The social-emotional dimension of giftedness: The SENG support model

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Abstract

SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of Gifted) is an organisation that recognises the importance of the social-emotional dimension in giftedness. Being bright is not enough. Environmental factors and innate characteristics within a gifted individual influence their social and emotional development. These factors act separately and interact together to influence and sometimes challenge gifted individuals. Five factors are identified that dramatically influence how a gifted child thinks, feels, and behaves. These include levels of giftedness, asynchronous development, overexcitabilities, thinking and learning styles, and the forced-choice dilemma. The unique concepts and challenges of giftedness found within New Zealand's Maori populations are highlighted within these factors. The SENG Model Parent Groups, which have been popular in the US for many years, are now spreading internationally. These groups are unique as they aim to bring attention to the social and emotional needs of gifted individuals, through a ten-week program run by trained facilitators. These groups differ from local support groups and associations as they allow parents to trial, implement and refine strategies at home, within a supportive group, where the facilitators model the behaviours that the parents later adopt.

The importance of the social-emotional dimension

The notion of high intelligence being associated with emotional or social difficulties is somewhat counterintuitive. Intelligence assumes problem-solving ability, which includes such related areas as forethought, reasoning skills, ability to see cause-effect relations, attention to detail, memory for relevant data and a wide array of knowledge to draw upon. Bright individuals, one would assume, should be able to anticipate, avoid and solve interpersonal problems more easily than others and they should have more self-understanding.

Such assumptions are not always valid. Many authors (e.g., Silverman, 1993; Webb, 2010) have written of individuals who were highly able cognitively, but who demonstrated significant emotional or interpersonal deficits, and historically controversy has existed as to the extent to which intellectually gifted children are prone to social and emotional problems (Webb, 1993). Currently, research concerning social and emotional needs of gifted children and their families falls into two basic categories. One group of authors view gifted and talented children and adults as being prone to problems and in need of special interventions to prevent or overcome their unique difficulties (e.g., Silverman, 1993). The other group of authors view gifted children and their families as being able to fare quite well on their own; those needing special interventions are seen as a relative minority (e.g., Neihart, Reis, Robinson & Moon, 2001).

These two views are not as contradictory as they might first appear. Those authors who find that gifted children are doing relatively well on their own usually have chosen students from academic programs specifically designed for gifted children. Such children, by the very nature of the selection process, are typically functioning well in school, which implies that they are unlikely to be experiencing significant social or emotional problems. The selection process, then, limits the representativeness of the sample of gifted children being studied and will exclude those who are academically underachieving because of social or emotional problems.

By contrast, authors who consistently find problems among gifted children most often rely on data gathered in clinical settings and from individual case studies where the population is self-selecting. This likely produces a sample bias, as well, that prompts an over-estimate of the incidence of social and emotional difficulties.

It would appear that both views have at least partial validity and it is worth noting that high potential children who have not been achieving have featured in few empirical studies, probably due to the difficulties involved in identifying them. There does, though, seem to be consensus

that at least some gifted individuals have social and emotional challenges that become barriers to leading fulfilling lives. They may not use their abilities fully or relate and interact appropriately with others. Fulfilment is more likely when an individual is performing closely to their true potential.

There is at least some evidence that certain social and emotional issues are more likely to occur among gifted children, particularly in specific settings. The intellectual and emotional development of gifted children may be out of sync with their chronologically aged peers. What is interpreted as bad behaviour or an over-reaction to a situation within the school setting, can be how a gifted child is communicating his or her intense and morally based perspective.

Gross (2004a) highlights the importance of recognising how early young gifted children begin to mask their abilities for peer acceptance. Her Australian study of sixty exceptionally gifted children, who were reading fluently prior to school entry, showed that more than forty of these children significantly modified their reading performance (or deliberately stopped reading in class) within two weeks of transitioning to school. The small group of children who continued to show their reading skill were in classes where the teachers set up emotionally safe environments that recognised, accepted and facilitated their reading abilities. Further, when a gifted child norm-references that other children in the class are not demonstrating the same skill sets as them, they may close down and withdraw completely to fit in. After all, just like all children, gifted children are social beings who seek social acceptance and friendships.

