

My 1 chrs first 2000 words - 4-2 column pages

THE INTELLECTUALLY SUPERIOR STUDENT

My 1 chrs 20. low
5 page convention

I. The Intellectually Superior Individual and Society.

Why is his education important? What justification is there for considering him a special problem apart from other children and youth? What promise is there in efforts to develop his high talents to their fullest? Ernest Ligon opens his book, "A Greater Generation", with this provocative supposition:

"Suppose that Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Martin Luther, William Harvey, Oliver Cromwell, Nicholas Copernicus, Andrew Jackson, and Michael Faraday were all students in your local high school this year! If your high school is of average size, and your community of average intelligence, as far as native endowment is concerned, that probably is actually the case every year.

Such an idea is staggering. Yet historical studies of men of genius permit estimates that such great figures as John Adams, John Locke, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Jonathan Swift, Washington Irving, Sir Isaac Newton, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Charles Darwin, Immanuel Kant, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Leonardo da Vinci all fell within the intelligence levels represented by the reasonably bright children in public and private schools today.

Such men as these cited have emerged through the years in eras when differing educational philosophies and differing educational conditions prevailed. To use their flowering as an argument against special provisions for the gifted is to ignore the fact that education today is geared to and for the masses, to the pointed neglect of the intellectually *able*. It is further to ignore the fact that countless numbers of individuals probably of similar caliber, have not been able successfully to find an adequate solution to their high potential.

Edward Lee Thorndike has addressed himself to the special case of men of great abilities. He makes this suggestive and practical analysis of the influence upon the world of affairs of the behavior of one man of superior capacity:

"...let us suppose that the services of Mr. Gifford, the president of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, have in the last ten years added one one hundredth of one percent per year to the cheapness, accuracy, convenience, etc. of telephone use. They probably have done more than that. If every group of persons on the company's payroll for a sum of salaries equal to his salary (\$210,000) had done as much, telephone service would have been improved beyond recognition. If by paying him or somebody else \$420,000, this addition could have been two hundredths of a percent per year instead of one, it would have been a marvelous bargain. The addition of three hundred switchboard operators to speed up service, or two hundred linemen to reduce breakdowns, which would cost as much or more, would be as one drop to a bucketful of value."

He adds further comment respecting the promise held forth in human welfare by a systematic search for such gifted people in their childhood and youth, and a special education designed for their optimum development:

"It is probable that a continuous account of the superior abilities that appear at ages 14, 18, and 22, with provision to keep careers open for their talents, would be a useful social investment. Even if nine out of ten of the recipients of such attention and aid achieve only moderately, the investment may yet be profitable provided one in a hundred of those near the top is enabled to do a higher quality of work than he would otherwise have done.

The full argument in support of this conclusion would be long and intricate, but its gist may be realized by considering what the world could afford to pay to develop the ability to cure cancer or make it fashionable for nations to settle their disputes by justice rather than by force, ten years sooner than it would otherwise be developed. Even a slight rise in a very high ability is, roughly speaking, priceless. Even a small chance of such a rise is worth a large expenditure. We should not miss the chance by failure to discover the promising candidates early."

If we would engage in contemplation not of projections and possibilities, but of actual outcomes ascertained through the genetic and developmental study of selected gifted children within our own times, we can turn to the researches of Lewis M. Terman. His now famous "Genetic Studies of Genius" undertook to follow the life course of 1000 bright children in

California, to chart the course of their progress through childhood, youth, and adulthood. He began in 1921, when the average age of his subjects was ten years. They ranged in IQ from 135 to 200, the average being 151. The last report on these "children", made when their mean age was around thirty-five, (the 25 year follow-up published in 1947, *The Gifted Child Grows Up*) reads like a roll call of distinguished achievement. Their adulthood was reached during the period of World War II, and many of the original 1000 children rose to high rank in military service. Others occupy now positions of great responsibility in governmental services of one kind or another. And here are a few of their representative individual accomplishments:

"A physicist who is extremely gifted in administration as well as in science is director of one of the great laboratories devoted to the applications of atomic energy.

