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ABSTRACT

This paper is a literature review comparing the characteristics and needs of the average gifted child with the disadvantaged gifted child in four areas: (1) cognitive; (2) affective; (3) psycho-motor; and (4) special aptitudes. Numbered items indicate those comparisons that may be contrasted directly between the two groups. All other items are observations for which there are no apparent comparisons. The educationally disadvantaged gifted child has a particular set of characteristics and needs. While similarities with the average gifted child exist, the differences seem more pervasive. The disadvantaged gifted child needs to be recognized as an individual. Teachers who do not seek to build on the unique strengths of these children, but choose to make them into perfect molds of either the average disadvantaged child or the average gifted child, will be doing a great disservice to these children. Music education is needed especially for educationally disadvantaged gifted children. Successful musical experiences can produce the higher esteem levels necessary for these students to change their life circumstances. Music presents a subject matter of both immediate appeal and long-term relevancy for each of these students. They have observed persons from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving financial and societal stability in the areas of music and music-related occupations. Music education for disadvantaged gifted children may be the greatest opportunity for intellectual and emotional growth. Music is one of the most appropriate subjects for fostering individual and group growth for the disadvantaged gifted child. Contains 60 references. (Author/DK)

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## **Music Education and the Educationally Disadvantaged Gifted Child**

Janice Chapin Buchanan

Appropriate music education may be the answer to the current dropout problem among the educationally disadvantaged gifted students of our nation's schools. Music's force as a peer-approved activity, coupled with its realistic possibilities as a career choice, offers these students direct avenues toward fulfilling their own educational and creative potentials. For educators to reach and teach individual children who are both creatively gifted and educationally disadvantaged, new understandings will be required.

While many teachers are willing to recognize the presence of gifted children in disadvantaged groups, few seem aware of the special kind of creativity and giftedness these children have developed or hold as potential. An awareness of the similarities and differences between the average gifted child and the disadvantaged gifted child is particularly valuable. This information can aid in both identifying and planning for the meaningful education of disadvantaged gifted children.

This review of the literature compares the characteristics and needs of the average gifted child with the disadvantaged gifted child in four areas: cognitive, affective, psycho-motor, and special aptitudes. Numbered items indicate those comparisons which may be directly contrasted between the two groups. All other items are observations for which there are no apparent comparisons.

## Characteristics

### Average Gifted Child

#### Cognitive

1. Has a keen power of observation, a liking for structure, a questioning attitude, and is persistent in pursuing his/her interests (Hildreth, 1966; Hollingworth, 1926; Martinson, 1960; Witty, 1951).
2. Usually scores high on standardized and teacher-made tests (Terman).
3. His/her superiority is greatest in reading, language usage, arithmetic reasoning, science, literature, and the arts. Least advanced abilities in spelling, arithmetic computation, and punctuation, but he/she is usually not below grade level even in these areas (Buhler & Guirl, 1963).
4. Has the ability to absorb abstract concepts, to organize them more effectively, and apply them more appropriately than the average child (Gallagher, 1985; Gaier & Dellas, 1971).
5. Early maturity in talking and reading (Terman, 1926).
6. Has good retention of wide-ranging facts (Hildreth, 1966).
7. Interests are many-sided and spontaneous (Gallagher, 1985; Hildreth, 1966).

### Disadvantaged Gifted Child

#### Cognitive

1. Ingeniousness and resourcefulness in the pursuit of self-selected goals and in coping with the difficult conditions of life peculiar to states of economic insufficiency and poverty, and low social class status (Gordon, 1964).
2. Below average in school achievement as measured by standardized tests. (Gordon & Wilkerson, 1966) IQ and achievement tests unable to accurately assess his/her capabilities (Baldwin, 1987; Hilliard, 1976; Torrance, 1969, 1971).
3. High development of informal, expressive language, imagery and gesture (Riessman, 1962; Torrance, 1969, 1971; Deutsch, 1967), but a lack of standard English usage characterized by the use of fewer words, poorly structured syntax, and limited subject matter mainly to convey concrete needs and immediate consequences (Bernstein, 1961).
4. Abstract concepts are firmly connected to things that can be seen, felt, and acted upon (Riessman, 1962).
5. Lack of adequate audial and temporal perceptions, discriminations, and articulation (Fantini & Weinstein, 1968), but good visual and spatial perceptivity (Riessman, 1962; Taylor, 1939; Torrance, 1969).
6. Tends to lack in subject matter experiences our school systems assume to be common to all (Ausubel, 1963; Gordon & Wilkerson, 1966).
7. Limited development of individual self-expression (Riessman, 1962).

