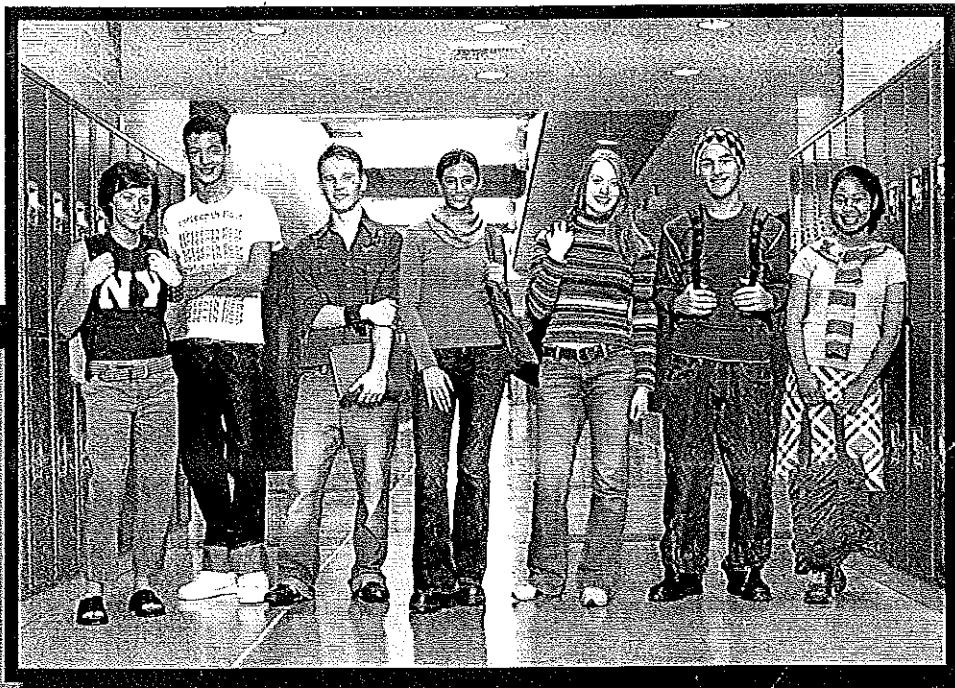


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The Handbook of SECONDARY GIFTED EDUCATION



edited by

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& Sidney M. Moon, Ph.D.

This ground-breaking textbook is designed to help education professionals interested in building effective and comprehensive educational opportunities for gifted secondary students.

This book offers an in-depth, research-based look at ways schools and classrooms can support the development of gifted adolescents. The *Handbook of Secondary Gifted Education* is the most comprehensive critical resource on this topic available.

Topics include understanding the gifted adolescent, social/emotional issues, adolescent issues, best practices for curriculum and instruction and programming options (both school-wide and in specific subject areas), teacher education, and professional development.

The purpose of the book is to provide a research-based handbook that views gifted adolescents and their needs as the starting point for building an effective, integrated educational program.

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ON BEING GIFTED AND ADOLESCENT

PART

*On Being Gifted
and Adolescent:
An Overview*

by Sidney M. Moon

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uch of the research in the field of gifted education has focused on young children. Only a handful of researchers have focused on the needs and characteristics of gifted adolescents (Benbow, 1986; Clasen & Clasen, 1995; Coleman, 2001; Cross, Coleman, & Stewart, 1995; Lubinski & Benbow, 1994; Lubinski, Webb, Morelock, & Benbow, 2001). Existing research states that adolescence is both a time of great potential (Feldhusen, 1998; Jarvin & Subotnik, this volume; Moon, 1993; Sethna, Wickstrom, Boothe, & Stanley, 2001; Van Rossum & Gagné, this volume; VanTassel-Baska, 2001) and special vulnerability for high ability students (Clasen & Clasen; Cross, Gust-Brey, & Ball, 2002; Peterson, 2003). Being gifted and adolescent isn't easy for many reasons. These students must cope with the normal developmental issues of adolescence, and with being different because of their giftedness (Clasen & Clasen). Many of them face intense pressure from peers to deny their abilities (Cross et al., 1995; Cross, Coleman, & Terhaar-Yonkers, 1991; Steinberg, 1996). Often they do not have the opportunities they need to develop their abilities into demonstrated talents, either because their school does not have the resources to provide advanced coursework in core subject areas, such as physics or British Literature, or because they are talented in an area not emphasized in most secondary schools, such as engineering or art.

The first part of *The Handbook of Secondary Gifted Education* focuses on the students—their characteristics, needs, and individual differences. Those characteristics and needs form the foundation for services provided at the secondary level. Part I has three purposes:

- To discuss the relevance of existing conceptions of giftedness to the adolescent period and suggest a framework for secondary gifted education (Chapter 1),
- To highlight important general, developmental themes affecting all high ability adolescents (Chapters 2–3), and
- To illuminate the ways in which individual differences can influence the development of gifted and talented adolescents (Chapters 4–7).

In Chapter 1, Moon and Dixon review evolving conceptions of giftedness in the published work of four major theorists in the field of gifted education: Renzulli, Gagné, Feldhusen, and Sternberg. They conclude that all of these theorists have something to offer secondary gifted education, even though none of them developed their theories specifically for the adolescent period of development. Then, they propose a framework for secondary gifted education that builds on existing conceptions of giftedness, but suggests that secondary gifted education should place as much stress on personal and social development among high ability adolescents as it does on cognitive development.

