


THE CULTIVATION OF THE COLLECTIVE AMONG GIFTED STUDENTS:

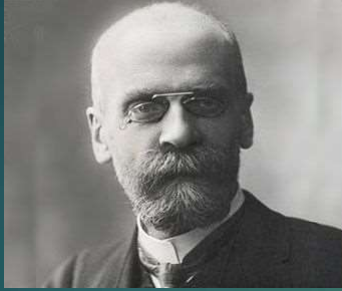
# Achieving Success Through Social Emotional Development

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## Emile Durkheim and Society



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- ▶ French Sociologist
- ▶ Sought to explain how religion brings society together

## Setting the Scene: Collective Effervescence



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# Mummers Parade



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The Individual



The Collective



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## How can we help gifted students to fit in?

I can't relate to anyone!

No one wants to be my friend!

I want to be normal!

## What's At Risk?

- ▶ Loneliness
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Social Isolation
- ▶ Less Academic Success



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## Challenge #1

Gifted students need to be challenged constantly to engage with others. They need to find their peers interesting.

### Proposed Solution #1

Since gifted students need to be challenged intellectually, we sometimes have them skip a grade or two and put them with older kids. This acceleration will allow them a better fit academically.

## Obstacle

- ▶ Hollingworth's Theory of Asynchronous Development
  - Accelerating a gifted student to a higher grade doesn't promote friendship or belonging.



## Challenge #2

Gifted students know they are smart, and so does everyone else.

## Proposed Solution #2

Embrace the giftedness within and allow these students to enroll in computer classes, math clubs, and other academically-oriented affiliations.

## Obstacle

### Swiatek and Dorr's The Social Coping Questionnaire (1998)

- ▶ Denial I'm going to pretend I'm not smart to fit in
- ▶ Popularity Trying to hang with the gang (not the right one).
- ▶ Peer Acceptance Aware that giftedness is deemed "nerdy"
- ▶ Social Interaction Avoid typically "smart" activities.
- ▶ Lying Lie about how smart they are.

## Challenge #3

Gifted students have an overwhelming sense of perfectionism, and they need to be perfect by their own standards in order to fit in.

### Proposed Solution #3

Even though gifted students need to be perfect, this doesn't impact who their friends are. They will make friends.

## Obstacle

Gifted students have different priorities than typical students.

- ▶ Motivated to do well for themselves, and not to please others.



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Gifted students have a high standard for their friendships.

- ▶ Place a higher emphasis on "real" and "authentic" relationships.
- ▶ Pickier when it comes to who they want to be friends with.



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*“Someone has said that genius is necessarily solitary, since the population is so sparse at the highest levels of mental ability. However, adult genius is mobile and can seek out its own kind.”*  
 – Lewis Terman

## A New Approach

- ▶ Gifted students need to be with their intellectual peers.
  - We need to put gifted students of the same age together to foster a feeling of belonging. Gifted students need to be with like-minded students, regardless of age.

## A New Approach

- ▶ Gifted students need to be able to go at their own pace.
  - Let gifted students survey the land and determine their own course for acceptance.



## A New Approach

- ▶ Gifted students need to be doing things they love.
  - Let gifted students take the classes they want to take and explore the subjects that interest them the most. They will aggregate to those just like them.

## A New Approach

- ▶ Gifted students need to give back.
  - Social acceptance can come in the form of community service or from activities that force them into group settings.

## A New Approach

- ▶ Gifted students need strong supports.
  - The family unit is just as important to a gifted student's ability to adapt as is the actual social circle.

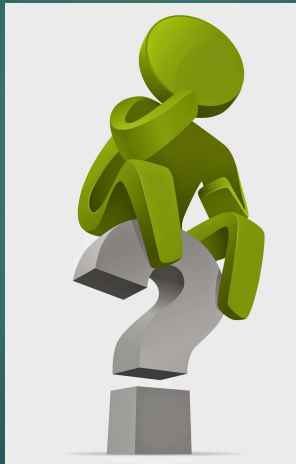
## Collective Effervescence and the Gifted Child

- ▶ The ability to bring together like-minded students with the same interest, the same focus, and the same values, leads to a sense of collective effervescence.



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## Questions?



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