UNDERSTANDING
Your Gifted Child
From the Inside Out


James R. Delisle, Ph.D.
Understanding your gifted child from the inside-out: A guide to the social and emotional lives of gifted kids

James R. Delisle
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Understand what Giftedness is . . . and what it is not
It was sad.

I never saw anyone break down and cry in math class before!
WELL, HE'S FROM ANOTHER SCHOOL, AND I SUPPOSE HE WAS FRUSTRATED.
He should realize that math is something you can't learn overnight.

I know.
MAYBE HE OUGHT TO CONSIDER TEACHING ANOTHER SUBJECT?
This is a copy of the homework he comes home with.

Age 5
Age 5

This is the work he does from home.
This is what I do well in school. **EVERYTHING**
Name: JAKE

This is what I do well in school.
EVERYTHING

STOP ENTERING!

This is what I wish I could do better:
NOTHING!

I never tried anything I can't do.
Mrs. Snyder, I'm very sorry I didn't do much in my December Handwriting. I have large regrets still inside me unfulfilled that I am still sad about. I should have done it while I had the chance but oh! What have I done? Huge problems are coming my way! How can I pay for college with a grade like that? Never will, possibly. I might not graduate high school! I would be begging for scraps instead of going to college! I wish I had done my handwriting! I will improve by doing my handwriting and not just one page. I will do each and every thing including the labels! I shall work and work until my hands get sore and throb like my heart beat. I shall not refuse to work even if my hands hurt. I shall never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never, quit!
I shall not retreat!
My life has been miserable for since when you gave me my handwriting to day before today, but I shall change that... I will do my handwriting.

with great dreams and a pollegial call,
yours, Mia

ACE 7
Giftedness: “Who you are” not “What you do”

Giftedness is a greater awareness, a greater sensitivity, and a greater ability to understand and transform perceptions into intellectual and emotional experiences.

--Annemarie Roeper
Know the distinction between "better at" and "better than"
The 8 Great Gripees of Gifted Kids

1. No one explains what being “smart” or gifted is all about. It’s kept a big mystery.
2. School is too easy and/or not relevant.
3. Parents, teachers and/or friends expect me to be perfect.
4. Friends who really understand me are few and far between.
5. I get teased about being smart.
6. I feel overwhelmed by the number of things I can do in life.
7. I feel different and alienated from most of my classmates—I think in different ways than they do.
8. I worry about world problems and feel helpless to do anything about them.
**Gifted**

- You get more homework
- You learn more
- It makes you feel bad

**People think you're higher of you**
- They expect too much
- When you can help it makes you feel better

- You get less time to play

**You get things done faster**
- You have allot of free time
- If you don't know something you don't have much time to learn it

**People tease you**
- It makes you feel better that you're not teasing them
Gifted

- People think you are perfect
- Get a good job
- You can get into better colleges
- Get called names

+ Better colleges cost more money
+ Learn harder stuff
+ Get in special classes
+ With some people for four years

- Hard to explain
- Explaining you're in the same class

SECRET.

Everything has its price.

So some people don't call us names.
You are smart, they might not believe you can do hard things. You might not have as good an imagination since you know things aren't true. You might not believe that other kids do. You can still pretend you believe them and have fun.

If you know something you are smart, in school it might be boring. You won't have to worry about work that is hard. You might start not paying attention and get in trouble.

You are smart, they might not believe you can do hard things. You might not have as good an imagination since you know things aren't true. You might not believe that other kids do. You can still pretend you believe them and have fun.

Everything has its ups and downs!
CreativE

Gifted

- feel bad
- kids tease you
- come up with good come backs
- see stuff other people can't
- get in trouble
- in testing work
- not under estimated
- over estimated
- punishment
- when you fix it you get even more praise

Everything has its ups and downs.
Take charge of your own education
Fall Leaves
By Robert Jellinghaus
Age 11

I see a leaf.
It is yellow with red and orange mixed in.

My mind says:
“The yellow is caused by the oxidation of leftover sugars.
The red and orange are caused by the emergence of recessive pigments.”

I see a leaf.
It is yellow with red and orange mixed in.

