

## Notes from Susan Jackson Presentation to JAGC

26Jan15

### 1. Who is Susan Jackson?

- a. Jackson is from the Daimon Institute in White Rock, BC (between Vancouver and the Washington border)
- b. Book: Living with Intensity; Movie: Rise

### 2. Cognitive Observations

- a. GT kids take in much more sensory and other information, and process it much faster and more deeply
- b. GT kids make much greater use of knowing through image and metaphor
- c. GT kids often feel a physical sense of an idea hatching before its full cognition
- d. Unstructured “noodling time” is crucial for healthy GT functioning and development, because it allows their brains time to process everything they’ve taken in
  - i. GT kids are often characterized by a sense of “dynamic equilibrium”, or operating close to the edge of chaos, which is also the zone of maximum creativity

### 3. Emotional and Social Observations

- a. GT kids often have more emotionally nuanced and sensitive perceptions of others than their non-GT peers
  - i. This means GT kids are innately primed to connect to other people
- b. Gender development for GT kids is interesting; because of their higher level of sensitivity, they tend to be more androgynous than other kids, which can be very confusing
- c. However true peers are hard to find for GT kids, which creates many potential negative feedback loops
  - i. E.g., anxiety and depression; frustration and anger; emotional shutting down; strong will; condescension and lack of empathy
  - ii. Many GT kids can experience dark emotions due to a repression of their deep feelings
    1. GT kids need to learn to recognize anger (but not rage) as a healthy emotion, and when and how to express it in appropriate ways
    2. The same with sadness. Can’t fear it. Learn to recognize it as a healthy emotion that helps us to let go of things, relearn and revitalize
- d. GT kids know they are different from others, and often feel they don’t fit in
  - i. A lot of GT kids feel the difference from actually being in the world (with authentic peers), and just observing it as an outsider

- ii. They have to learn how to manage the anxiety many of them feel when they know they are different
- iii. Another manifestation of this is that GT kids often have strong wills, because they know they are different from others, and this is one way to overcome the anxiety they may feel (i.e., exert strong will to control the situation and thereby reduce the perceived threat)
- iv. Other alternatives include social withdrawal, denial of feelings, etc.
- e. Many GT kids intensely feel emotion, but because of a lack of authentic social experience may find it hard to express them appropriately
  - i. What is helpful?
    - 1. Reinforcing effective social skills
    - 2. Pre-scripting and visualization of successful social interactions
    - 3. Less is more – GT kids need just a few basic pointers
      - a. E.g., GT kids have a tendency to overwhelm other people with information
      - b. Stop your inner chatter! GT kids can easily ramp up their anxiety via their own self-talk
      - c. Show interest, be curious, ask questions
    - 4. Slowing down, taking a deep breath
    - 5. Being relaxed is vital for good social interaction
- f. GT kids frequently feel as though they are struggling to keep it all together – to coordinate and balance all the different aspects of their human development
- g. Authentic peer relationships with other GT kids are critical for GT kids' healthy emotional and social development
  - i. Which in turn affect the health of their cognitive and moral development as well
  - ii. Ideally, these authentic peer relationships can span a range of activities, not just cognitive ones
    - 1. E.g., participating on a sports team together, where they can experience the pleasures and benefits of exercise
    - 2. Note that a lot of GT kids shy away from sports, because athletic success doesn't come as easily as cognitive success, and since they already feel they are different, why make themselves stand out even more?
    - 3. However, exercise is critical for GT kids, as it is as effective a prophylactic against anxiety as any drug
      - a. GT kids need to learn to recognize when they need to exercise; when their balance feels off, which exercise can restore
- h. GT sibling relationships are more intense than normal sibling relationships

**4. Improving the GT child's self-awareness – of their unique development path and particular development needs (so that they recognize themselves as normal) -- is the hallmark of an effective gifted education program**