in promotion from one level to the next, the skipping process occupies a questionable position.

"Moderate acceleration, particularly in high school and college is not inadvisable when the individual is socially and physically mature for his age. Especially is this true where there are no enrichment opportunities for the gifted child. It is quite possible and desirable to save one or two or even three years of the individual's educational life when he is well advanced in social and physical maturity. Except in unusual cases, such acceleration should probably take place in the latter part of the educational program."<sup>23</sup>

### Enrichment

If the needs of most of our talented students are to be filled reasonably adequately, enrichment of the curriculum is undoubtedly the most practical approach. A major share of our public schools are overcrowded, understaffed, or are forced to operate on meager allotments of financial assistance. Collectively or singly,

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23. Merle R. Sumption, Dorothy Norris, and Lewis M. Terman, "Special Education for the Gifted Child," Forty-Ninth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1950), p. 279.

these weaknesses lessen the possibility of special classes and special teachers. Then, too, relatively few schools have sufficient enrollment from which to draw mentally superior candidates for special education.

Gifted children are found in our one-room rural schools and small city systems just as surely as they are identified in our densely populated areas, but the problem of meeting the needs of those in the relatively sparsely populated areas is, of necessity, a program of enrichment.

The enrichment method in the regular classroom is simply providing for the wise use of the superior child's leisure time. Unlike the acceleration method, the enrichment program stresses the importance of extensive education rather than swift basic instruction. Thoroughness is more important than speed during a child's formative years and the basic educational foundations can best be achieved without the teacher having to be constantly alert for weaknesses in social and emotional growth resulting from acceleration.

"The gifted pupil's program is truly enriched not by adding aesthetic and appreciational experiences, or by putting in an extra subject or two such as algebra

or high school science, but through setting up a unified type of program which provides to the fullest degree for meaningful experiencing in a rich environment."<sup>25</sup>

The "unified type of program" suggested by Hildreth is now practiced by many progressive school systems and offers a desirable balance between skill subjects and activities which employ these skills. A common practice is to devote the morning session to reading, writing, language, spelling, and arithmetic skills and use the afternoon session to develop projects through varied activities which coordinate the basic skills. It is through the projects or units that the superior students are able to make valuable contributions by exercising their extraordinary mentality.

Cooperative work on assigned units affords the teacher exceptional opportunities to explore the talents, hobbies and interests of the individuals in the group. Here latent potentialities reveal themselves to the alert teacher and offer excellent opportunities for guiding the child in the development of his talents, not only for his own life but for the good of society.<sup>26</sup> Thus the

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25. Hildreth, op. cit., p. 262.

26. Witty, op. cit., p. 265.

scope of the various subjects is limited only by the pupil's interests and abilities, the teacher's talents, and the facilities of the school.

The provision of rich experiences and extra-curricular activities in the unified study approach offers limitless possibilities. "The organization and administration of such activities will do a great deal toward a more balanced program for gifted pupils. Various teachers and others concerned have presented some rather exhaustive plans for utilizing their time and abilities in various extracurricular pursuits. Some of the activities they suggest for this are newspaper, forestry, mechanics, arts and crafts, radio, and the like. One can readily see the possibilities of using various types of activities, depending upon local conditions and interests of the children. Trips to local industries, large stores, museums, and farms, as well as to other points of scientific and cultural value, may be used to good advantage."<sup>27</sup> If experience enrichment of this type is used to supplement academic work, education becomes life rather than an isolated activity of the child's life.

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27. Karl C. Garrison, The Psychology of Exceptional Children (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1950), p. 255.

The amount of enrichment possible is often limited by a dearth of time and inventiveness on the part of the regular teacher plus a lack of facilities on the part of the school. No cases of too much enrichment have been recorded. If a broadly enriched program is offered the child during his first six or seven years in school he will have a better background for future acceleration. Meanwhile, he will have an opportunity to mature socially and physically so he will not be at a loss to adjust as he moves ahead more rapidly in subsequent years.<sup>28</sup>

#### General considerations<sup>29</sup>

Special attention needs to be directed toward the development of industrious habits for those who are tempted to utilize their ability is "skimming" their assigned tasks.

