



# Gifted Unlimited, II

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Chartered in 1963, NWGCA is a statewide, nonprofit organization of people with an interest in meeting the special needs of highly capable children

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Barbara Warren-Sams, editor

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## Highly capable funding becomes part of basic education funding

In Washington State, effective September 1, 2011, the instructional program of basic education provided by each school district shall include programs for highly capable students. Sounds impressive, but what does it mean?

The most important difference is legal. Until now, highly capable funding from the state was a categorical program. That

meant that the state was not obligated to provide any funding for highly capable programming. Each legislative session, advocates for highly capable learners had to make the case to receive any funding at all and with no guarantee that funding would be continued from one year to the next. As a part of basic education, highly capable funding is now protected. The Washington State

Constitution makes education the paramount duty of the state, and by law the legislature is required to provide funding for a basic education program.

The story doesn't end there, however. Whether the state is currently meeting its paramount duty to amply fund basic education is the subject of intense debate and an ongoing lawsuit. In February 2010, a

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## Overlooked options for gifted: Part-time public or private enrollments

*Susie is a gifted musician and mathematician and does math and music at home well beyond the work she is assigned at school. Susie's parents can select a curriculum, enrichment program, or private tutor and withdraw her from school during the times when math and music are normally taught.*

*Cai loves recess and lunch hour at his neighborhood school, but is bored and frustrated the rest of the day. Cai's parents*

decide to withdraw him from school and home school him. They walk to the local school at recess and lunch so he can hang out with his friends. When his class goes on a field trip he joins them.

*Kimi is finally getting an adequate challenge at the private school her parents found for her, but she has a speech problem. She receives weekly speech therapy from her local school district.*

*Vivek wishes his teacher would let him read the exciting chapter books he reads in home instead of the readers he thinks are too easy and boring. Otherwise he is happy in school. Vivek's parents can't afford to buy the curriculum to teach him to read at home. They enroll him part-time in a public virtual school in reading at the appropriate level, and he takes the rest*

*Continued on p. 4*



## President's letter

Every parent should read Carol Dweck's book, *Mindset: A New Psychology of Success*. The book is based on decades of her research on achievement and success as a world-renowned Stanford University psychologist. Then, they should hand the book to their children, read it with them, and talk about the book's important concepts that lead to achievement and success.

In the book Dweck explains

- Why brains and talent don't bring success
- How brains and talent can stand in the way of success
- Why praising brains and talent does not foster self-esteem and accomplishment, but jeopardizes them
- How teaching a simple idea about the brain raises grades and productivity
- What all great CEOs, parents, teachers athletes know

Dweck discovered from her research that there are two mindsets that serve to create a person's understanding of their ability and their reach for success—a fixed or a growth mindset. In a **fixed mindset**, people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are fixed traits. They spend their time documenting their intelligence and talent instead of developing them. They also believe that talent alone creates success—without effort. *They are wrong.*

In a **growth mindset**, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment. *Virtually all great people have had these qualities.*

The good news is that people can learn a growth mindset. This book describes for the reader how to create the growth mindset.

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When my sons were young, I vowed never to tell them that I was proud of them. What I said instead, when they accomplished something, was, "You must be very proud of what you have accomplished." My thinking was based on the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. I truly did not want them to undertake an effort with the thought of pleasing me. I wanted them to achieve because it interested and pleased them. I took a bit of heat about my approach, but that was nothing new to my parenting experience.

The concepts of the fixed and growth mindsets were not yet articulated, and yet I had personally experienced both.

Why do I share this with you now?

Because school has started for another year. Our children are learning and practicing their mindsets every

day. They are also experiencing the ambivalence our education system has for the value and quality of gifted education. Whatever your child's school system delivers as gifted education may, in fact, be irrelevant to your child's future ability to create a life he or she loves to lead.

You, as parents, are the most important influence in their lives. You can help them develop a mindset that lets them make the most of every experience, no matter how rich or how impoverished. You can help them seek out the resources and educational experiences that move them toward their passion and their future achievement and success.

According to Carol Dweck's research, the question of gifted ability is not one of nurture or nature. It is a combination of both, with an emphasis on the belief that hard work and effort can lead to achievement and success in any endeavor. This book and other resources will help you and your children learn how to cultivate a growth mindset. The understanding that the brain is malleable and that you have control over your own brain development is a powerful tool indeed.