Contextual issues: The influence of environmental and innate factors

To a large degree, the needs of gifted children are the same as those of any other human and generally these children go through the same developmental stages as other children, though they may reach these developmental stages at an earlier age (Gross 2004b; Webb & Kleine, 1993). As with other children, gifted children may face potentially limiting factors such as poverty, lack of opportunities to develop their talents, drugs and alcohol, or being from a minority background. To the extent that such needs and challenges are met by positive and supportive responses from their environment, social and emotional problems are less likely. If met with hindrances, such as harsh, inconsistent punishment, over-conformity to social expectations, family disintegrations, emotional problems, or rewarding indiscriminately the child's behaviours, a child's potential is less likely to develop and flourish.

Thus, a distinction must be made between social and emotional problems that arise primarily from the environment (i.e., exogenous) and those that arise primarily from within the individual (i.e., endogenous). Of course, one must also consider the interaction between these two.

Years ago, the educator May Seagoe (1974) noted that the very characteristics that may be strengths for gifted children also are likely to have potential problems associated with them, particularly stemming from the interaction of the child's characteristics and the environmental setting. Some of the more common of these characteristics are shown in Table 1. More recently, the psychologist Dr James Webb has made a similar listing with regard to gifted adults.

Five Factors

Five factors dramatically influence how gifted children think, feel, and behave, yet these factors are seldom included in current research. These factors are listed below.

Levels of giftedness
Children at the highest levels of giftedness are usually dramatically different from children at the lower levels. Being gifted with an IQ of 140 is not at all the same as being gifted with an IQ of 180! Issues of peer relations are more extreme, educational planning and school issues are more complex, and these children are more likely to be influenced by asynchronous development and the overexcitabilities, discussed below.

In 1942, psychologist Leta Hollingworth, in her book, *Children Above 180 IQ* noted that more intelligence is not necessarily better, and she introduced the concept of "optimum intelligence" — the range of intelligence (about IQ 120-145) at which one is bright enough to do almost anything in life, but not so different in interests or abilities to have trouble relating with others. Hollingworth believed that most of our leaders in society come from this "optimum" range. Ruf (2005) has more systematically described five levels of giftedness and the educational implications and school issues associated with each level.

Table 1: Problems Associated with Characteristic Strengths in Gifted Children

Strength	Possible Problems
Acquires and retains information quickly	Impatient with slowness of others; dislikes routine and drill; may resist mastering foundation skills; may make concepts unduly complex
Inquisitive attitude, intellectual curiosity; intrinsic motivation; searching for significance expects same of others	Asks embarrassing questions; strong willed; excessive in interests;
Ability to conceptualise, abstract, synthesise; problem-solving and intellectual activity	Rejects or omits details; resists enjoys problem-practice or drill; questions teaching procedures
Can see cause-effect relations	Difficulty accepting the illogical, such as feelings, traditions, matters to be taken on faith
Love of truth, equity and fair play	Difficulty in being practical; worry about humanitarian concerns
Enjoys organizing things and people into structure and order; seeks to systematise	Constructs complicated rules or systems; may be seen as bossy, rude or domineering
Large vocabulary and facile verbal proficiency; broad information in advanced areas	May use words to escape or avoid situations; becomes bored with school and age peers; seen by others as a know-it-all"
Thinks critically; has high expectations; is self critical and evaluates others	Critical or intolerant toward others; may become discouraged or depressed; perfectionistic
Keen observer; willing to consider the unusual; new experiences	Overly intense focus; may be gullible
Creative and inventive; likes new ways of doing things	May disrupt plans or reject what is already known; seen by others as different and out-of-step
Intense concentration; long attention span in areas of interest; goal-directed behaviour persistence	Resists interruption; neglects duties or people during periods of focused persistence interests; seen as stubborn
Sensitivity, empathy for others;	Sensitivity to criticism or peer rejection; desire to be accepted by others for different and expects others to have similar values; need for success and recognition; may feel different and alienated
High energy, alertness, eagerness; periods of intense efforts	Frustration with inactivity; eagerness may disrupt others' schedules; needs continual stimulation; may be seen as hyperactive
Independent; prefers individualised work; reliant on self	May reject parent or peer input; non-conformist; may be unconventional
Diverse interests and abilities; versatility	May appear scattered and disorganised; becomes frustrated over lack of time; others may expect continual competence
Strong sense of humour	Sees absurdities of situations; humour may not be understood by peers; may become "class clown" to gain attention