Intensive training in early childhood should be discouraged. Information should be given when called for, thereby helping the child help himself. Knowledge acquired when it is wanted is like food consumed when one is hungry. It is quickly assimilated and becomes part of the mental structure. Hobbies should be encouraged but allowed to wane when interest is no longer spontaneous.

Access to books is of special importance but reading should not absorb all the child's leisure time; rather, materials should be provided which encourage manipulation, construction, and designing.

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28. Sumption, Norris, and Terman, op. cit., p. 278.

29. Hollingworth, op. cit., pp. 334-337.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to point out certain data that may lead to a better understanding of the intellectually superior child and his behavior in the regular classroom. As noted by Monroe's classification of various concepts of giftedness, controversy exists concerning the term "gifted child" and its connotation. Philosophically, it should be understood that the most crucial factor in determining the success of our society is the provision of adequate methods for developing the abilities of our people. The study has revealed that the regular classroom teacher occupies an important position in the identification and education of those who deviate upward on the intelligence scale.

The material relative to identification of superior intellectual ability revealed a number of approaches which may be utilized in the selection of those

who may qualify for special consideration. Hildreth stresses the importance of early identification of superior ability and points out definite advantages that may be realized through the employment of a flexible curriculum. Regarding the most reliable program of identification it appears that a series of standardized tests supplemented by parent and teacher appraisals would offer the most complete coverage of all areas.

The common belief that mental superiority is usually accompanied by physical deficiencies has been discounted by numerous authorities; rather, it has been repeatedly proven that mentally gifted children are generally physically advanced, attractive, well rounded, and emotionally stable. Any instability of a gifted child is more often a product of the environment than an inborn deficiency.

The education of the gifted is not unlike the education of any other child in that the needs of the student must be determined and met by the classroom teacher. Acceleration is not the answer to meeting the needs of the gifted. The so-called skipping process robs the gifted of valuable social and emotional contacts whereas enrichment in the regular classroom furnishes

broad educational growth, develops leadership ability, and allows the child to be a child rather than an over-intellectualized social misfit.

Enrichment of the curriculum in the regular classroom is most effectively achieved through a unified type of program which encourages cooperative work on assigned units. Unified study offers an excellent medium through which diversified materials and richer experiences may be employed. Through the employment of these enriching techniques the classroom teacher can utilize the abilities of gifted students in providing a measure of stimulation for the entire class. Moreover, participation in the activities of the regular classroom, as opposed to special classes, has the advantage of preparing the superior student for a congenial life in a democratic society made up of individuals of widely varying ability. The classroom teacher may be encouraged by the fact that no cases of too much enrichment have ever been recorded (Terman) while many superior students have suffered emotional instability caused by being unduly rushed into advanced patterns (Witty).

One of the great needs in education at the present time is the stimulation of interest in the education of the gifted. Through widespread efforts of cooperation

between the home, the school, and the community in providing opportunities for them, our gifted children may utilize their potentialities and become the darers, the thinkers, the inventors, and planners of tomorrow's world.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered upon the basis of the writer's acquaintance with available literature concerning gifted children.

1. Encourage teacher training institutions to offer courses relative to identifying and educating gifted children in the regular classroom.
2. Encourage organization of special classes for the gifted in densely populated areas.
3. Discourage acceleration of the gifted students at the elementary level.
4. Allow acceleration when the gifted child advances to junior high school level.
5. Provide a well planned program of enrichment at all levels so that all gifted children have sufficient opportunity to develop their abilities above and beyond what is called for in the normal school program.
6. Encourage classroom teachers to develop assignments which stimulate creative ability and require

organization rather than just boring "busy work."

7. Provide creative activities to develop special talents.

8. Give every child the type of education which best meets his needs.

9. Stimulate interest in the education of the gifted not only among educators but among all members of our society.

10. Advise parents of the gifted children and encourage them to work cooperatively with the classroom teacher in providing profitable experiences outside of school.

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