



Nebraska Department of Education

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High Ability Learning

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Parenting HAL Students: Challenges and Successes

Parenting is not an easy task. Additionally, parenting a HAL child is extremely complex and multifaceted. Your student may display some (or all) of the characteristics of giftedness, including but not limited to:

- Learning quickly
- Advanced vocabulary
- Unusually active and alert
- Focuses intensely on one single or varied interests
- Think in abstract, creative, and insightful ways
- Highly inquisitive and asks questions
- Emotional
- Conerened with the truth, equity, and justice
- Diplays advanced sense of humor
- Daydreams



(NAGC).

This is not an extensive list, and each child is different. These characteristics are commonly seen among HAL children.

In addition, HAL students often develop asynchronously: develop faster cognitively than physically and emotionally. This can also create a frustrating experience as child and parent navigate the child being out of sync.

These complex children do not come with an instruction manual, unfortunately. The purpose of this.

Upcoming Event – Planning for Summer



HAL students benefit greatly from participating in advanced opportunities during the summer. Research shows positive academic and emotional growth when HAL students participate in summer programs. This webinar will highlight some summer online and in-person opportunities for HAL students from University of Iowa, Camp Invention, Vanderbilt University, and many more! Join us in welcoming experts from each program as they describe their offerings and answer questions.

The event will be held on December 7, 2022 at 6:00pm (CST). To register, visit this [link](#).

Strategies for Parenting HAL Students



One of the most important things to remember about parenting HAL students is that you are not alone. Millions of parents around the world are facing the same struggles and joys as you. Because of the prevalence, experts have made many suggestions regarding strategies for raising HAL students to meet their full potential.

Understanding What Giftedness is...and What it is Not

“Gifted” can sometimes be conflated with “perfect” or “good at everything.” This not only happens with adults, but children as well. It is important to talk to your child about what it means to be a HAL student. Reinforcing the idea that being HAL does not mean that everything is always easy or that they will always get a good grade is crucial in identity formation. Normalizing failure and learning processes can help students develop grit and avoid maladaptive perfectionism. Similarly, as parents, it is important to emphasize a growth mindset. Research shows that when a parent had a performance orientation instead of learning goals, the child is more likely to develop dysfunctional perfectionism (Albard & Parker, 1997).

Family Relationships

Having a HAL student in some ways impacts family dynamics. Because HAL students tend to be emotional and perceptive, they can sense disequilibrium in the family and react strongly to something seemingly trivial. It can add an extra layer of difficulty when there are sibling(s) involved—HAL or not HAL. Even if siblings are both HAL, they are very likely different and react in different ways. Fighting amongst siblings can be caused by a perceived lack of attention, comparisons, or opposite excitabilities. If you have one child is HAL and one that is not, the HAL

child may feel as if their accomplishments are downplayed or undervalued compared to their sibling, or their sibling can feel as if they will never live up to the HAL child.

All this to say having a HAL child impacts everyone in the family. The following are some strategies that can be used to improve familial relationships (Isaac-McLeod, 2017):

- Model encouragement and mutual adoration
- Embrace similarities and differences
- Actively listen to your child
- Establish discipline that promotes self-regulation and provides choices within limits
- Encourage striving for excellence rather than perfection
- Explain requests to your child versus "Because I said so"
- Family meetings to provide avenues to avoid power struggles and allow expression

Helping HAL Children Make Friends

One common concern of parents is they feel as if their student is not making friends in school. It can be hard for HAL students, especially if they feel as if they do not fit in or have any peers that understand them. Without forcing children into new friendships that are awkward or staged, Kessler (2016) suggests 5 tips:

- Be Understanding: We hate seeing our children alienated, but there are things that students need to learn on their own. Instead of forcing awkward relationships, sometimes it is enough just to be there for them. We cannot always solve their problems, but we can listen and comfort.
- Don't Offer Platitudes: Offering general statements about making friends. It is not as simple as "being nice" or "go talk to someone new." It can be helpful to coach them or chat with them, but don't put undue pressure on them.
- Encourage Them to Get Involved: Friendships can happen naturally in interest-based settings that are forged out of commonalities. Being around like-minded peers can go a long way toward friendships.
- Practice Social Skills: Social interactions can be difficult for HAL students. Guided role-playing or talking through situations/social skills can help them behave appropriately when faced with these situations.
- Empathize: Validate your child's feelings and empathize when they are feeling alone or left out. Discussing a time where you felt similarly can be powerful.

While this is not an extensive list of strategies, the following resources can prove helpful:

[Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted Parenting](#)

[NAGC: Helping Your Gifted Child Succeed](#)

[Suggestions for Productive Parent Teacher Conferences](#)

[Parenting Gifted Kids: Tips for Raising Happy and Successful Children](#)

[Resources for Parenting Gifted Children](#)

[Nebraska Department of Education HAL Parent Page](#)

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