Adapted from Clark (2007) and Seagoe (1974)

Following is a general summary of Ruf's (2005) *Estimates of Levels of Giftedness*. There is some overlap across each of the levels and it should be noted that test scores are not the sole determinant of giftedness level. Intrapersonal skills, inner qualities, and chance are also considered; however, these may be specific to the environment offered. Some gifted children demonstrate a higher level of intensity and drive than others of similar assessed ability levels, while others only awaken when they find or discover a new passion area. In contrast, some gifted children close down and withdraw at school when it is does not meet their learning or social-emotional needs. In recognising and programming appropriately for children at the extreme range of intelligence, off-level testing should be utilised as part of the identification process.

Level One Gifted:

- Approximately 90th-98th percentiles on standardised tests.
- Termed Superior to Moderately Gifted on IQ tests.
- Generally top one-third to one-quarter of students in a mixed-ability class.
- Often described as bright achieving students in the classroom.
- Predominate gifted program population due to higher frequency compared to Levels Two through Five.
- Start kindergarten with end-of-year skills already mastered.

Level Two Gifted:

- Mostly 98-99th percentiles on standardised tests.
- Termed Moderately to Highly Gifted or Very Advanced on IQ tests.
- As many as three students in a typical mixed-ability classroom.
- Qualify for many gifted programs.
- Master most kindergarten skills one to two years before kindergarten (by age 4).

Level Three Gifted:

- Approximately 98-99th percentiles on standardised tests.
- Termed Highly to Exceptionally Gifted or Very Advanced on IQ tests.
- One or two per grade level, more in high socioeconomic schools.
- Qualify for gifted programs as they are above the level of most other participants and curriculum material.
- Unless gifted program includes more than one grade level, student may be only one of same ability in gifted class.
- Master majority of kindergarten skills by age 3 or 4.
- Question Santa or Tooth Fairy by age 3 to 5.
- Most spontaneously read with or without previous instruction before kindergarten.
- Most read simple chapter books by age 5-6.
- Most intuitively use numbers for many operations before kindergarten.

Level Four Gifted:

- Primarily 99th percentile on standardised tests (formerly referred to as exceptionally and profoundly gifted range).
- One or two across two year levels; two or three per year level in high socioeconomic schools.
- Majority of kindergarten skills by age 3.
- Question Santa or Tooth Fairy by age 3 to 4.
- Majority at Years 2-3 level equivalency in academic subjects by early kindergarten.
- Majority at upper high school level equivalencies by Years 4-5.
- Show concern for existential topics and life's purpose by early primary school age.

Level Five Gifted:

- Primarily 99th percentiles on standardised tests (formerly referred to as exceptionally and profoundly gifted range).
- High intellectual profile across ability domains, great inner drive to learn across domains Exceptionally to Profoundly Gifted or Highly Advanced on IQ tests.
- At least one in every 250,000, a higher proportion in metropolitan areas and high socioeconomic background schools.
- Majority have kindergarten skills by about 2 years or sooner.
- Question Santa or Tooth Fairy by age 2 to 3.
- Majority spontaneously read, understand fairly complex maths, have existential concerns by age 4-5 with or without any instruction.
- Majority have high school year level equivalencies by age 7 or 8 years old, mostly through their own reading and question asking.