The next two chapters illuminate some of the reasons for Moon and Dixon's stress on personal and social development. Hébert and Kelly's chapter on identity and career development highlights the importance of identity issues for adolescents and some of the unique identity issues facing gifted adolescents. Hébert and Kelly argue that career development is essential in secondary school and needs to be differentiated for gifted adolescents. Because career development is based on interests, secondary gifted educators need to assess the emerging interests of their students and help them understand how those interests can be translated into meaningful careers. Assouline and Colangelo's chapter on social-emotional development also stresses the importance of adolescence as a time of maturation and self-development in the context of teen culture. Because teen culture often emphasizes conformity, adolescence can be a difficult time for high ability youth, especially those whose talents lie in the academic areas. Assouline and Colangelo present an overview of the unique tensions experienced by gifted adolescents and provide guidance for ensuing healthy social and emotional development. Like Hébert and Kelly, they stress the importance of a focus on self-concept, identity, and career development. In addition, they provide specific guidance for furthering the development of gifted adolescents who are underachieving in school.

The final four chapters in Part I address individual differences within the gifted and talented population. It is important for secondary educators to be aware that gifted and talented students are not a homogeneous population. During adolescence, the interests of high ability youth become increasingly well-defined, their

talents more and more specialized, and their levels of expertise increasingly differentiated (Gagné, 2000, 2005). In addition, factors such as gender (Chapter 4), ethnicity (Chapter 5), disabilities (Chapter 6), and differences in motivational profiles (Chapter 7) can influence their cognitive, personal, and social development. Hence, secondary gifted educators need to be aware of these individual difference factors and the ways they can influence development among high ability youth.

Reis' chapter on gender issues again stresses the importance of identity development in adolescence and defines a successful transition for gifted adolescents as "an integration of their abilities, talents, interests, personal choices, and values such that they are able to achieve at high levels and attain personal contentment" (p. 88). Gender influences every aspect of these developmental tasks. For example, researchers have found that gender influences students' attributional styles, performance on standardized tests, socialization, career aspirations, and self-concepts. Reis provides numerous strategies for parents, counselors, and teachers to use in preventing gender stereotypes from inhibiting the development of high ability adolescents, encouraging healthy gender role identities, and ensuring positive transitions through adolescence for all high ability youth.

In Chapter 5, Ford and Moore explore issues related to the additional identity-development variables of race, culture, and ethnicity. They show how these factors can inhibit or enhance talent development among gifted adolescents of color. They describe the unique psychological, socio-emotional, and academic issues faced by these high ability adolescents, stressing the need to see these students as both gifted and culturally diverse. As with the other authors in Part I, they place as much emphasis on promoting the personal and social development of these students as they do on encouraging their high cognitive abilities. They state that identity development is a central issue for culturally diverse, high ability youth, and that it is a more complex process than for other gifted adolescents. Gifted students of color must incorporate giftedness, gender, and ethnicity into their identities, often in the midst of a peer culture hostile to achievement. Ford and Moore suggest that multicultural counseling and multicultural education can help facilitate healthy development among gifted adolescents of color.

Especially challenging individual differences among gifted adolescents can stem from the presence of some type of disability. In Chapter 6, two scholars who are experts on the needs and characteristics of twice-exceptional students, Baum and Rizza, team with a twice-exceptional college student, Sara Renzulli, to provide a poignant summary of the unique challenges faced by these special individuals. The chapter authors define twice-exceptional adolescents as students with coexisting talents and deficits. These students have strengths in specific areas combined with deficits in learning, paying attention, or meeting social and emotional expectations that can impede their overall development. For example, a student who is talented in computer programming but has a co-occurring Attention Deficit Disorder would be a twice-exceptional student. Chapter 6 describes the characteristics of these students and provides suggestions on how educators can differentiate curricula for them and support their social-emotional development. Woven throughout the chapter is

Sara's story—the school experiences of one highly gifted adolescent with a learning disability who eventually learned to focus on her strengths, and compensate for her weaknesses, so she could succeed in college and life.

The final chapter in Part I focuses on motivation, a neglected area of individual differences in talented adolescents. Most conceptions of giftedness suggest motivation becomes increasingly important as gifted individuals mature and develop their talents (see Chapter 1). Patrick, Gentry, and Owen summarize research on the impact of individual differences in selected motivational constructs, such as goal orientations, on student achievement and well-being. They compare and contrast motivation research on typical students with the somewhat more limited research base on the motivational characteristics of gifted students. Chapter 7 also provides guidance on how educators can promote adaptive motivational beliefs and behaviors in all gifted adolescents.

In conclusion, Part I provides the foundation for *The Handbook of Secondary Gifted Education* by focusing attention on the unique characteristics and needs of gifted students in the adolescent period of development. Together, the chapters in Part I suggest that gifted adolescents need interventions that help them develop personally and socially, as well as academically. Perhaps the most important non-academic, developmental issue that gifted students must address in adolescence is identity development. Part I suggests that individual difference variables such as gender, race, and motivational style lend great complexity to the process of identity development among gifted adolescents. Educators and counselors need to forge strong partnerships to ensure that all of the developmental needs of gifted adolescents are met in secondary schools, and that these students have every opportunity to achieve at high levels in college and beyond.

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