

PLC/Book Study Guide for *Bright, Complex Kids*

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This guide is designed as a professional development resource and can be used to facilitate a book study or as a learning experience for a professional learning community (PLC). Facilitator notes are provided for additional support and explanation in planning and facilitating your school or group's sessions. We recommend that the principal and/or facilitator read the entire guide and the book before beginning the study.

For each session, participants will be asked to read chapters of the book. They may also be asked to bring materials or create or implement something *prior* to attending a session. Each chapter description includes guiding questions and suggested tasks that can be used as group activities during the group session.

Please note that each session's preparation work is noted at the beginning of the session notes. Before you dismiss participants for each session, look ahead to the next session and review and clarify what must be done before the next meeting. Reach agreements if suggested tasks are going to be adjusted or modified.

Chapter 1:

Recognizing Them

Participant Preparation

Before reading chapter 1, consider these questions:

- What might prevent a high-ability child or teen from being deemed eligible for a special program for bright kids?
- What social and emotional impact might being identified as “gifted” have on a child or teen?
- What social and emotional impact might *not* being identified have on a bright child or teen?

Discussion Questions

After reading chapter 1, respond to any five of the following prompts:

1. Why is it important to consider that there are many *levels* (not kinds) of “giftedness”?
2. Why might a teacher not refer a bright child or teen for further evaluation when asked to nominate kids who might have been missed during initial screening (standardized test scores)?
3. How might the concept of multiple intelligences be applied in identification and programming?
4. When classroom performance, or a single cutoff score on an assessment, is the main criterion, what concerns about the identification process come to mind?
5. Why might a bright child or teen not eagerly demonstrate high ability in the classroom?
6. Name one potential effect on a bright child or teen of *not* having high ability recognized.

Chapter 2:

Making Sense of Them

Participant Preparation

Before reading chapter 2, consider these questions:

- How are bright kids similar to all other kids their age? How are they different?
- Socially and emotionally, what might distinguish bright kids from other kids?
- What aspects of being bright might affect social interaction?
- What are some common stereotypes associated with high (and extreme) ability?
- What kinds of worries might parents have about their bright kids?

Discussion Questions

After reading chapter 2, respond to the following prompts:

1. How would you briefly explain the asset-burden paradox of giftedness to a child and to a teen?
2. What does “making sense” of high ability refer to?
3. What developmental *tasks* might bright kids struggle with?
4. How might asynchronous development affect a bright child’s or teen’s school experiences?
5. How might heightened sensitivity and overexcitabilities affect a child or teen at home and at school?

Chapter 3:

Learning from Them

Participant Preparation

Before reading chapter 3, consider the following questions:

- How might educators and parents learn from bright kids? Why might they want to do that?
- How might medical and psychological professionals learn about the social and emotional development and concerns of bright kids?
- What aspects of the internal world of bright kids might adults be unaware of?
- What might be the most important guideline for adults who are talking with bright kids?

Discussion Questions

After reading chapter 3, respond to any five of the following prompts:

1. What is meant by “giving up some control” when listening?
2. Explain the importance of nonpeer and nonexpert roles for adults when listening and responding.
3. Give an example of a noninvasive question for initiating conversation with a bright child or teen.
4. Explain how *statements* may be as effective as, and perhaps more effective than, questions when interacting with a child or teen.
5. Distinguish between open and closed questions.
6. Name three guidelines for listening that you especially want to remember.
7. Name one ethical concern that applies to listening.

Chapter 4: Achieving and Underachieving

Participant Preparation

Before reading chapter 4, consider the following questions:

- Is *gifted underachiever* an oxymoron?
- Where and how are gifted kids probably most easily accessed for studies?
- How important should academic achievement be when identifying bright kids for special programming?
- What might keep a brilliant thinker and writer from achieving well in the classroom?

Discussion Questions

After reading chapter 4, respond to the following prompts:

1. Make an argument against using only “convenience samples” to learn about the needs and concerns of bright kids.
2. When is academic achievement not a reliable indicator of high ability?
3. Name one benefit and one challenge related to including bright underachievers in programs for bright kids.
4. Explain the concept of “developmental stuckness.”

Chapter 5: Staying Optimistic About Underachievement

Participant Preparation

Before reading chapter 5, consider the following questions:

- What do you usually assume about the future for high achievers? On what basis?
- What do you usually assume about the outlook for underachievers? On what basis?
- What might help underachievers perform better academically?
- Have you known any high achievers who didn't sustain high achievement in college or university?

Discussion Questions

After reading chapter 5, respond to the following prompts:

1. If you were concerned about an underachiever's well-being, where would you begin with helping?
2. What might affect whether high school high achievers perform less well in college than expected?
3. Which Peterson study offers the most optimism about bright underachievers?
4. What kind of special program for bright kids might help underachievers engage in school?
5. Interpret this statement: *Underachievement may be mostly developmental.*

Chapter 6: Living on the Edges, Twice-Exceptionally

Participant Preparation

Before reading chapter 6, consider the following questions:

- How do you feel, and/or what do you believe, about bright students who have a learning disability (with average academic achievement, for example) being in special programs for high-ability kids?
- Do you know a bright adult who struggled in the classroom because of a learning disability?
- Name five learning disabilities that can coexist with high intellectual ability.
- How might three of these disabilities be accommodated in the classroom?