Find other resources at [www.mindsetonline.com](http://www.mindsetonline.com) and [www.Brainology.us](http://www.Brainology.us)

Marcia Holland

Benjamin Barber, an eminent sociologist, once said, "I don't divide the world into the weak and the strong, or the successes and failures...I divide the world into the learners and nonlearners."



## Highly capable funding, continued from p. 1

King County Superior Court found that the state was not adequately funding basic education. The State appealed that decision to the Washington State Supreme Court and a hearing was held in June 2011. A decision by the Supreme Court is expected this fall.

Pending the outcome of the lawsuit, the shift from being treated as a categorical program to being included in a program of basic education will not change the amount of funding that is provided for highly capable programming by the state, nor will it make any guarantees that there will be adequate funding to provide services to all the students who might qualify. Whatever the outcome, advocates for highly capable children continue to hold an absolutely essential position in obtaining an appropriate education for these students.

### HIGHLY CAPABLE PROGRAM SPECIFICS

**Access.** Though now included in basic education, just as when funded categorically, school districts must apply to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to receive supplemental funding from the state. They must provide details of how they intend to identify and serve highly capable learners. Districts in Washington have local control, however, and are not required to apply for funding from the state. What “access to accelerated learning and enhanced instruction” might look like is largely left open. OSPI administers a program for highly capable students that could include research, the dissemination of information to local school districts, statewide staff development, and the allocation of supplementary funds.

**Identification.** The identification of those students who might be eligible for such services is also left open. The state defines a highly capable student as “a student who exhibits high capability in intellectual and/or creative areas, possesses an unusual leadership capacity or excels in specific academic fields, and requires services beyond the basic programs provided by schools. Outstanding abilities are present in students from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor.” Districts can design their own identification processes, as long as those processes are consistent with the Washington Administrative Codes.

**Funding.** About the only things said with certainty revolve around funding. The legislature intends to allocate funding based on 2.314 percent of each district’s population—an amount designed to provide, on a statewide average, 2.1590 hours of instruction per week in extra instruction in a class with 15 highly capable program students per teacher. The legislature limited what should be expected from the state when it found that “access to accelerated learning and enhanced instruction through the program for highly capable students does not constitute an individual entitlement for any particular student.” The goal is that selected students “be provided, to the extent feasible, an educational opportunity which takes into account each student’s unique needs and capabilities and the limits of the resources and program options available to the district.” This is where parents, teachers, and other advocates for highly capable learners must step in. It is our responsibility to join together with

others in similar situations to advocate for those appropriate educational opportunities. NWGCA can help you organize, and there are a numerous resources available to help you make your case.

### HCPTWG AND QEC

As part of the changes that led to the inclusion of highly capable programming in basic education, the legislature also funded a Highly Capable Program Technical Working Group. HCPTWG, comprised of national, state, and local leaders and experts on gifted education, looked at issues of definition, identification, program design, and effectiveness and made recommendations to the Quality Education Council. QEC considered those recommendations and forwarded some of them to the legislature. The legislature considered those recommendations, but took little action on them during the last legislative session. The work of HCPTWG appears online on the OSPI web site at [www.k12.wa.us/HighlyCapable/Workgroup/default.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/HighlyCapable/Workgroup/default.aspx).

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By becoming an informed advocate, you will be able to make the case for the appropriate identification of highly capable learners and adequate access to accelerated learning and enhanced instruction. You will be able to speak for programs that will take into account each student’s unique needs and capabilities. The legislature has established the framework under which we will act. It will be up to us to fill in the details necessary to take highly capable programming forward as an effective element in the instructional program of basic education.

*David Berg, NWCGA board member*



## Overlooked options, continued from p. 1

of his courses at his neighborhood school.

### **Do the previous examples sound like pipe dreams?**

In Washington state, all children, even those enrolled in private school or homeschooled, are entitled to enroll part-time in their local school district tuition free, for as few or as many courses, sports, activities or services as they desire. (RCW 28A.150.350). Services include counseling, psychological services, testing, remedial instruction, speech and hearing therapy, health care services, and tutorial services for the disabled.