8. Will probably graduate from high school and college a year younger, but is in more extra-curricular activities than others (Kirk, 1979).

His/her ability to learn generally does not decrease; it will, in fact, probably increase (Terman & Oden, 1951).

Learns at a rate that is superior to others and has an economy of work methods (Gallagher, 1985).

Does academic work and reads books that are at least one to two years in advance of his/her peers (Terman, 1926).

Ideas, relationships, and facts are dealt with in a superior way (Kirk, 1979).

### Affective

1. No greater feelings of inadequacy or anxiety than others (Gallagher, 1985), but may feel more pressured than others to measure up to the expectations of their parents and other adults (Soares & Soares, 1971).

Characterized by such terms as: dependable, ambitious, and happy (McGehee & Lewis, 1942).

Surpasses others on standardized measures of self-adjustment and personal maturity in both elementary and secondary schools (Martinson, 1960).

Socially sensitive and empathetic (Strang, 1960).

In heterogeneous groups, the gifted enjoy high acceptance by students of all levels (Gallagher, 1985).

8. Pro-education-but-anti-school-attitude prevalent in lower socio-economic strata results in child's ambivalence toward education. Many will drop out (Riessman, 1962).

Is a motoric learner and has a great respect for physical sciences. (Riessman, 1962)

Creative productivity in small groups (Torrance, 1969).

High non-verbal fluency and originality (Torrance, 1969).

Has learned to tune out noise, events, and conversation going on around him/her--a learned inattention (Bloom, Davis, & Hess, 1965).

### Affective

1. Depressed self-concept noticeable in situations where lower socio-economic groups are integrated with higher socio-economic groups (Gallagher, 1985; Riessman, 1962), but positive self-concept when grouped with other disadvantaged persons (Coleman, 1966).

Freedom from self-blame and parental over-protection (Riessman, 1962; Bloom, Davis, & Hess, 1965).

Security found in the extended family and in a traditional outlook on life (Riessman, 1962).

Belief in and a reliance on fate (Gallagher, 1985).

Emotional sensitivities lead to being more injured in the ghetto setting than the average disadvantaged child (Witt, 1968).

Has versatile and vital social interests (Ward, 1961).

Lack of strain accompanying competition (Riessman, 1962).

He/she is less prone to make over-statements or to cheat (Kirk, 1979).

Strong peer-group loyalty (Riessman, 1962).

Distrust of outsiders unless heroes (Gallagher, 1985; Gordon & Wilkerson, 1966).

Equalitarian behavior and informal style with peers (Riessman, 1962).

Lessened sibling rivalry (Riessman, 1962).

2. Are co-operative and may be disciplined more readily than others by appeal to reason, presenting another point of view, hero-worship, or consistently rewarding merit (Hollingworth, 1926).

2. Usually disciplined physically by his/her parents or other adults (Riessman, 1962).

3. Has a high moral sense and finds same values logically right for many groups (him/her-self, parents, teachers) (Gallagher, 1985; Terman, 1926).

3. Subjected to values and expectations that tend to generate conflict between selves and the school (Gordon & Wilkerson, 1966).

### Psycho-motor

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Earlier and more rapid rate of growth than others (Ketcham, 1965).

Highly creative in movement, dance, and other physical activities (Torrance, 1969).

The average gifted child is usually physically superior--taller, heavier, and freer from physical defects (Bentley, 1937; Hollingworth, 1926; Terman, 1926).

Great enjoyment and achievement in sports (Torrance, 1969; Riessman, 1962).

Excellent co-ordination (Hollingworth, 1926; Wilson, 1956).

May show effects of malnutrition (Bloom, Davis, Hess, 1965).

### Special Aptitudes

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1. May be talented in one or more of the following which are rewarded and encouraged in the dominant culture:

1. May be talented in one or more of the following which are rewarded and encouraged in the disadvantaged sub-culture:

Social Leadership--possesses an exceptional capacity for mature, productive

Social Leadership--highly developed and sophisticated social abilities and insight bred out of the struggles of the

relationships with others, both peer- and adults (Witty, 1951).

lower-economic strata (Bruch, 1969).