Discussion Questions

After reading chapter 6, respond to any five of the following prompts:

1. Describe two examples of new knowledge you gained from this chapter.
2. Name two learning disabilities you had not thought about prior to reading this chapter.
3. Describe a “developmental paradox” related to twice-exceptionality.
4. Name two professionals who can help parents and teachers make sense of and address coexisting learning disabilities, high intelligence, and nonstellar academic performance.
5. What is “comprehensive assessment”?
6. Explain the difference between IEPs and 504 plans.

Chapter 7: Worrying

Participant Preparation

Before reading chapter 7, consider the following questions:

- How might you define or explain the term *anxiety* to an eight-year-old? A twelve-year-old? A sixteen-year-old?
- How might characteristics associated with high ability be affecting kids who worry a lot?
- What might bright kids worry about?
- What do you worry about?
- What did you worry about during the school years—if and when you worried?

Discussion Questions

After reading chapter 7, respond to the following prompts:

1. How might characteristics associated with high ability have been reflected in what you worried about and *how* you worried as a child or teen?
2. Name two types of anxiety, as described in clinical resources.
3. Describe two behavioral strategies for addressing worry.
4. Describe two cognitive strategies for addressing worry.
5. Explain what “externalizing the problem” means.

Chapter 8: Fearing Failure: Perfectionism

Participant Preparation

Before reading chapter 8, consider the following questions:

- How would you explain the concept of perfectionism to a middle school student?
- What behaviors in a classroom or at home might suggest fear of failure?
- What might contribute to perfectionistic behavior?
- In what area(s) of your life are you at least somewhat perfectionistic? Definitely *not* perfectionistic?

Discussion Questions

After reading chapter 8, respond to any five of the following prompts:

1. Challenge or defend Greenspon's contention that perfectionism is about fear of failure.
2. How might a teacher or parent contribute to a student's perfectionism with written assignments?
3. How might perfectionism be explained when no external contributors are obvious?
4. How might you distinguish between pursuit of excellence and perfectionism?
5. Describe two strategic steps for helping a child or teen combat perfectionism.
6. When might you conclude that perfectionistic behavior needs the attention of a mental health professional?
7. Which information in this chapter, if any, surprised you?

Chapter 9: Feeling, Struggling, Hiding

Participant Preparation

Before reading chapter 9, consider the following questions:

- Why might bright kids hide distress?
- During your school years, what kinds of stress and distress did you usually not tell any adults about? At what ages or grade levels?
- Looking back, what are some possible reasons you did not talk about these stressors with an adult?

Discussion Questions

After reading chapter 9, respond to any five of the following prompts:

1. Give two possible reasons bright kids might hide their distress. What might be some perceived risks in talking?
2. How might caring adults at school help bright kids talk about distress?
3. Explain how bright kids' belief that they must resolve issues themselves and not talk about them might lead to self-harm or harm from others.
4. Name one feeling inherent in existential depression, according to Webb.
5. Which findings in the Peterson studies, if any, surprised you?
6. How might a therapist's or teacher's positive and/or negative biases about a bright child or teen affect their relationship?
7. How might you explain the concept of positive disintegration to a bright fourteen-year-old?

Chapter 10:

Coping with Adversity

Participant Preparation

Before reading chapter 10, consider the following questions:

- What do you think helps bright kids deal effectively with adversity?
- What helps you deal effectively with setbacks and high-stress situations as an adult?
- How do you typically respond to children or teens when you're aware that they are in adverse circumstances?
- On a scale of one to ten, with ten being highest, rate your resilience when experiencing adversity.

Discussion Questions

After reading chapter 10, respond to each of the following prompts:

1. How would you explain the concept of resilience to a bright ten-year-old?
2. Using for reference the lists of factors of resilience and the summaries of the six young women, name some aspects in your personal history that have helped you be resilient.
3. As a parent at home, as a counselor or educator at school, or as a clinical professional, how might you help a child or teen develop resilience?
4. What might indicate to an adult that a child or teen has hit the coping-limits ceiling?

Chapter 11: Diagnosing and Misdiagnosing

Participant Preparation

Before reading chapter 11, consider the following questions:

- Think of a bright child or teen diagnosed with a learning disability. What is the disability? How does (or did) the disability affect classroom behavior and/or work?
- In general, what kinds of behaviors of bright kids do you think might be *misdiagnosed* as a disability—or unnecessarily referred for evaluation?
- How might a psychologist determine whether a behavior is a diagnosable disability versus a behavior common among kids with high ability?

