

Navigating through the educational system: Meeting the learning needs of my gifted child

“Momma, I am not going to school I really get bored” every morning started with this conversation in our house since Ishan was in 1st standard. What can we do now? This question rang in our head multiple times during his school years. We decided we can't sit idle and add to the agony of our child who is trying to fit in our education system, fighting against social awkwardness & trying to satiate his curiosity.

Let's do something together and start the conversation with the school. Fortunately we were a part of the Millennium National School family, Pune; the school was prepared to go out of their way for their students. 'Let's give some extra stuff but at the same time let him do things which are requirements of the educational system was our motto throughout'. So, within the boundaries of the educational system, academic expectations we explored with freedom & flexibility in collaboration with the school.

Teachers started giving him advanced level worksheets or puzzles after he completed his regular classwork in 1st standard. But soon that turned out to be inadequate. Then we decided to skip one standard so he was promoted directly to 3rd standard. This was just the start and hardly enough; soon we had to figure out other options for Ishan in a structured way. He was given some privileges & exemptions in the school provided he agreed to follow some rules. For instance he was ahead in conceptual understanding in math and science 3 levels above his age.

So, the teachers let him carry and read his own books during those classes. At the same time he had to attend other classes and complete worksheets of other subjects. Around 5th standard we came across Kaveri Gifted Education and Research Center, Pune and the Gifted Educator and Counsellor became a saviour for us. Together we were able to envision future opportunities that could meet Ishan's learning needs.

Next step was to allow him to attend higher standard classes and get access to the science labs which he loved the most. During the library period as well he was given access to advanced level books. But that too was not enough for Ishan who showed college level understanding of concepts from physics. He had begun reading about quantum mechanics, and theoretical physics. This arose the need to seek subject experts or mentors who could guide him. His first mentor was Mr. Prakhar, a resource person invited by the school to lead their science club. He would spend time with Ishan and have discussions with him on different topics, books, as well as solve science problems. We also intermittently approached and had a string of interactions with the physics and mathematics teacher from Junior College level, retired as well as young professors from the physics department of Pune University. He also interacted with young and dynamic professors of Indian Institute of Science Education & Research (IISER), Pune. You might wonder how we managed time with

school & mentoring. Well the school offered Ishan flexibility of spending 2 days a week out of school to learn from his mentors and do self-study. The school and us continued to let Ishan know that he also needed to complete his school work and fulfill minimal academic requirements in lieu of the time he got to pursue his interest area to a deeper level.

My parenting journey until now has been wonderful and challenging & even frustrating. There are some lessons we learnt on the way which I would like to share with other parents of gifted children.

These are:

- Ask for help and keep an open channel of communication with the school.
- Think of a collaborative approach- parents along with school, counsellor and gifted educator.
- Overcoming one's inhibitions and seeking resources for your child.
- Understanding the need to approach and seek guidance from experts when required

The ups and downs might continue and as a parent of a gifted child I understand that I will need to keep advocating for my child who is now a teenager perhaps even through young adulthood.

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gifted 15 year old
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KAVERI GIFTED EDUCATION AND RESEARCH CENTER (KGERC)
KGERC Community Initiative
 For parents of talented and gifted children



I think my child is Gifted, but I don't understand how to help her.

Joining parent support group may help you to understand your Gifted child and her needs. Register before 12th November.

This support group is run for the parents and by the parents. Objectives are:

- Share parenting practices- what works!
- Share resources to support talent development
- Celebrate child's achievement and success as a parent
- Offer comfort, encouragement to each other and help accept the giftedness within

Meeting: 7th October, Saturday, 10:00 am to 12:30 pm

Venue: 2nd Floor, 42/16 Panchasheel, Income Tax Lane, Prabhat road lane no.14 Erandwane, Pune - 411004

***Please note the change in venue**



A Worms Eye View

We organised a visit to the R.K. Laxman Museum for students enrolled in the gifted program from std 6th and 7th. This field trip aimed at integrating art to nurture cognitive abilities. It was organised in collaboration with Dr. Kalmadi Shamaraao High School, Baner on 16th August, 2023. The students observed the world through the glasses of R.K. Laxman and they were



able to connect and enjoy his sense of humour. They were so inspired by his art that a few students spontaneously attempted a few caricatures. Field trips are an essential part of the gifted program as it helps to widen students perspectives. The reflection sheet given to the students at the end of the visit indicated how they absorbed their experiences.

Establishing a mark at the Global Platform

KGERC is very proud to share that we made a mark at the recent World Conference August 2023- "Excellence without borders: Gifted Education in a changing World. This is an annual conference which has been virtual for the past 3 years organized by the World Council of Gifted and Talented Children.