Asynchronous development

If a child functions at the 98th percentile on a cognitive assessment of ability in one area, most adults would expect that child's abilities in other areas will be similar. However, as intelligence increases, this becomes progressively less likely. Many children in the higher levels of ability, for example, may function at the 99.9th percentile in one or two areas, at the 98th percentile in

another area, yet at the 76th percentile in another area. Thus, they are not only different from peers, but they are out of sync within themselves, sometimes to the point of being both gifted and learning disabled. These children are sometimes called *twice exceptional*. This is very frustrating for them and can lead to an underestimation of their abilities in areas of strength for both the student themselves, their teachers and parents, because the disability is often overshadowing or masking their strength. Often, the larger the range in individual subtest scores, the greater the frustration experienced by an individual and the more significant the underlying learning disability is likely to be. Parents and teachers are often puzzled and highly frustrated at the student: How could a child who can master one academic area with such ease struggle so significantly in another? Why can the child talk like that but barely write a sentence in their book? What is reasonable to expect from such a child?

Another type of *asynchronous development* arises with increasing intelligence because judgment lags behind intellect, prompting many frustrated parents and teachers to say to their very bright child, "For someone so bright, you have no common sense at all!" Often, the brighter the child, the greater the gap between judgment and intellect appears. Why is this so? First, judgment about interpersonal customs is typically not something that is logical (e.g., why does society have certain rules about what clothes should be worn on certain occasions or in certain settings?); one simply has to live long enough to memorise the customs and subtle rules of interaction. Second, recent brain research indicates that the prefrontal cortex, where judgment functions are located, develops more slowly in gifted children than in others (Willis, 2009).

Overexcitabilities

As a child's ability level increases, there is usually a similar increase in sensitivity and intensity. As one mother stated, "My child's life motto is 'Anything worth doing is worth doing to excess!' " The concept of overexcitabilities (OEs) comes from Dabrowski's theory (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009; Mendaglio, 2008), which specifies that an individual can be extremely intense in one or more areas — intellectual, imaginational, emotional, psychomotor, and sensual. Understanding the OEs can markedly reduce the likelihood of power struggles or even misdiagnosis of these children.

Dabrowski, a Polish psychiatrist and psychologist whose general theory is titled The Theory of Positive Disintegration, coined the phrase "superstimulability" or "overexcitability."

Although all humans are stimulated by events around or within them, Dabrowski noted that the brighter the child, the greater the likelihood that the person would become superstimulated. Dabrowski also noted that this could be in one, or more, of five areas, each characterised by certain behaviours.

- **Intellectual** (Avid Reading, Curiosity, Asking Probing Questions, Concentration, Problem Solving, Theoretical Thinking).
- **Imaginational** (Fantasy Play, Animistic and Imaginative Thinking, Daydreaming, Dramatic Perception, Use of Metaphor).
- **Emotional** (Concern for Others, Timidity and Shyness, Fear and Anxiety, Difficulty Adjusting to New Environments, Intensity of Feeling).
- **Psychomotor** (Marked Enthusiasm, Rapid Speech, Surplus of Energy, Nervous Habits, Impulsive Actions).
- **Sensual** (Sensory Pleasures, Appreciation of Sensory Aspects of Experiences, Avoidance of Overstimulation).

As gifted children do not require the same number of repetitions (or exposures) to experiences to learn, they therefore may not require the same level of sensory stimulation to engage with and interact with their environments to learn. Emerging literature draws comparisons between sensory processing and overexcitabilities in gifted children (Blackett & Hood, 2009; Cronin, 2003). Sensory information is essentially accumulative in the body and individuals all have differing levels of sensitivity to sensory rich environments. Sensory sensitivities are slowly becoming more widely recognised and catered for within educational settings. Some children find the long-run halogen lights visually too bright. Other children find that the noise within a new entrant reception classroom is overwhelming and therefore they increase their speech volume (as a way of blocking out the background noise and soothing themselves). A growing number of children are even wearing ear muffs to filter auditory information and background noise. Historically, the behaviour produced as a reaction to overstimulation from sensory input has been interpreted as misbehaviour or inappropriate by parents and teachers. In turn, this has sometimes resulted in a child being disciplined for an outburst that is essentially of a sensory-based nature.