Discussion Questions

After reading chapter 11, respond to any five of the following prompts:

1. What are some characteristics associated with high ability that might be misdiagnosed as pathology?
2. What kinds of negative impact might a misdiagnosis have on a child or teen?
3. Describe a situation in which an actual learning disability was not suspected by a teacher or psychologist and ultimately missed.
4. Give an example of a change in the environment that resolved a behavioral problem.
5. Give two examples of differences between giftedness and medical perspectives that you want to remember for future use when explaining the concept of misdiagnosis to a parent, an educator, or a clinical professional.
6. How might the general increase in mental health diagnoses be related to the misdiagnosis phenomenon?

Chapter 12: Parenting

Participant Preparation

Before reading chapter 12, consider the following questions:

- What might make parenting a bright, complex child or teen different from parenting a child or teen with average ability?
- What might parents do unwittingly that could affect a bright child's or teen's mental health or well-being negatively?
- Name three behaviors or perspectives children might learn from seeing their parents model them.

Discussion Questions

After reading chapter 12, respond to any five of the following prompts:

1. In what aspects of life does parental modeling probably matter most?
2. How might parental anxiety affect a child's or teen's experience of growing up?
3. Explain how the concept of hierarchy fits into the process of parenting a bright child or teen.
4. How might collaboration be applied when parenting a bright child or teen?
5. If everyone in a family is simultaneously developing, what might a mom, dad, teen, and child be individually struggling with developmentally?
6. Of all the suggestions for parents, which three would you like to remember most?

About the Authors

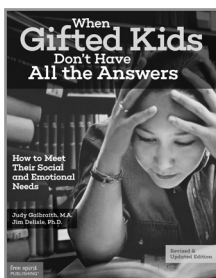
Jean Sunde Peterson, Ph.D., is professor emerita and former director of school counselor preparation at Purdue University. In addition to her considerable clinical work with gifted youth, she has conducted workshops and presented keynote addresses internationally on their social and emotional development, with topics related to academic underachievement, prevention- and development-oriented small-group work, listening skills, bullying, and trauma. Dr. Peterson has authored more than 140 books, journal articles, and invited book chapters, and her articles have appeared in all major gifted-education journals as well as in the *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *Professional School Counseling*, and *International Journal of Educational Reform*. She has received ten national awards for scholarship, including the 2020 Distinguished Scholar Award from the National Association for Gifted Children, as well as twelve awards at Purdue for teaching, research, or service. She was a state teacher of the year in her first career as a classroom teacher. She lives in Indiana.



Daniel B. Peters, Ph.D., is cofounder and executive director of the Summit Center. He has devoted his career to the assessment and treatment of children, adolescents, and families, specializing in overcoming worry and fear, learning differences such as dyslexia, and issues related to giftedness and twice-exceptionality. Dr. Peters is the author of *Make Your Worrier a Warrior*, its companion children's and teen's guide, *From Worrier to Warrior*, and the *Warrior Workbook*. He contributed to *Twice Exceptional: Supporting and Educating Bright and Creative Students with Learning Difficulties* and *toughLOVE: Raising Confident, Kind, Resilient Kids*, coauthored *Raising Creative Kids*, and has authored many articles on topics related to parenting, family, giftedness, twice-exceptionality, dyslexia, and anxiety. He cofounded and codirects Camp Summit, a camp for gifted children, and hosts the *Parent Footprint Podcast with Dr. Dan*. Dr. Peters was recognized as the 2018 Mental Health Professional of the Year by Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG) and received the 2013 Distinguished Service Award from the California Association for Gifted. He lives in Northern California.



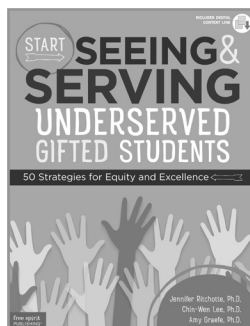
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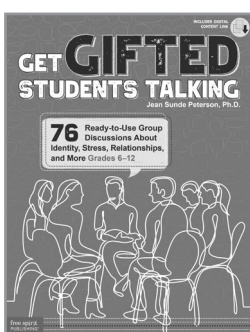
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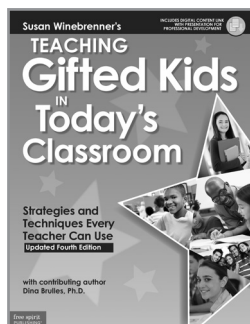
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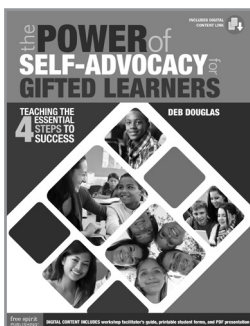


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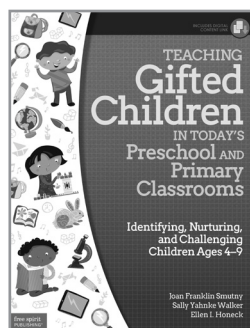
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