My heart says:
“The yellow is a bit of leftover sun from summer.
The red and orange is the leaf spiraling down the lower spectrum as it is going to sleep.”

I see a leaf.
Promote self-advocacy.

Self-advocacy is the process of recognizing and meeting the needs specific to your learning ability without compromising the dignity of yourself or others.

-Loring Brinckerhoff, ETS


www.gtcarpediem.com
Ten Tips for Talking to Teachers

Are you having a problem with a class or assignment? Can you see room for improvement in how a subject is taught? Do you have a better idea for a special project or term paper? Don't just tell your friends. Talk to the teacher!

Many students have told us that they don’t know how to go about doing this. The following suggestions are meant to make it easier for everyone—students and teachers.

1. **Make an appointment to meet and talk.** This shows the teacher that you’re serious and you have some understanding of his or her busy schedule. Tell the teacher about how much time you’ll need, be flexible, and don’t be late.

2. **If you know other students who feel the way you do, consider approaching the teacher together.** There’s strength in numbers. If a teacher hears the same thing from four or five people, he or she is more likely to do something about it.

3. **Think through what you want to say before you go into your meeting with the teacher.** Write down your questions or concerns. Make a list of the items you want to cover. You may even want to copy your list for the teacher so both of you can consult it during your meeting. (Or consider giving it to the teacher ahead of time.)

4. **Choose your words carefully.** Example: Instead of saying, “I hate doing reports; they’re boring and a waste of time,” try, “Is there some other way I could satisfy this requirement? Could I do a video instead?” Strike the word “boring” from your vocabulary. It’s a buzzword for teachers.

5. **Don’t expect the teacher to do all of the work or propose all of the answers.** Be prepared to make suggestions, offer solutions, even recommend resources. The teacher will appreciate that you took the initiative.

6. **Be diplomatic, tactful, and respectful.** Teachers have feelings, too.

7. **Focus on what you need, not on what you think the teacher is doing wrong.** The more the teacher learns about you, the more he or she will be able to help. The more defensive the teacher feels, the less he or she will want to help.

8. **Don’t forget to listen.** Strange but true, many students need practice in this essential skill. The purpose of your meeting isn’t just to hear yourself talk.

9. **Bring your sense of humor.** Not necessarily the joke-telling sense of humor, but the one that lets you laugh at yourself and your own misunderstandings and mistakes.

10. **If your meeting isn’t successful, get help from another adult.** “Successful” doesn’t necessarily mean that you emerged victorious. Even if the teacher denies your request, your meeting can still be judged successful. If you had a real conversation—if you communicated openly, listened carefully, and respected each other’s point of view—then congratulate yourself on a great meeting. If the air crackled with tension, the meeting fell apart, and you felt disrespected (or acted disrespectfully), then it’s time to bring in another adult. Suggestions: a guidance counselor, the gifted program coordinator, or another teacher you know and trust who seems likely to support you and advocate for you. Once you’ve found help, approach your teacher and try again.

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Appreciate that less than perfection is more than acceptable.
A D-MINUS
AAUGHH!!

A B-PLUS...
AAUGHH!!
A D-Minus
AAUGHH!!

A B-Plus...
AAUGHH!!

That proves it, Ma'am..
A D-Minus
AAUGHH!!

A B-Plus...
AAUGHH!!

That proves it, Ma'am...

We all have different thresholds of pain!
What do gifted high school freshmen worry about?

1. I will fail, so why should I even be going here?
2. I really am not gifted, it’s just a label people pin on me to get me to work hard.
3. I won’t find any friends here who really “get” me.
4. I will be bored...as usual, in my classes.
5. I’ll have to fake who I am if I want to fit in.
6. I will feel even more pressure to perform because I’m in a “gifted school.”
7. I’ll be so busy with schoolwork that I won’t have time to do anything fun.
8. I’m probably going to be the dumbest of the smart kids.
9. I’ve never had to study before to get good grades, so I don’t know how to study.
10. I’m going to be intimidated sitting next to college students in my classes.
Hanging in there

If you find yourself getting discouraged about how things are going, perhaps you can take heart in these statistics from Outside Info, with credit also to the Hope Health Letter and “The Joy of Working,” by Denis Waitley:

- The greatest quarterbacks complete only 60% of their passes.
- The best basketball players make only about 50% of their shots.
- Most major league ballplayers get on base only 25% of the time.
- Top oil companies, even with the help of expert geologists, must dig an average of 10 wells before finding oil.
- A successful actor is turned down 29 out of every 30 times when auditioning for television commercials.
- Winners in the stock market make money on only two out of every five investments.
Rejection on a First-Class Scale

John Grisham’s first novel, *A Time To Kill*, was rejected by 28 publishers.