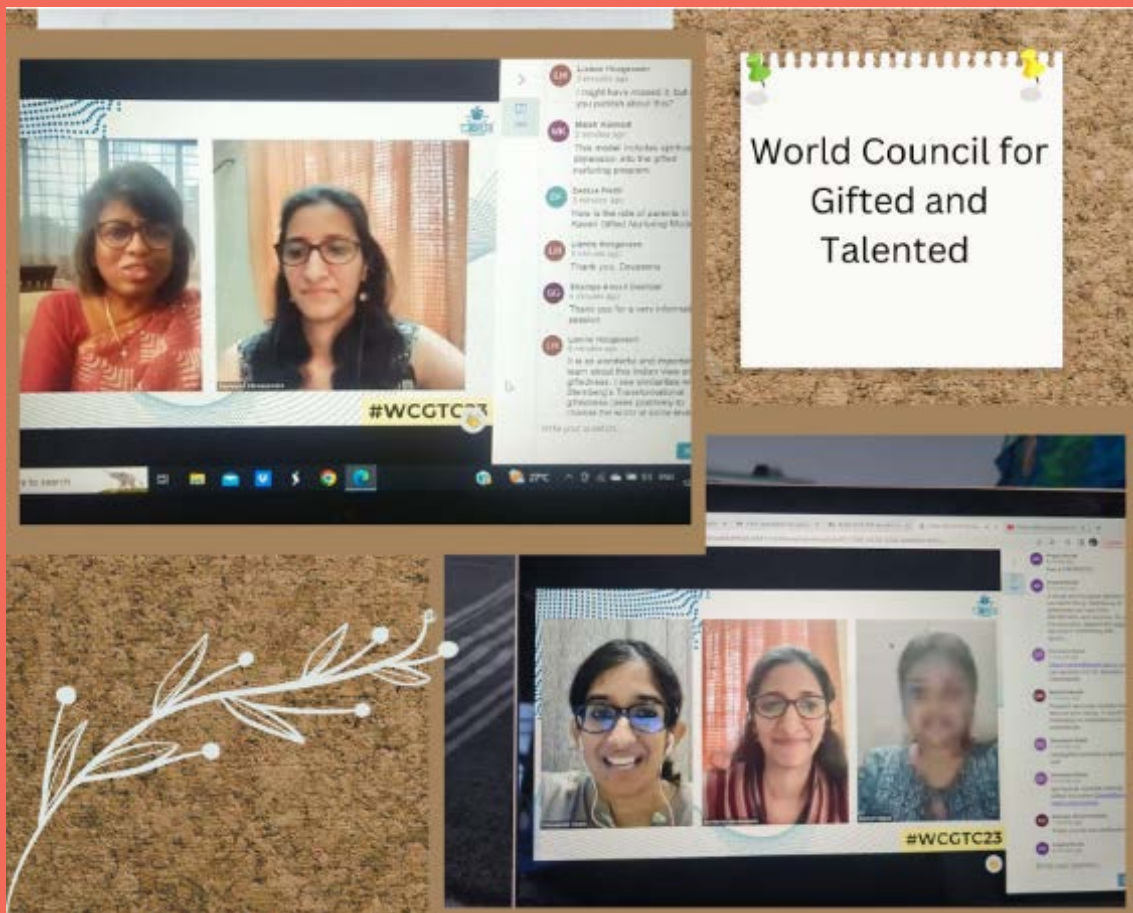
Our team made two presentations the first one was a qualitative research study titled "Parental concerns of highly gifted children in Indian context: An indicator for parental awareness and training' which was an output of the data collated by KGERC over the past 9 years. The significance of this

research was that it gave an insight into the perceptions and needs of parents of gifted children in the Indian context.

The second presentation was a concept idea titled Kaveri Gifted Nurturing Model, elicited from Panchakosh'. We have been studying the model and believe it has potential to be a good fit to holistically nurture gifted individuals. Over the last 3 years we have incrementally used aspects of the Panchakosh model to design activities and experiences for gifted children participating in the Kaveri Gifted Nurturing Program. We had Denise Fleuth, President of World Council of Gifted and Talented children, Former

President of WCGTC Dr. Julia Roberts and Dr. Leanne Hoogeveen, President of European Council for Higher Ability (ECHA). A promising note to continue our work.

This platform has helped KGERC to gain recognition for our work which was well received by participants across the globe. It was encouraging to see that senior, well-established experts from the field of gifted education took an active interest in our presentations and it also gave us the opportunity to address meaningful questions and comments from a cohort of educators, parents, researchers and academicians from the field of gifted education.