Any program normally made available to a regularly enrolled student must be made available, although for full-time private school students the right is limited to programs not offered at the private school.

Choosing part-time instruction, if your child is not a full-time private school student, requires that the parent either obtain the school's consent to consider the absence excused or file a Declaration of Intent to homeschool with the Superintendent's office of the local school district (an annual requirement). Washington Homeschool Organization's website ([www.washhomeschool.org](http://www.washhomeschool.org)) contains information about the Declaration of Intent requirements.

Failure to file or obtain excused absence status may result in truancy proceedings under the Becca Bill. Unex-

cused absences can result in filings with juvenile court. If you enroll your child age 6 or older in school, the child must attend full-time unless you file a Declaration of Intent to Homeschool or obtain an excuse for the absence. A public school is not under an obligation to allow an absence to be excused, but it is under an obligation to accept part-time enrollment of Declaration of Intent homeschoolers.

**If you enroll your child age 6 or older in school, the child must attend full-time unless you file a Declaration of Intent to Homeschool or obtain an excuse for the absence.**

An advantage of the Declaration of Intent process for gifted children is that the principle and teacher for a home instructed student is the parent. Should the parent and the teacher of a class in which the child is part-time enrolled disagree about assignments or other course work, the parent has the right to overrule the teacher, although this power should be used judiciously to maintain quality relations with the school. The teacher does maintain the ability to give a "poor mark" for failure to comply with his or her requirements. Unless your child is in high school, school marks may be unimportant.

Schools that fail to honor the part-time instruction requirement can lose their funding. Where a child is enrolled part-time in more than one school (such as a virtual school and a bricks and mortar school) total enrollment cannot exceed full-time.

A parent wishing to follow the part-time route will need to be an advocate. A resistant school may need to be educated about its obligations under the part-time schooling statute. At the elementary level the parent needs to nurture a spirit of cooperation with the classroom instructor to ensure timely notice of schedule changes.

At the lower elementary level, it is easiest to participate either by a set block of time (such as mornings or afternoons) or in recess, lunch, enrichment and after-school activities because other schedules vary so much week to week. By upper elementary, specialist schedules tend to be more set and easier to participate in. Part-time enrollment is easier to schedule at the middle and high school levels. For high school, part-time enrollment in Running Start is a popular option.

You can also participate in your school's gifted program part-time, regardless of how it is structured.

You likewise can choose to participate in a public at home (also known as an ALE) or virtual school program part-time.

*Mary Heuett Oemigis, Executive Director,  
Reach Learning Community*

The Reach Learning Community ([www.reachschool.org](http://www.reachschool.org)) is located in Redmond, Washington. It provides extra-school opportunities for enrichment and education to meet the needs of gifted students who are homeschooling, or participating in a private school or their local community school part-time.





## What is “overexcitability”?

*A small amount of definitive research and a great deal of naturalistic observation have led to the belief that intensity, sensitivity and overexcitability are primary characteristics of the highly gifted. Sharon Lind*

This is not startling news to any parent who has removed the tags from clothing to make it wearable or wondered about the child who has boundless energy and can't seem to sit still or stop chattering. Perhaps you've questioned the existence of an imaginary friend who must be provided for or worried when your child seems to be in another world. Indeed there have been many times when my husband and I have turned to one another and simply said “living with intensity” as explanation for our son's way of taking the world head on.

The work of a Polish psychiatrist and psychologist, Kazimierz Dabrowski, (1902-1990) formulated the Theory of Positive Disintegration. A piece of his theory sets out five areas of what he called “overexcitabilities.” (According to Daniels and Piechowski in “Living with Intensity,” a better translation from the Polish might be the word “superexcitability” or intensity.) This theory provided me with an “aha” moment from the first time I was introduced to it and continues to help me understand my son.