William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* was rejected 21 times.

Pearl Buck’s *The Good Earth* was rejected 14 times.

J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* was rejected by more than 25 publishers.

Jack Canfield’s *Chicken Soup for the Soul* was rejected by 36 publishers.
“Your report card is good, BUT . . .”

“This’ll be easy for a smart kid like you.”

“I don’t care about your grades. I just want you to do your best.”

“YOU’RE NOT WORKING UP TO YOUR POTENTIAL.”
A school principal in Singapore sent this letter to the parents before the exams

Dear Parents

The exams of your children are to start soon. I know you are all really anxious for your child to do well.

But, please do remember, amongst the students who will be sitting for the exams there is an artist, who doesn’t need to understand Math... There is an entrepreneur, who doesn’t care about History or English literature... There is a musician, whose Chemistry marks won’t matter... There’s an athlete... whose physical fitness is more important than Physics... If your child does get top marks, that’s great! But if he or she doesn’t... please don’t take away their self-confidence and dignity from them. Tell them it’s OK, it’s just an exam! They are cut out for much bigger things in life. Tell them, no matter what they score... you love them and will not judge them.

Please do this, and when you do... watch your children conquer the world. One exam or a low mark won’t take away...their dreams and talent. And please, do not think that doctors and engineers... are the only happy people in the world.

With every good wish,

[Signature]
20 Ways To Show You Care

--Excerpted from the Research Institute of Minneapolis

1. **Hide surprises for them to find.**
2. Contribute to their collections
3. **Clip magazine pictures and articles that interest them.**
4. Help them to become an expert at something.
5. Tell them about yourself.
6. **Admit when you make a mistake.**
7. Tell them stories in which they are the hero.
8. Notice when they grow.
9. **Help them learn something new.**
10. **Be silly together.**
11. Share a secret.
12. Help them take a stand, and stand with them.
13. **Look in their eyes when you talk with them.**
14. Tell them their feelings are OK.
15. **Forget your worries sometimes and concentrate only on them.**
16. **Notice when they are acting different.**
17. Send them a letter or postcard.
18. **Ask for their opinion**
19. Give them a special nickname.
20. Create a tradition with them, and keep it.
The greatest gift that we can give our gifted children is to believe in the following:
That the gifted child is average with gifts, not superior with faults.

Annemarie Roeper, 1984
Stop paying interest on a bill you never owed
“The good news is that your son is advanced.
The bad news is that we’re afraid he’s going through a mid-life crisis.”
INTERESTED
SPIRITUAL
KIND
ORIGINAL
INVENTIVE
DEEP
SENSITIVE
SPARKLING
INTENSE
PERCEPTIVE
ABSORBING
ENTHUSIASTIC
CRANKY

CHALLENGING
PRECISE
FEARLESS
TENDER-HEARTED
HEADSTRONG
TRANSCENDENT
WISE
AMAZING
PROTECTIVE
INTENSITY

A salient descriptor that characterizes the personality of a gifted child is **intensity**. Intensity takes many forms that can be both strengths and weaknesses. Recognizing and understanding these intensities can help toward improving the social and emotional life of the child.

- **INTENSITY OF THOUGHT**
  “Her mind is always whirring.”

- **INTENSITY OF PURPOSE**
  “Once he makes up his mind to do something, he’s not satisfied until it’s accomplished.”

- **INTENSITY OF EMOTION**
  “She internalizes everything anyone says about her.”

- **INTENSITY OF SPIRIT**
  “He’s always looking for someone less fortunate who needs help.”