Course in Gifted Education

We conduct biannually online gifted courses which culminates into a three day in-campus exposure and experience with observing and discussing about supporting and nurturing gifted students. This time we had participants from across the country Kerala, Amaravati, Vadodhara and Gulf Country along with our school counselors and our own school teacher as well. Attached are a few testimonials.

parents, and live sessions with parents provided for complete information.

- Would love to learn more from the instructors again, such expert resource persons in gifted research. Very informative and experimental kind of learning from both.



Testimonials

- The experience of the Gifted Education Course was fantastic and we got the opportunity to meet a lot of gifted kids and their parents. That helped us to understand a lot about this spectrum.

- The instructor was amazing, making her classes thoroughly engaging. Loved every session of hers.

- The expert provided rich insights into counselling with



Connecting with Gifted Children: The Importance of Authenticity

When I began working with gifted children at KGERC four years ago, I had my own biases, assumptions, apprehensions, and insecurities related to working with this particular population. Initially, I spent a considerable amount of time rehearsing my sessions, trying to determine the right things to say, how to say them, & what questions to ask. However, I soon realized that this approach was insufficient to build a connection with gifted children. As time went on, I started reflecting on and experimenting with my facilitation style to see what worked and what did not. In my interactions with students, I always strived to be fair and just. For instance, if one student requested an extension on a submission deadline for valid reasons, I would either extend the deadline for everyone or clearly communicate to others why that student was granted an extension. This was especially crucial when working with gifted children since they have a very strong sense of justice and expect equal treatment from others.

There were instances when I felt overwhelmed in the company of passionate and highly skilled

gifted children. I feared that they might ask me questions that I did not know the answers to, and this might make me appear under-informed or incompetent. However, I soon realized that these children were not necessarily concerned with my level of knowledge but valued my interest in their thoughts, ideas, and passions. By asking pertinent questions, appreciating their efforts, and expressing interest in their areas of expertise, I was able to form deeper connections with them. However, there were times when I found it challenging to support or establish a positive relationship with some students, despite my best efforts. In such situations, I relied on classic techniques such as being there for them when they needed me, actively listening to them, and checking up with them intermittently. I assumed that these students would not miss me once they completed our gifted program. But to my surprise, most of the text messages or phone calls that I received were from these same students. It seems that my genuine approach resonated with them.

My most significant realization during my work with gifted

children was that no matter how much theory, research, or resources I employed, it was my genuine approach that mattered most in connecting with them. Even if I used the most advanced methods or relied on the most sophisticated literature, it would not be enough if the children did not perceive me as authentic and sincere.

In the end, the ability to build positive relationships with gifted children came down to my willingness to listen to them, to appreciate their unique talents, and to be genuinely interested in their ideas and perspectives. Once I was able to connect with them on a deeper level, everything else fell into place, and we could create an environment that supported their growth and development. This was my most profound learning, and it has continued to guide my work with gifted children.

Vrushali Rao
Gifted Counsellor and
lecturer



Seeing a new world of the experiences of gifted and talented children

I have been a teacher for 14 years. A chance conversation at the lunch table of getting into further higher studies with my fellow teacher colleagues steered the conversation to the gifted course. It surprised me that such a course exists for children who are envied by most of the kids and their parents. Curiosity got the better of me and I decided to enquire at the gifted center (KGERC). I had worked with remedial children but the idea of not only working with gifted children but also to understand certain misunderstood areas was very inviting. With this in mind, I also approached our senior school counsellor Mrs. Shubhada. She encouraged me to go ahead and so did the Principal of Dr. Kalmadi Shamarao High School, Ganesh nagar, Pallavi ma'am, who was more than happy. It was also very exciting to work on a course which few people knew about.

As the course unfolded, I reflected on many aspects of learning including the emotional, psychological, physical, social challenges that gifted children face. I started looking forward to going to classes and interacting with gifted children and learning how they think and see the world. One of the talented students in my class started tapping the desk with his

fingers. When I asked him about the tapping he said, "This is how I think ma'am". Another gifted child has such good emotional regulation that she is unaffected by any disruptions or mayhem in the classroom. She doesn't even bat an eyelid as she is engrossed in her reading in the midst of complete mayhem in a free period in the classroom.