During the last year of the war, a historian served as director of a large project for the Office of Strategic Services, in which position he directed the work of more than a hundred social scientists engaged in research on the cultural, economic, political, and social conditions of the people in one of our enemy countries. He is now assistant director of a great foundation.

A professor of physiology was co-director, during the war, of what was perhaps the most important investigation that has ever been made of the physiological, biochemical, and psychological effects of prolonged semistarvation. The report of this research will run to several volumes.

A professor in one of the applied physical sciences served throughout the war as director of a government research laboratory which employed hundreds of scientists and technicians, spent millions of dollars, and created devices that so reduced the efficiency of enemy radar as definitely to shorten the war. This man has received two of the highest honors that can come to a scientist; the presidency of his national scientific society, and membership in the National Academy of Sciences.

A professor of pharmacology in a medical school has published more than a hundred research contributions before the age of thirty-five and is the executive head of his department.

Two of our men have won national recognition as writers of fiction. One of these has published seven detective novels. The other, a graduate in engineering, has published dozens of articles and short stories based upon technological themes, three novels -- one of which has been compared favorably with the best of its genre -- and a book on inventions. His magnum opus to date, a scholarly book on witchcraft and magic, has just been completed.

One of our men is a relatively young motion-picture director who is rapidly becoming known as among the most talented in the country.

Several of our women have taken a doctorate in science and have done creditable research. One is a metallurgist who holds a very responsible position in an industrial firm. One is a bacteriologist who holds the rank of assistant professor in a leading medical school...."

In striking contrast to this productiveness, consider this sad story of unrealized potential:

Story of Clarence Findlay

Clarence Findlay, the Pullman porter, who is doing very well financially even though family extravagances dissipate his earnings. He never forgets the instructions of superiors or the requests of passengers, and he always gives accurate answers to questions about the route and train schedule. He is fairly pleasant to patrons and other strangers, but moody around home. He doesn't read much any more. When he does read, he usually finishes a book in an evening. He wants more out of life than he's getting, but he does not know what it is, and doesn't expect to find out. His friends tell him how well-off he is -- best income of any man in his block. But he regards the neighbor in the corner house with envy and impersonal resentment. This neighbor is a schoolteacher, a college graduate. The porter doesn't know it, but buried in the files of the large city school system which he attended twenty-five years ago is a pupil record card with this notation, "Clarence Findlay, IQ 144." The record fails to show what his memory recalls occasionally: after high school graduation, went to work as a messenger in the office building where his father worked as janitor. "Wish I'd gone to school longer," he sometimes muses. "If I'd gone on to college, maybe..."

This is too often, I fear, the lot of the gifted, especially those from subordinate positions in the social and economic scale, when no special endeavors are made to search out and educate the unique potential characteristics which they possess. I shall in a moment estimate the number of children within our state who likely would profit from special education. Of these, there are many who will not be able through their own undeveloped resources to manipulate the economic and social forces which block their progress to the higher levels of education from which they can profit.

"Society is injudicious in the extreme to neglect those children who possess the potentialities of high-quality leadership. It is the part of wisdom to prepare these boys and girls for the important social responsibility which will be theirs. Today, as perhaps never before, we face problems of world magnitude which threaten the existence of society itself. Education is challenged to develop

leadership for the tremendous tasks which lie ahead. Under such conditions, special education of the gifted is not only justified but is demanded by the lessons of history."

II. The Superior Individual and School.

How do bright children fare in school? What has been the characteristic attitude of teachers toward them? How have curricula been modified to accommodate them? What are some desirable adjustments within reach of the classroom teacher? It is to these questions that we shall now address ourselves, moving toward the end to bring into consideration the actualities of the English curriculum itself, by virtue of your particular interests. First, the darker side -- for strangely, bright children often fare very poorly in school. Leta Hollingworth, who dedicated her life to the study of gifted children, cites a case of this nature: A ten year old boy, IQ 165, referred to her as a school problem:

"...The foolish teacher who hates to be corrected by a child is unsuited to these children. Too many children of IQ 170 are being taught by teachers of IQ 120. Into this important matter of the selection of the teacher we cannot enter, except to illustrate the difficulty from recent conversation with a ten year old boy of IQ 165. This boy was referred to us as a school problem: 'Not interested in the school work. Very impudent. A liar.' The following is a fragment of conversation with this boy:

What seems to be your main problem in school?