- **INTENSITY OF SOUL**
  “She asks questions that philosophers have asked for centuries and gets upset when we can’t give her definitive answers to them.”

From J.R. Delisle, *Once Upon a Mind: The stories and scholars of gifted child education*, 2000. Illustrations on subsequent pages are used with permission of Dr. James Delisle.
what i think

what i say
Intensity of Thought

When I was a second grader, the teacher gave a homework assignment introducing the concept of “zero”. There were several problems in which zero was added to or subtracted from various numbers. Of course, the answer was that the number always remained the same . . . I sat alone in my room and stared with tears at this seemingly senseless problem.

I wondered, ‘How could I add something to a number and yet the number remained unchanged?’ Suddenly, I understood—and had the first mystical experience of my life. The immensity of the concept of nothingness overwhelmed me. I was awed by the realization that mathematicians were brilliant enough to capture this immensity in a little symbol. I felt a sense of comfort and light.

Poetic Voices: A student-run nonprofit sharing the art of poetry with senior citizens in rehabilitation and assisted living centers.

The founder of Poetic Voices, Jacki, age 17, explains:

"My most powerful moment while sharing poetry was with a senior named William. He enjoyed writing poetry as a hobby and attended every single one of my workshops. Even after he got better and left the rehabilitation center, he would email me for the dates of each workshop and attend as a guest. If he was too sick to come or had other plans, he would email me right after the workshop asking about the poetry prompts. I worked with him for over a year until he suddenly passed away. His wife joined the next workshop to tell me how much he loved my workshops and would talk about them with her all the time. I was moved to know how others valued the time spent writing and sharing poetry."
* Cameron Cohen, 14, Los Angeles, CA
After a long, boring bout in a hospital, Cameron developed the *iSketch* app. for iTunes. It lets people paint with fingers or brushes. So far, Cameron has donated more than $20,000 from the sales of his app. to the hospital that treated him, so that they can buy electronic games for young patients.

❖ Mimi Ausland, 15, Bend, OR
After playing *freerice.com*, which sends rice to developing nations for each correct answer to a math or vocabulary question, Mimi decided to design a website called *freekibble.com*, which gives 10 pieces of dog food to the Humane Society for distribution to animal shelters. Ellen Degeneres highlighted Mimi and is now the sole sponsor of Mimi’s work through her pet food company, Halo.

❖ Go to familycircle.com/dogood for more stories of wonder!
“Whenever you scold me I get a headache in my heart.”
On Christmas Eve, Adam gave me a most wonderful surprise, one that no one I have told had ever seen performed by someone in our age group. He had planned it for weeks and I later found out my whole family was involved. While I was at the Christmas Eve Vigil, he came over and cooked dinner, set up a candlelit table for two in my basement, and dressed in a tux. When I came home, my sister led me to her room, where I was instructed to put on the dress that I had worn the previous year to a formal dance. At that particular dance, I had worn the dress but came home in tears because no one had asked me to dance.

When I emerged from my sister’s room, Adam was standing in the hallway in his tux. He informed me that dinner was waiting. I was literally shaking with delight and unquenchable joy. As tears filled my eyes, he led me downstairs to where the candlelit dinner was set up. After dinner he played “It Must Have Been the Mistletoe” and, to make up for the last time I had worn that dress, Adam asked me to dance.

This was truly the best Christmas ever.

Sara is 15. Adam is 16.
As far as I can recall, none of the adults in my life ever once remembered to say, “Some people have a thick skin and you don’t. Your heart is really open and that is going to cause pain, but that is an appropriate response to this world. The cost is high, but the blessing of being compassionate is beyond your wildest dreams. However, you’re not going to feel that a lot in 7th grade. Just hang on.”

---Anne Lamott, *Stitches*, 2013, p. 28
Senior Thesis
Letter to Mrs. P

As a means of introducing yourself, write me a letter. The letter needs to focus on your experiences as a writer, as well as goals, both personal and academic, for your senior year.