Thinking and learning styles

There is substantial evidence of inborn temperaments (Kagan & Snidman, 2005). Some children seem born shy and introverted, avoiding risk-taking, and have strong perfectionistic

tendencies; others are more uninhibited and live life on the edge. Some children have predispositions to learn verbally; others by doing, listening or by visualising. Children who learn predominantly by visualising are often referred to as *visual-spatial learners* (Golan, 2008). Some children are naturally neat and organised; while others are so disorganised that their rooms resemble a landfill site. Some are uncomfortable with new settings and challenges; others are continually challenging ideas and looking for creative solutions. Neither style is inherently better; they are simply different. However, parents can easily drift into power struggles with children who have a different thinking and learning style than their own preferred style. Awareness of differences in styles can help. The differences between auditory-sequential and visual-spatial learning styles in the gifted were recognised and documented by Dr Linda Silverman (2002) in 1981 at the Gifted Development Center in Colorado. She is also credited with coining the phrase the *visual-spatial learner* and has written a wealth of information on how to cater for these diverse, often highly creative learners from an educational perspective with her colleague Alexandra Golan.

The forced-choice dilemma

The degree to which students believe they have the right to hold opinions (or views) which run counter to those of the majority culture, will influence their opportunities to develop and maintain strong relationships with peers and authority figures. In a school culture where conformity is a vital measure of acceptability, gifted students often may face a forced-choice dilemma, if they wish to pursue an area of talent that conflicts with their need to fit or be accepted by their peer culture (Gross, 2004b).

Bevan-Brown (2004) suggests that for gifted Maori students in New Zealand who identify with their culture, a strong knowledge and appreciation of their Maoritanga (cultural identity) through learning about the language, customs, traditions, spirituality, ancestors, and tribal connections of their whanau (extended family) is paramount in realising their potential. Within Maori society giftedness is broadened to include values such as *service to others* and the *using of gifts and talents to benefit the wider community*.

In fact, within Bevan-Brown's research on giftedness a number of groups were identified as having special abilities, which were perceived as belonging to a collective of people, who together demonstrated a particular talent or quality. Numerous examples were cited of Maori students being included in gifted groups or camps but withdrawing because they did not like the learning environment offered. They were often the only Maori child invited and they therefore felt isolated. Teachers and peers were not pronouncing their names correctly, and students felt alienated as the social culture offered did not match their social and cultural needs. Teachers are therefore encouraged to support gifted Maori students within a Maori-relevant context. For example, a science fair entry could be on traditional Maori rongoa (medicine).

These findings appear highly applicable to the many diverse groups around the world who may have been marginalised by the majority culture. The majority concept of giftedness is not the only *correct* one and as a result, students should not be put in a position of choosing whether they belong to their cultural group or to a gifted group. They can be and should be able to have both.

The positive side of recognising, valuing, and embracing the social-emotional dimension

Whether or not a gifted child's talent will be realised depends heavily on parents and teachers recognising, valuing and embracing the social-emotional dimension. This includes understanding all of the characteristics commonly associated with giftedness. SENG's mission is to do just that. In particular, SENG has developed a model for parent support groups where parents can share ideas and experiences. They work at appreciating and encouraging their child, considering how to anticipate problems and find solutions and how to prevent difficulties.