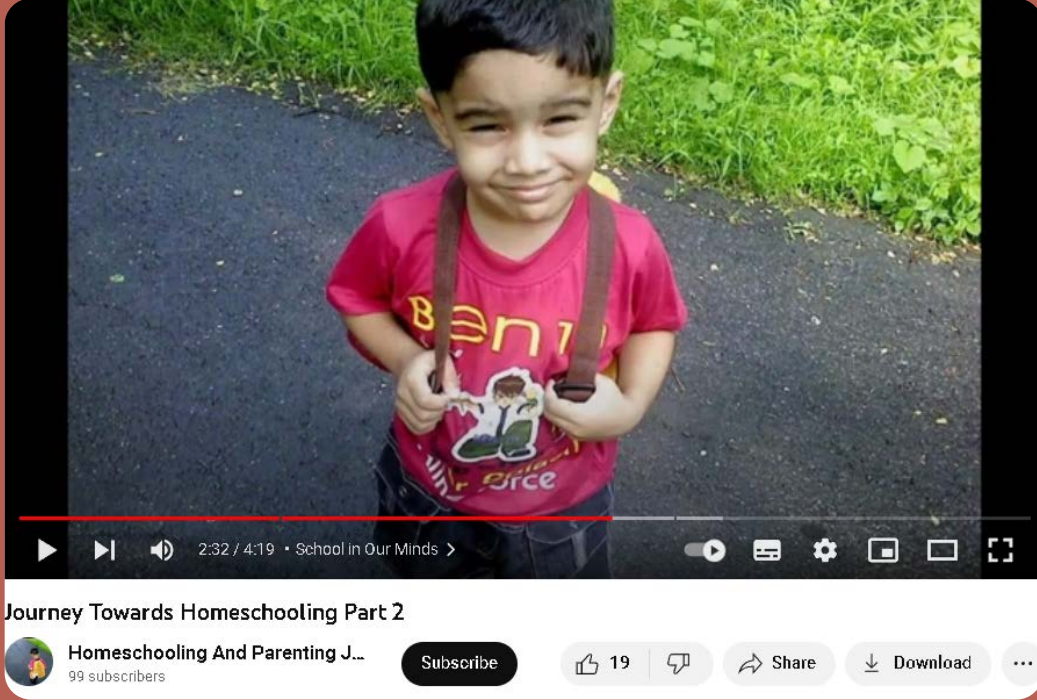
The course was a complete eye opener for me. The casual question of "Why do gifted children need to be studied? What problems can they face even though they have what others struggle to achieve?" Such and other related thoughts were slowly replaced by a series of sessions which led me to look at them with a different perspective. These children have their own demons to fight. Life is definitely not as easy as we think it is for them. I have learned that they also go through their own struggles and issues, in-fact sometimes or rather most of the times they go unnoticed. As I dug deeper and deeper into the writings and research in the field of giftedness, it made me reflect on how easily we judge a book by its cover. Talks, sessions and interactions with my other colleagues in the course gave me insights that now I feel that I have to do a lot of work in this area.

I enjoyed my journey in the course. Yes, at times I do find some terminologies difficult to understand, some conversations make me wonder and I keep trying to connect this with my earlier thinking which naturally requires more effort on my part. But, it definitely is worth it. The more I learn, the less I know! One of the many wise decisions I've made thus far, in my opinion, has been to enroll in this course. It has definitely dispelled any misconceptions I had about these talented kids. Throughout the course, we also engaged with parents of brilliant children of all ages, and we were astounded by how patient, understanding, and eager they are to help their children develop their own brilliance.

Kanchan Bhat
English and Social Studies
Teacher Dr. Kalmadi
Shamarao High School,
Ganeshnagar.



A Parent of a Gifted child sharing her homeschooling journey



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Coz4WK8gTvw>



Insights from Facilitating an SEL Session for Gifted Students

The emergence of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) within educational setups has seen a rapid growth in recent years as it positively impacts academic achievement and well being of students. For gifted children who demonstrate unique challenges due to their high intellectual abilities, it is vital to foster their emotional intelligence and social skills.

At our school- Dr. Kalmadi Shamarao High School, Secondary Section we have designed and are conducting a gifted nurturing program that includes several areas of development and emotions is one of the crucial ones. My experience of planning and co-facilitating an SEL session with the gifted students has been an insightful one. For instance, for a session on emotions we designed activities to create a platform for gifted students to learn to identify emotions, to help them recognize their emotional triggers and to build skills to help them express and manage their emotions effectively.

In one such activity, the students got into pairs and were given cards with different emotions written on them. They were told to identify and discuss situations where they felt that particular emotion. Complex emotions like thoughtful,

hopeful, jealous, proud and inadequate were included. The students took their time thinking of and listing out various situations. What started as a simple activity soon became an insightful discussion about the complexity of emotions. While discussing their experiences where they felt big emotions, the students resonated with each other and were eager to share openly.

Witnessing gifted students open up about their vulnerabilities during the session underscored the importance of creating a safe space for them to be able to talk about their feelings. It was clear that the students hungered for continuous discussions that acknowledged their emotional journey. For gifted students who may feel isolated due to their unique abilities, this session offered an opportunity to connect on a deeper emotional level.

To support gifted students holistically, it is crucial that we nurture their socio-emotional areas along with nurturing their intellectual brilliance.

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