Guidelines
* At least four paragraphs in length.
* Focus on tone and voice. (Hint: Your personality should be apparent.)
* Support all general statements with specific, interesting examples.
50 points

Let's get one thing out of the way, I'm busy. Now I don't see this as an insult like some others would. I just lack the motivation to reach the heights I could. I'm a nerd, I'm a skeptic, and mostly I'm a lunatic. I've never been the over achiever, or the A student. I've never been the sports star, or the future President. The fact of the matter is simple. I don't care. I literally could care less about some letter on paper judging work that I didn't care about in the first place. I could sit here and tell you some bullshit about drive and passion but then you'd expect it of me. I mean, only disappointed yourself.

Experiences as a writer? Well honestly I used to have a passion and fire for the written word. I wrote poems, songs and stories almost every day. I wasn't complete without an open book in my hand. Then the public education system killed my passion in cold blood, leaving me wither much of a wild. Prompts, essays, written responses were the beasts that killed my love of the craft. The pen that was once insensible from my hand was now the source of my oppression. My many poems ceased, my stories went on with endless sad
My songs were nothing more than terrible imitations of others. I have no goals in the academic or musical world. My goals have changed as I grew older. I no longer see art as a way to express myself, but as a means to escape reality. I no longer sit at my desk, wasting time and effort on projects that I no longer care about.

So, there it is, a glimpse into my writing style and thoughts. It's a state of disarray and only seems to perpetuate words of melancholy or sadness. I no longer have passion, no more motivation. I waste away the hours playing video games, avoiding the world of learning it once was to me. It is now a twisted prison, filled with others like me, who's dreams aren't worth the time of day.

Conformity forces us all to write and think the same, so that we will get good grades and survive, but bit by bit, in our forced mediocrity, cursing the world around us. No more goals, only pain.

Beth

I love that you came through this, but try to avoid swearing. Also, you need a greeting and salutation.

45/50
IN NEW YORK CITY, A RESCUE WORKER...
IN NEW YORK CITY, A RESCUE WORKER...

is praying to god. He's not sure if there is a god anymore.
but faith won't stop working. It's miracle on him.
He is a hero. He isn't hungry, for glory, fame, or money. He wants his life back.

In New York City a rescue worker is tired
He gets his energy by the heroes around him and they get their energy from him.

In New York City a hero is crying. Heroes do cry.

Name: Ali Abjad
Gifted Adults: Their Characteristics & Emotions
Annemarie Roeper

1. Gifted adults differ intellectually from others
   - sophisticated, global thinkers with a penchant for complexity of thought

2. Gifted adults retain childlike emotions
   - they bring a childlike delight to discoveries and life in general

3. Gifted adults’ views of self differ from others’ views of them
   - others may ignore them, elevate them, or disparage them

4. Gifted adults are often driven by their giftedness
   - they have no choice but to think, explore, create, and survive

5. Gifted adults need time for solitude
   - daydreaming and “alone time” are vital to their well-being

6. Gifted adults search for meaning and purpose
   - in themselves and others, they need to ask “why?”

7. Gifted adults have many diverse abilities and interests
   - careers and hobbies are fleeting: “There is so much to learn and do!”

8. Gifted adults have strong senses of justice and morality
   - they live to serve; they distinguish justice from equality
Important Things My Kids Taught Me
Ann Landers, October 15, 1999

1. It’s more fun to color outside the lines.
2. If you’re going to draw on the wall, do it behind the couch.
4. Save a place in line for your friends.
5. If you want a kitten, start out by asking for a horse.
6. Making your bed is a waste of time.
7. If your dog doesn’t like somebody, you probably shouldn’t either.
8. Toads aren’t ugly. They’re just toads.
9. Just keep banging until someone opens the door.
10. Don’t pop someone else’s bubble.
11. You shouldn’t ask to start the game over just because you are losing.
12. Chasing the cat is more fun than catching it.
KIDS AND KITES
By
Robert Jellinghaus
Age 11

Kites fly but they need an anchor
Kids roam but they need a home

If a kite loses its anchor, it falls
If a child loses his home, he declines

As a kite goes higher and higher
You give it more string
As a child grows older and older
You give him more freedom

But here the similarity ends
For kites (even with the most string imaginable)
Crash sooner or later
But kids
(if they are old enough)
Adjust safely and create new homes
Thank you
I've got my whole life scheduled through high school...
Kudzu | by Doug Marlette

I've got my whole life scheduled through high school ...