Several of them.

Name one.

Well, I will name the teachers. Oh, boy! It is bad enough when the pupils make mistakes, but when the teachers make mistakes, oh, boy!

Mention a few mistakes the teachers make.

For instance I was sitting in 5A and the teacher was teaching in 5B. She was telling those children that the Germans discovered printing, that Gutenberg was the first discoverer of it, mind you. After a few minutes I couldn't stand it. I am not supposed to recite in that class, you see, but I got up. I said, 'No; the Chinese invented, not discovered, printing, before the time of Gutenberg -- while the Germans were still barbarians.'

Then the teacher said, 'Sit down. You are entirely too fresh! Later on she gave me a raking-over before the whole class. Oh, boy! What teaching.

Under a teacher who could offer him a more substantial intellectual diet, such mistaken details, if they occurred at all, would be received with

less violence. But with the child bored already, his frustrated mind apparently was "triggered" by such manifest carelessness.

In a now classic listing, some one hundred-odd famous men and women are named, some to be studied later as geni in the work cited at the beginning of this paper, who were at strong odds with the schools of their day. Some were even dismissed, frequently judged, inconceivably so, as failures in the very fields in which they were subsequently to become famous. The list includes such names as Charles Darwin, Patrick Henry, Jonathan Swift, George Eliot, Sir Walter Scott, Daniel Webster, Schiller, Goethe, and Shelley. Perhaps it is partially true that in the average school the rule for the gifted is:

"This much shall you learn, and no more. If by chance you get through with your lesson before your fellows are through, fold your hands and wait quietly until all have finished studying."

Another of Hollingworth's vivid appraisals indicates the wastefulness often represented even where deliberate attempts are made to adjust to the gifted:

"We know from measurements made over a three-year period that a child of 140 IQ can master all the mental work provided in the elementary school, as established, in half the time allowed him. Therefore, one-half the time which he spends at school could be utilized in doing something more than the curriculum calls for..."

No exhaustive discussion of time-wasting can be undertaken here, except to say briefly that these exceptional pupils are running errands, idling, engaging in "busy work", or devising childish tasks of their own, such as learning to read backward -- since they can already read forward very fluently. Many are the devices invented by busy teachers to "take up" the extra time of these rapid learners, but few of these devices have the appropriate character that can be built only on psychological insight into the nature and the needs of gifted children."

It follows then that the extreme perceptivity of gifted children makes it possible and desirable that their education be conceived uniquely. Because their intellectual interests and prospective futures differ from others, and because they can learn more and learn it more rapidly, the educational experiences which intellectually superior students should have in school

ought not to be identical with the experience of other students. It should be different as to kind, quality, and level of insight. Every teacher, school, school system, and institution of higher learning should have systematic policies and procedures for the education of their gifted students.

Now we shall of necessity pass over the various types of adjustments that have been made administratively to adjust the school program to the needs of these children. None, incidentally have been remarkably successful. What types of adjustments are within reach of the classroom teacher with or without homogeneously grouped pupils? The character of the so-called "enriching experiences is important. Some forms of enrichment are not adequate or desirable. Often the mere "busy work" that Hollingworth describes has passed for appropriate education, and again an "extra load" of work at exactly the same level of difficulty and comprehension has been offered as a means of occupying the time of the gifted. This latter becomes especially ironical in view of the fact that the brighter child actually needs less practice and experience in learning a given level and quantity of idea and principle than does the average child.

Perhaps the first point to be made about "enrichment" is the natural tendency of the brighter child to enrich his own experience. The typical gifted child, by his very nature, tends to get more out of school than the typical average child. From the same stimuli, whether arranged by the school with educational intent or merely existing in the environment, the gifted individual acquires deeper insights, broader understandings, keener appreciations, and more memories than the individual of average intellect. Thus, life for the gifted appears to be enriched merely by the living of it, and those life experiences that occur within school walls reward the gifted more richly than the average. Although this type of unplanned, learner-determined enrichment almost inevitably results from any kind of educational experience

for mentally superior individuals the values so derived by the gifted student usually fall far short of what he might obtain from an educational program deliberately aimed at maximizing the outcomes of his school experience through enrichment of opportunities for learning.