According to Daniels and Piechowski, it's hard to find a person of talent who does not show evidence of any of the five following overexcitabilities:

**Psychomotor**—movement, restlessness, drivenness, an augmented capacity for being active and energetic

**Sensual** – enhanced refinement and aliveness of sensual experience

**Intellectual**—thirst for knowledge, discovery, questioning, love of ideas and theoretical analysis, search for truth

**Imagination**—vividness of imagery, richness of association, facility for dreams, fantasies and inventions, endowing toys and other objects with personality, preference for the unusual and unique

**Emotional**—great depth and intensity of emotional life expressed in a wide range of feelings, great happiness to profound sadness or despair, compassion, responsibility, self-examination

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## Parents can hone skills at fall WAETAG conference

Would you like to: (1) know more about how to work with your child's teacher to craft a challenging educational experience for your child?, (2) have the information you will need this year to urge your school district to develop an appropriate gifted program that meets the new definition of gifted as part of basic education?, (3) talk with other parents about what they are doing to encourage schools to recognize and serve the gifted children? You can get all this information and more by attending the annual conference of the Washington Association of Educators of Talented and Gifted.

You should also ask your children's teachers if they are going to attend this conference, the only one this year

**WAETAG CONFERENCE**  
**Wenatchee Convention Center**  
**and Coast Wenatchee Hotel**  
**Saturday, October 29, 2011**  
**Early bird registration**  
**before October 1**  
**Register on the WAETAG web**  
**site at [www.waetag.com](http://www.waetag.com)**

to focus solely on excellence in gifted education.

The conference, two and a half hours from Seattle in the beautiful Wenatchee Valley, features Dr. Karen Rodgers as keynote speaker. Dr. Rodgers is nationally known for her work matching the needs of gifted children to curriculum. Her newest book, *Re-forming Gifted Education: How Parents*

*and Teachers Can Match the Program to the Child* shows parents and teachers can work together to improve gifted education programs. This conference is rare opportunity for parents to interact with a renowned expert on parenting and advocacy for gifted children.

The conference features a parent track with the following sessions:

**Gifted Education as Basic Education—What Role Will Parents Need to Play to Make It Happen.**  
**David Berg, member of OSPI**  
**Highly Capable Work Team**

Get caught up on what's new in Washington. As of September 1, 2011, gifted education will be part of basic education. What does this mean? How

*Continued on p. 8*



## Overexcitability, continued from p. 5

So why then is it important for parents to know about these intensities? First of all, it's imperative that our gifted children understand that these traits are what help their talents unfold. We need to discuss with them the positive aspects of these traits.

Second, understanding that Overexcitabilities can also be thought of as Original Equipment and that they are just the way that these individuals experience the world is important for those who teach and live with these persons. These intense reactions are very real to them and to have them

dismissed or ignored can lead to discouragement, depression and anxiety.

A final thought from Sharon Lind's work:

Often when overexcitability is discussed, examples and concerns are mostly negative. Remember that being overexcitable also brings with it great joy, astonishment, beauty, compassion and creativity. Perhaps the most important thing is to acknowledge and relish the uniqueness of an overexcitable child or adult.

Suggested resources for further reading on Dabrowski and overexcitabilities include:

"Overexcitability and the Gifted." Sharon Lind 2001. Available on SENG web site at [www.sengifted.org](http://www.sengifted.org) (look under articles, then social/emotional issues).

*Living with Intensity.* Susan Daniels and Michael Piechowski, 2009.

*"Mellow Out They Say": If I Only Could.* Michael Piechowski, 2006.

*Ann Koch, NWGCA board member, will present a session at the WAETAG conference on overexcitability where parents can share in more depth their stories and strategies.*

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Your membership expiration date appears next to your address label.**

### NWGCA Membership Application

Does your employer match contributions?  Yes  No

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I don't want to share my information with other Washington organizations for the gifted.

Please cut or copy this form and send it with a check for \$35 (yearly dues) to:  
NWGCA Treasurer, PO Box 10704, Spokane, Washington 99209. Make check payable to NWGCA.



## One Parent's Journey with her gifted children

Growing up, I was called “gifted.” My husband was obviously gifted. And I figured that, of course, we’d have gifted kids. Well, I was right! The thing I hadn’t realized was that, as the mother of gifted children, I would have to rely on not only my own (incredibly limited) understanding of what “gifted” means, but also the interpretations of the meaning of “gifted” to those who would work with our children.