Creativity--has unusual strengths in reaching new and different approaches or ideas out of a large number of thoughts or variety of choices (Torrance, 1965).

Creativity--"one track," where the individual relentlessly pursues the answer to a problem by using given information with emphasis on quantity and variety of output from the same source (Guilford, 1956; Riessman, 1962).

Musical--extraordinary ability to perform or to write music (Pressey, 1955). Capable of a high level of intellectual and emotional response to musical experiences (Hartshorn, 1960).

Musical--extraordinary ability to perform or to write music with the motivation of job availability (Pressey, 1955; Riessman, 1962).

Artistic--has a high sense of aesthetic judgment leading to fine artistic competence (Pressey, 1955).

Artistic--especially adept in visual art activities (Torrance, 1969).

Physical--unusual talent for athletic performance or dance developed from superior original capacity and training (Pressey, 1955).

Physical--unusual talent for athletic performance or dance developed from superior original capacity, training and job availability (Pressey, 1955; Riessman, 1962).

Mechanical--unusually fine spatial perceptions, understanding and manipulation of machines (Wilson, 1958).

Humor--special ability in this field, both spontaneous and programmed (Torrance, 1969).

Others: Dramatic, Linguistic, Literary, Scientific or Mathematical.

Others: Dramatic, Literary, Linguistic, Scientific or Mathematical.

Needs

Average Gifted Child

Disadvantaged Gifted Child

Cognitive

1. A culture that encourages and is grateful for the gifted (Pressey, 1955).
2. Overall individualized curriculum planning (Deutsch, 1967; Torrance, 1965).

3. To be identified as potentially gifted early in life (Barbe, 1965; Harvey, 1961; Lehman, 1932).
4. Associations with others of superior ability (Pressey).
5. To be encouraged to go beyond society's tolerance of mediocrity (Kenniston).
6. Imaginative, sensitive, creative, learning teachers with an understanding of his/her special needs, strengths (Kirk & Wilson, and his/her developmental level (Deutsch, Piaget).
7. "Above all he/she needs scope, material on which his/her imagination can feed, and opportunities to exercise it. He/she needs inconspicuous access to books, museums, instruments, paints, ideas, a chance to feed himself/herself with the accumulated knowledge of our world" (Mead).
8. The stimulation of many successes for which the individual gains recognition (Pressey).
9. A great amount of brainstorming (Wilson) and daydreaming (Torrance).
10. Allowed to pursue tasks without interruption (Torrance).
11. To have creative thought planned for and encouraged (Torrance, Wilson).
12. To be taught the skills of critical thinking, decision making, and astute judgment (Torrance, 1965).

Less repetition of material (Kirk, 1979) and more complex associative methods of learning developed (Baker, 1927).

Be led to work on deeper problems, more subtle relationships, and look for conclusions and generalizations (Baker, 1927; Kirk, 1979).

Encouraged to take the initiative in planning what and how they will learn (guided at early levels) (Strang, 1960).

Combination of "traditional" and "progressive" teaching approach. (Traditionalists might contribute structure, rules, discipline, authority, rote learning, order, organization, and strong external demands for achievement. The progressivist might emphasize importance of motivation, learning by doing, discovery learning, and use examples drawn from the experience of the child (Riessman, 1962).

To be tested for giftedness in broadened ways (Alvino, 1981; McKenzie, 1986; Reis & Renzulli, 1982; Taylor & Ellison, 1983; Yarborough & Johnson, 1983).

To be taught by persons with overtly positive attitudes toward the educationally disadvantaged child (Baldwin, 1987; Karnes & Johnson, 1987).



To learn how to learn and to gain test-taking skills (Fantini & Weinstein, 1968; Gordon & Wilkerson, 1966).

Small group learning situations (Witt, 1968).

Types of learning that begin with the disadvantaged's creative style, physical attunement, developed expressiveness and imagery (Baldwin, 1987; Riessman, 1962; Torrance, 1969, 1971; Watson & Belland, 1985).

To have teacher focus on problems that are relevant to the student (Fantini & Weinstein, 1968).

Basic skills best developed through physical and visual, rather than aural, perceptions and discriminations (Gordon & Wilkerson, 1966).