So there'll be no surprises... every course is advanced placement... every class is college prep!
I’ve got my whole life scheduled through high school...

So there’ll be no surprises... every course is advanced placement... every class is college prep!

I just hope I can get into AP trig in my senior year.
I've got my whole life scheduled through high school...

So there'll be no surprises... Every course is Advanced Placement... Every class is college prep!

I just hope I can get into AP trig in my senior year.

If I don't, I'll wind up homeless!
Dear Mom,

I've asked the receptionist to give you this as soon as you get back from your meeting, so you'll know where I am. Mike's mom is taking me home with her. She was the only person available to take me to the emergency room. My arm isn't moving very well because of the bandages, so I hope you can read this okay.

The firemen said the wiring was very old. You'll be glad to know I saved the family album. Fluffy should be okay, but it doesn't look so good for Tigger.

Also, my algebra teacher wants you to give her a call.

Love,

Bobby
DEAR MOM,

I'VE ASKED THE RECEPTIONIST TO GIVE YOU THIS AS SOON AS YOU GET BACK FROM YOUR MEETING, SO YOU'LL KNOW WHERE I AM. MIKE'S MOM IS TAKING ME HOME WITH HER. SHE WAS THE ONLY PERSON AVAILABLE TO TAKE ME TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM. MY ARM ISN'T MOVING VERY WELL BECAUSE OF THE BANDAGES, SO I HOPE YOU CAN READ THIS OKAY.

THE FIREMEN SAID THE WIRING WAS VERY OLD. YOU'LL BE GLAD TO KNOW I SAVED THE FAMILY ALBUM. FLUFFY SHOULD BE OKAY, BUT IT DOESN'T LOOK SO GOOD FOR TIGGER.

ALSO, MY ALGEBRA TEACHER WANTS YOU TO GIVE HER A CALL.

LOVE,

Bobby

P.S. JUST KIDDING! I'M FINE, THE HOUSE IS FINE, AND FLUFFY AND TIGGER ARE FINE. I AM GETTING A "D-" IN ALGEBRA, THOUGH. WHAT A RELIEF.

Huh? XXX
“Go into the arts. I’m not kidding.
The arts are not a way to make a living.
They are a very human way of making life more bearable.
Practicing an art, no matter how well or badly,
is a way to make your soul grow, for heaven’s sake.
Sing in the shower. Dance to the radio. Tell stories.
Write a poem to a friend, even a lousy poem.
Do it as well as you possibly can.
You will get an enormous reward.
You will have created something.”

Kurt Vonnegut
TOM WAGNER, 18
Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota

In May 2009 Tom’s 10th-grade American history class at Simley High had taken their end-of-year exams but still had several weeks before school was out. So when their teacher mentioned that the historic Rock Island Swing Bridge was scheduled for demolition in June, the students unanimously voted to spend their last month figuring out a way to save it. Built in 1994, the double-decker span had once been used as an escape route by John Dillinger as he fled the FBI. After the bridge was closed off to cars in 1999 for safety reasons, it had also become a favorite local hangout. “Kids went there to skateboard, throw rocks across the water or just enjoy the view of the Mississippi River,” says Tom. “It was a real part of our community.”

With the deadline looming, Tom’s class had to act fast. They organized a Sunday morning breakfast at a restaurant near the bridge, and Tom created a Facebook page to rally support. The students invited everyone they knew via e-mail and church announcements, directed them to the page and urged them to start spreading the news. Their efforts paid off—the event was packed and raised over $1,000. “The response was great, even though we set it up so quickly,” says Tom. He and his classmates then went to the city council, where they gave a presentation on the bridge’s history and suggested that it be turned into a recreational pier and park. The proposal made it to the state legislature, and by June Governor Tim Pawlenty signed a moratorium on the demolition. By this point various historic and preservation groups had joined the cause. In October, the city of Inver Grove Heights took ownership of the bridge and hired engineers to refurbish it by building an observation deck and fishing pier—mission accomplished.