Data from works such as *Understanding Creativity* (Piirto, 2004) and *Cradles of Eminence: The Childhoods of More than 700 Famous Men and Women* (Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, & Hanson, 2004), support the importance of parental involvement if children are to develop their potential. Parents of gifted children, however, often find their experience is a lonely one filled with questions. They wonder if all gifted children have the same or similar problems as their own child with school, teachers or friends. They may be puzzled by some of the behaviours of their gifted child, such as precociousness, constant questioning of others or lack of motivation in things the parent believes they should be motivated in. Parents want to know how other families deal with such issues and possibly learn new ways of dealing with them in their own families. Parents also want to learn how other parents have successfully overcome school issues. Although parents surely want to do what is best for their

children, they often do not know what educational options and alternatives exist, nor how to advocate for their child with school personnel appropriately. Sharing ideas and experiences with other parents of gifted children can help these parents feel less alone and more confident about their ability to support their child's academic and social emotional needs. They are given options and strategies to trial, while being listened to in a nurturing and open environment.

The overarching goal of the SENG Model parent support groups is to help parents support and nurture the emotional development as well as the academic growth of gifted children. Here is a brief description for those who wish to organise parent support groups in their own community. Groups, which are limited to fifteen individuals, are normally facilitated by two leaders and take ninety minutes per session. Parents learn about common characteristics and behaviours of gifted children, self-discipline, how and when to set boundaries, strategies to improve communication, resolving conflicts with siblings, sparking motivation and much more.

SENG parent groups differ from local support groups and associations in that they are more than just a 'meeting to share information'. The actual structure of the SENG Model Parent Groups allows parents to identify one or two practical steps to try, then to report back to the group how the strategy worked, and then to refine and build upon the strategy. This all happens within a supportive group where the facilitators, in their leading style, are modelling desired behaviours that the parents will hopefully adopt.

Ten topics have been prioritised as the most important areas to cover. These topics were selected because they are considered to be the most frequent issues affecting gifted children and their families. Not surprisingly, each topic has numerous sub-issues, and the relative importance of issues varies for each family.

Characteristics of Gifted Children
- What is giftedness
- Gifted or just smart?
- Behavioural characteristics
- Learning and thinking styles
- Range of intelligence
- Asynchronous development
- Overexcitabilities

Communication: The Key to Relationships
- Communication is the key to everything else
- Barriers to communication
- Intensity and sensitivity of feelings
- Punishing a child for being gifted

Motivation, Enthusiasm, and Underachievement
- Why enthusiasm for learning gets lost
- Power struggles
- What is appropriate to expect

Discipline and Self-Management
- How much discipline is needed?
- Lag of judgment behind intellect
- Developing self-organizational skills

Intensity, Perfectionism, and Stress
- Idealism and perfectionism
- Learning to tolerate frustration
- Developing persistence and resilience

Idealism, Unhappiness, and Depression
- Cynicism and depression
- Feelings of aloneness
- Worries about suicide

Acquaintances, Friends, and Peers
- How much do gifted children need to interact with others?
- Introversion/extroversion
- Peer pressures in adolescence

Family Relationships: Siblings and Only Children
- Sibling comparisons and unequal abilities
- Birth order effects
- Sibling rivalry

Values, Traditions, and Uniqueness
- Expressed and unexpressed values in the family
- Traditions can bind and inhibit
- Traditions can offer connectivity and support

Complexities of Modern Parenting
- Fast pace and pressures on parents
- Information explosion overexposes gifted children
- Issues for blended families
- Handling disagreements between parents

From experience, four additional issues frequently arise, but these are slightly less common, depending on the type of gifted child and the responsiveness of the educational system to the gifted child. The four issues are:

Finding a Good Educational Fit
- Parents cannot always trust schools to provide appropriate services
- If the fit is poor, emotional and behaviour problems are likely
- Parents must inform themselves about various educational options
- Parents often need to be involved educational advocates for their children

Gifted Children Who Are Twice Exceptional
- Disorders often associated with giftedness
- Interventions for the disorders
- Problem of possible misdiagnosis

How Schools Identify Gifted Children

- Methods of identification
- When scores do not match characteristics
- Individual testing, and requesting second opinions

Finding Professional help

- Are health care and counselling professionals informed about gifted children?
- Deciding to seek help
- How to find the right professional

The facilitated discussions allow parents to co-construct strategies for trialling within the home environment. They are not simply the delivery of information. The facilitator models the desired behaviours and focuses the session on 'take-home' value. Strategies often used by SENG facilitators include Socratic questioning, building on successes, meeting participants "where they are at", and recognising the 'feeling' rather than the 'content' of parents' contributions. The facilitator is not an expert, rather an active participant, who reflects questions back to the group, and encourages parents to contribute their ideas and experiences.