Start at an inductive level and progress to the deductive (Gordon & Wilkerson, 1966).

Emphasis on directed and manipulated affective experience designed to develop sensitivity to elaborated language forms as an essential tool of survival (Gordon & Wilkerson, 1966).

Learning may be presented through auto-instructional and programmed devices and methods giving the child a greater control over the timing of the stimuli which could help minimize the differences in orientation (Deutsch, 1967; Lathom, 1973; Riessman, 1962).

To grasp an understanding of situations, other times, and other peoples so as to be less bound by his/her own peculiar community (Gallagher, 1985).

Help to cultivate the diversity and variety the culturally different child brings to the dominant culture (Baldwin, 1987; Heller, 1983; Kenniston, 1958).

Actual rewards and immediate gratifications are valuable as motivations of achievement (Gordon & Wilkerson, 1966).

## Affective

1. To be respected as a person (Riessman, 1962).
2. To see purpose in his/her being (Cutts & Moseley, 1960).
3. To be taught to capitalize on his/her assets (Cutts & Moseley, 1960).
4. Loving care and social interaction crucial in early years for natural physical, emotional, and mental development (Torrance, 1965).
5. Accurate self-appraisal and self-acceptance (Kirk, 1979; Strang, 1960).

To be helped to guard against too much self-criticism and dissatisfaction with own achievements (Kirk, 1979).

Help in reducing hostility while maintaining aggressiveness and independence in judgment (Torrance, 1965).

To understand the kind of behavior which will make it possible for him/her to function well and to cope in the school mechanism (Deutsch, 1967).

To be able to identify with parent or other adult of the same sex (Gallagher, 1985).

Schooled in a warm, accepting, but ordered, atmosphere (Deutsch, 1967; Gordon & Wilkerson, 1966).

Knowing that a teacher anticipates he/she will do well in school (Deutsch, 1967).

Not to be indulged or patronized (Riessman, 1962).

Consistence from teachers and parents. (Riessman, 1962).

To gain skill and competence in intrapersonal and interpersonal management. (Gordon & Wilkerson, 1966).

## Psycho-motor

To have athletics and/or dance as an integral part of a child's growth (Strang, 1960).

## Special Aptitudes

Creativity--to feel that the teacher is on his/her side and approves of and encourages any form

of productive creativity; to have models of creative behavior; to have an understanding of his/her talent; to have freedom to communicate his/her ideas; and to be recognized (Torrance, 1965; Gaier & Dellas, 1971).

Others--early encouragement; intensive instruction and counsel; continuing opportunity as he advances; a congruent stimulating social life; cumulative success experiences (Pressey, 1955), and a broad range of opportunities to apply his/her skill (Thomas & Criscimbern, 1966).

### Discussion

The educationally disadvantaged gifted child does have a particular set of characteristics and needs. While similarities with the average gifted child exist, the differences seem more pervasive.

The disadvantaged gifted child sorely needs to be recognized as an individual. Teachers who do not seek to build on the unique strengths of these children, but choose by ignorance, apathy, or default to make them into perfect molds of either the average disadvantaged child or the average gifted child, will be doing a great disservice to these children.

Music education is especially needed for today's educationally disadvantaged gifted child. Successful musical experiences can produce the higher esteem levels necessary for these students to take the riches needed to change their life circumstances. Further, music presents a subject matter of both immediate appeal and long-term relevancy for each of these students. They have observed persons from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving financial and societal stability in the areas of music and music-related occupations. Indeed, music education for disadvantaged gifted children may be the greatest opportunity for the intellectual and emotional growth of this important part of our school populations.

The sensitive music educator will seek to increase his/her understanding of the characteristic strengths and needs of this group of children followed with the creation of implications and applications derived from these understandings which will enable the educator to provide meaningful and challenging experiences in music for the disadvantaged gifted child. Music is one of the most appropriate subjects for fostering individual and group growth for the disadvantaged gifted child, and music educators must not abdicate the responsibility of providing the best possible education for these children.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>In this paper I will use the term "educationally disadvantaged" to refer to the child whose restricted, usually low socio-economic, environment has left him/her at a disadvantage in our current school system. The term "average gifted child" will refer to the person who is educationally advantaged in that his/her environment has given him/her the background to succeed in our schools.