Before our oldest was about to embark on his academic career, we intentionally moved to a school district in a college town. Though I knew that they didn’t offer any gifted classes, the district had a great reputation. I also supposed that, with children of so many college professors attending school in the district, education would be considered a strong value within the community. Though that may have been so, this did not necessarily add up to a positive school atmosphere for our exceptionally gifted son.

Being a particularly glass-is-almost-overflowing (as opposed to half-full/empty) type of person, I assumed that all would be wonderful and happy in the lives of our children. I imagined that every teacher they would ever have would be instantly taken with them. I thought that their teachers would thank us for the opportunity to spend their days with our children. I assumed that all of their peers would appreciate and admire them. Well, it didn’t quite work out that way!

His kindergarten teacher did call us, all right! She called to tell us that he participated TOO much and TOO willingly. She told us that he was concerned about everybody else’s business. She let us know that, though he

was incredibly bright, we were going to need to teach him to calm down. She said that he was too intense, too emotional, and too sensitive. She told us that some of the staff members referred to him as “the little policeman,” because he was always trying to make everybody follow the rules.

His kindergarten teacher called him a “justice freak.” She demonstrated this by sharing this story: “When one of the little girls was crawling around at the top of the big toy on the playground, your son, while standing underneath her with one hand on his hip and one finger wagging at her, said, ‘You need to come down from there. That isn’t safe. If you fell, you would be hurt and sad. If you were hurt and sad, I would be sad. I don’t want to be sad, so you need to come down!’”

The story she was unaware of was that the same little girl was a bit of a bully and had very few friends. One day when tucking our son in bed, he inquired: “Susie is really mean to everyone. Today she pushed Sarah and called me names. Why is she a bully? How come she isn’t nice?” I explained that sometimes people aren’t very nice if others aren’t very nice to them. I explained that we don’t know what might have been going on in her life that caused her to lash out in that way. After thoughtfully considering this for a moment, tears developed in his eyes and he said, “The next time that Susie is mean to me, I will say something nice to her. Maybe I’ll tell her that her shirt is pretty. That way, she might start to feel better. If she feels better, then maybe she won’t be so mean to other people.”

Gifted children are so much more than “extra smart.” Honestly, that was about the limit of my understanding 16 years ago when our son was born. I knew that some gifted kids were “nerdy” and some were “show-offs” but always assumed that those were just the coping mechanisms those kids used to deal with other kids who were jealous.

I’ve learned a lot since then. Our children’s early experiences necessitated a lot of research. I came to learn that gifted children are more than “extra smart.” I learned that they are naturally more intense. I discovered Dabrowski’s Theory of Positive Disintegration and the concept of overexcitabilities. I came to understand that gifted kids can actually be considered special needs and what that means and how to help guide them. I learned that teachers don’t like it when parents say, “My child is bored.” I learned that parenting these children takes a lot of patience and understanding. I came to find NAGC and SENG and the local state groups (we’ve lived in three states with our kids.) I came to discover more about myself and husband, and realized that our children are distinct and special individuals who are self-aware, curious, sensitive, emotional and intelligent. Dealing with four people like this in one household can be tough, but we have learned how to respect one another and honor the various opinions and eccentricities that we all have. We’ve taught our children that they are gifted, what that means, how to “deal” with that and to know that, though they have been blessed with a superior intellect, they are not superior to others by virtue of it.

*Elizabeth Williamson, NWGCA board member*

**WAETAG**, continued from p. 5

is that different from what used to be? What role will parents need to play to help their school districts meet the spirit and intent of the new law? What resources are available to help parents with this important responsibility?

**Gifted Intensities—Do Your Gifted Children Have Some of Them? What to Do About It?** *Ann Koch, SENG trainer and past president, NWGCA*

A small amount of definitive research and a great deal of naturalistic observation have led to the belief that intensity, sensitivity and overexcitability are primary characteristics of the

highly gifted. This informative presentation will explore the research of Kazimierz Dabrowski and provide parents with valuable insight and tools for helping with the social and emotional needs of their gifted children.

**Be a Powerful Advocate for Gifted.** *Marcia Holland (moderator), President, NWGCA*

Join this forum on being a powerful advocate for your gifted child with teachers, principals, your schools, your district. Sharpen your advocacy skills. Share what you know. Learn from others. Collect resources.

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