From a parental perspective completing the program empowers parents to anticipate, avoid and solve problems encountered while parenting their gifted child. Gifted children, as with all children, have a continuum of social and emotional needs. So too do their parents. Identifying the social and emotional challenges that become barriers to their children reaching their potential across the home and school contexts is paramount. Challenges can be overcome and barriers lowered or taken down when parents use the information and strategies shared and developed within the group. Recognising when your child is out of sync with the environment afforded to them and changing that environment to better suit their needs acknowledges the importance of the social and emotional dimension of giftedness. Social acceptance and friendships are important for all children, including gifted children. More information can be found in Gifted Parent Groups: The SENG Model, 2nd edition (2007).

The future for SENG

SENG hopes to impart its influence worldwide. The issues for gifted children and their families transcend national and cultural boundaries. Not only have representatives of SENG spoken at various international conferences and provided training in the SENG Model Parent Groups, but SENG has also recently included on its Board of Directors a representative from New Zealand — educator and psychologist Rose Blackett.

Here are some activities which SENG is currently involved in, with hopes that these will become more widely available internationally.

- Website: www.sengifted.org
- An archive of *The SENG Update*, our monthly newsletter (available free via our website)
- Online articles and resources on various topics such as: Learning About Gifted Children; Multi-cultural Gifted Issues; and Perspectives From Gifted Children and Adults
- SENG Group and Community Facebook pages
- SENG Twitter
- Recommended readings on: Learning About Giftedness; Social and Emotional Issues; Adult Gifted; Parenting the Gifted; Counselling, Multiple Exceptionality and Psychological Issues
- SENG-Model parent group training for facilitators
- SENG-Model Parent Support Groups where parents can meet to discuss such topics as motivation, discipline, stress management, and peer relationships.
- Continuing Education (CE) credits available on extramural study courses for psychologists and other health care and counselling professionals on topics such as: Psycho-Educational Theory, Research and Best Practices for gifted children; Misdiagnosis and Dual Diagnoses of Gifted Children and Adults; and Clinical Challenges for Child Psychiatry involving the Gifted.
- Designating National Parenting Gifted Children Week in the US for the third week of July each year. In New Zealand National Gifted Awareness Week (GAW) is designated for the week including the 17th June, as it is the birth date of Professor George Parkyn (an early pioneer in gifted education)
- Sponsoring Webinars on topics of interest that can be accessed worldwide. Recent topics have included: Navigating the Quest for Help - Understanding Your Gifted Child's Puzzling Behaviour; The Gifted Child - Superachiever or Underachiever - Parents and Teachers Make the Difference; and Understanding and Treating Anxiety, Depression, Bipolar Disorder and Underachievement in Gifted Children, Adolescents and Young Adults
- Establishment of a National Professional Advisory Committee in the US composed of nationally known representatives from psychology, psychiatry, neurology, paediatrics and family practice medicine (General Practitioners)
- A DVD on issues of misdiagnosis and dual diagnoses of gifted children

- A brochure (developed jointly with NAGC in 2007) about gifted children to be distributed to all paediatricians and family practitioners in the U.S.
- Establishment of *SENG Nos Apoya*, a program with emphasis on special needs of Hispanic parents of gifted children (currently in development).

Although educational opportunities for gifted children are essential, social and emotional issues are equally crucial. *Being bright is not enough*. The mastery of facts and achievements are worth very little without corresponding social and emotional health — joy, happiness and a sense of belonging in this world.

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