The new Rock Island Swing Bridge had its grand opening last June. There’s a marker stone at one end that gives special thanks to those who helped save the landmark, including the students of Simley High. “If it hadn’t been for us—just a bunch of high school kids—it would have been gone forever,” says Tom. “It’s the best thing we ever did.”
**MIMI AUSLAND, 16**

*Bend, Oregon*

One day in early 2008 Mimi, then 11, was playing on Freecirk.com, where kids can fight world hunger by taking multiple-choice quizzes. Each time a correct answer is chosen, the site's sponsors donate 10 grains of rice to the United Nations World Food Program. "I thought it would be cool if there was something like this that could help animals too," she recalls. As a volunteer at the Humane Society of Central Oregon, Mimi had seen up close how the shelter was struggling with fewer donations and more animals. "I figured I could help by starting a fun website for kids that would get stores to donate pet food," she says.

Accompanied by her parents, Mimi went door-to-door asking businesses to contribute. She raised enough money to cover the cost of setting up a website, which a local design firm did at a 20% discount, and found a local store, Pet Express, to donate dog food. Mimi wanted to focus on canines first, since they were more difficult for the shelter to care for and place. So she pored through books to come up with kid-friendly trivia questions. "The first one—What's the fastest dog?—was pretty simple," she says. "Now that I also use magazines, newspapers and the Internet, the questions have gotten more interesting, plus I like to mix it up with funny questions, educational ones and some inspirational stories as well."

Freecirk.com was launched in April 2008. For every answer, right or wrong, the site donates 10 pieces of dry food to the Humane Society. There wasn't much traffic at first, but word soon spread via e-mail, blogs, Facebook and Twitter. In May Mimi delivered her first load—240 pounds' worth. Mimi launched Freecirkleat.com a couple months later. After the sites were covered on the national news, Ellen DeGeneres invited Mimi to appear on her TV show and offered to make Halo, the pet food company she co-owns, the sole sponsor.

Freecirkle now has some 100,000 followers worldwide and has donated nearly 7 million meals to more than 150 shelters and pet food banks across America. Mimi's even managed to ship food overseas, like the special one-time donation for rescued puppies in Afghanistan. The ninth-grader still helps research and write trivia questions every week. "They're getting harder to think of," she says. Fortunately, users send suggestions, and Mimi recently expanded their role on the site by adding a section where kids share stories and pictures of their own pet rescues each month, the site picks a winner, who receives $250 from the Freecirkle Foundation to give to their shelter of choice. "The most important thing I've learned is that if you put your mind to something, you can really make anything happen," says Mimi. "I want every kid to know that."

FamilyCircle.com

For more on teens doing good, go to familycircle.com/dogood
to be nobody but yourself
in a world which is doing its best
to make you everybody else
means to fight
the hardest human battle ever
and to never stop fighting.

e.e. cummings
12 REASONS WHY ACCELERATION ISN’T ACCEPTED IN AMERICA

- Teachers lack familiarity with acceleration and the research that supports it.
- Teachers lack confidence in implementing acceleration options.
- Some educators allow personal beliefs to conflict with acceleration research.
- Age of the student trumps everything.
- Most teachers see non-acceleration as the safer option.
- Acceleration is not taught in Colleges of Education Programs.
- Some teachers and parents see acceleration as hurrying a child through childhood.
- Educators and parents fear students will not adjust socially and emotionally.
- Individual students are less important than equal opportunity for all.
- It will diminish the self esteem of the other students.
- Teachers are afraid that there will be gaps in the child’s education.
- Disasters are memorable.
EIGHT GREAT GRIPES OF

GIFTED KIDS

1. No one explains what being gifted is all about- it's kept a big secret.
2. School is too easy and too boring.
3. Parents, teachers, and friends expect us to be perfect all the time.
4. Friends who really understand us are few and far between.
5. Kids often tease us about being smart.
6. We feel overwhelmed by the number of things we can do in life.
7. We feel different, alienated.
8. We worry about world problems and feel helpless to do anything about them.
PARDON MY PLANET | by Vic Lee

HOW DO I BLOCK MY PARENTS ON FACEBOOK?