Now the suggestions which I shall offer to you briefly as teachers of English, are couched in terms of "Levels" of which there are three, the level of contact with educational material which you arrange for the children, the level of understanding which you expect of them, and to which you guide them, and the level of expression which you encourage from them.

Level of Contact (with educational materials):

I would say to you as an English teacher that when research is assigned, point their way not to the standard encyclopedia, but to the original sources from which the encyclopedic sources are drawn; to original writings which are the sources of issues, and which represent the crystal clear thinking of men of insight into the natural and the human problem. If the lives of men are the subject, send them not to standard biographies, but rather to autobiographies, and letters, and diaries -- sources through which the able mind of the young student will be brought into first-hand contact with the mind of creative people, original thinkers -- that his own formative mind may be moulded of a higher caliber of reason and understanding.

For the world of literature as a whole, cast aside the single text which becomes so sheerly monotonous to pursue. Introduce them to sources from which continuous knowledge and insight is gleaned. Lead them to a discovery and mastery of every nook and cranny of the library, both school and university, where this is possible. Open up the world of learning as the intellectual "heavy weights" have perceived it in literature of enduring quality. Encourage them further to cherish and build a library of their own: These children can appreciate the value of growing through the years with a good collection of Shakespearean drama, a volume of Arnold's

essays, or of Browning's poetry. Bring them into contact under your guidance with the highest quality of thought and idea in classical and modern literature. One of the problems which you and I have is weeding out the trivia in the mass of print available today. These able children need to be conditioned to a reach in literature that will make them dissatisfied with anything but the highest, for their capacity and power of thought can traffic most effectively in this rare medium.

Level of Understanding.

For any given work of literature, where the abler child is in question, lead him quickly through the routine phases of instruction appropriate for the average -- plot, that is, and character, event and setting. Move to these levels of in-depth penetration of the knowledge of and about a work of literature:

The literary type: its abstract characteristics; even the historical dimension of the type, for form of the short story has evolved since the day of Poe, for instance.

Next in depth, I would suggest you lead the able child to criticism -- appraisal - comparison - evaluation -- and appreciation.

And further, don't ignore the actual performance of literary acts, as it were; for it is through doing that the really richest experience comes. Have the gifted child do for today's social scene what Dickens did for that of the nineteenth century: have him satirize the weaknesses of man as they are manifest today, as Swift did in his time; and have him depict the cacophony of Columbia's "Five Points" at five of an afternoon, as Sandburg did for Chicago.

I was delighted to note in this connection the article in a recent issue of South Carolina Education of your own Miss Pattie Parker, in which was represented a poem written by a student whom some of you from Columbia will

remember. It is such that makes me realize that in the school today, under the ministrations of progressive minded teachers, of which there are many, that the gifted child does not fare so badly as he once did. You are doing already many of the things which I am suggesting.

Level of Expression

Having brought the able student into contact with generic material, and pointed the way for him to move to more and more subtle levels of understanding, we do him an injustice when we expect and accept less in written and oral expression than a commensurate level in his own thought and idea. The gifted child can toss away his textbooks, loaf away his time outside of class, and doze while in class, and still turn in average work. Let us not allow him to be satisfied with less than is appropriate for him, with less than he can accomplish in creative, expressive work, and in test performances, which are another way, of course, of self-expression.

Conclusion

Now we have depicted something of the social promise of the intellectually superior individual; we have described their darker fate in the hands of teachers and school systems not sensitive to their needs; and we have sketched briefly in terms of "levels" a suggested educational regimen of greater appropriateness. What, we ask in closing, of the gifted child in our midst? There are some 500,000 children in school in South Carolina. Of this number, 5000 or more can be termed "moderately gifted", and some 500 "truly" gifted in mental endowment. Hearken back to Thorndike's idea of the great gain from an ever so slight increase in the productivity of the man of great ability, and I think we see our task. Every hour that you spend in planning for and thinking with your brighter child, is indeed an hour richly spent -- rich in educational magic, rich in his personal fulfillment and in your own, and rich in social promise.

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Principal address to the state convention of English teachers in South Carolina, 1953*