

University of Denver

Digital Commons @ DU

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Graduate Studies

2020

Supporting the Affective Needs of Gifted Readers: An Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship Study

Kimberly G. Freed
University of Denver

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Gifted Education Commons](#), and the [Language and Literacy Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Freed, Kimberly G., "Supporting the Affective Needs of Gifted Readers: An Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship Study" (2020). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 1754.
<https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/1754>

This Dissertation in Practice is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact jennifer.cox@du.edu,dig-commons@du.edu.

Supporting the Affective Needs of Gifted Readers: An Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship Study

Abstract

The purpose of this Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship Study was to analyze the perceptions of parents and teachers of reading supports and barriers on the affective development of gifted readers. The research questions that guided this study were: What do parents and teachers perceive as the most effective reading supports that promote the affective development of young gifted readers? What do parents and teachers perceive as the major barriers that hinder the affective development of elementary gifted readers? How can children's literature be used to support or hinder the affective development of gifted readers? Participants of this study were parents and teachers of gifted readers. Parents had at least one gifted child who was specifically identified in reading and teachers were gifted and talented teachers in a school district, working directly with gifted readers. Interviews were conducted with both parents and teachers to gain their perspectives about the supports and barriers that young gifted readers face in their affective development. The themes that emerged from this study were as follows:

RQ1: Teamwork and Compassionate Allies

RQ2: Underachievement and Unusual Reactions, Perfectionism

RQ3: Powerful Literature Changes Lives

The perception of gifted readers that emerged from this study were children with a strong moral compass with solid connections to books, ones who needed to see themselves within the quality literature they were reading, and children who need thoughtful differentiation and caring, patient allies to help them navigate their way through their difficult and unusual reality into adulthood.

Document Type

Dissertation in Practice

Degree Name

Ed.D.

Department

Curriculum and Instruction

First Advisor

Norma Hafenstein

Second Advisor

Paul Michalec

Third Advisor

Bruce Uhrmacher

Keywords

Affective, Asynchrony, Gifted, Overexcitabilities, Readers, Zone of proximal development

Subject Categories

Curriculum and Instruction | Gifted Education | Language and Literacy Education

Publication Statement

Copyright is held by the author. User is responsible for all copyright compliance.

Supporting the Affective Needs of Gifted Readers:
An Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship Study

A Dissertation in Practice
Presented to
the Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Kimberly G. Freed

June 2020

Advisor: Dr. Norma Hafenstein

©Copyright by Kimberly G. Freed 2020

All Rights Reserved

Author: Kimberly G. Freed
Title: Supporting the Affective Needs of Gifted Readers: An Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship Study
Advisor: Dr. Norma Hafenstein
Degree Date: June 2020

Abstract

The purpose of this Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship Study was to analyze the perceptions of parents and teachers of reading supports and barriers on the affective development of gifted readers. The research questions that guided this study were: What do parents and teachers perceive as the most effective reading supports that promote the affective development of young gifted readers? What do parents and teachers perceive as the major barriers that hinder the affective development of elementary gifted readers? How can children's literature be used to support or hinder the affective development of gifted readers? Participants of this study were parents and teachers of gifted readers. Parents had at least one gifted child who was specifically identified in reading and teachers were gifted and talented teachers in a school district, working directly with gifted readers. Interviews were conducted with both parents and teachers to gain their perspectives about the supports and barriers that young gifted readers face in their affective development. The themes that emerged from this study were as follows:

RQ1: Teamwork and Compassionate Allies
RQ2: Underachievement and Unusual Reactions, Perfectionism
RQ3: Powerful Literature Changes Lives

The perception of gifted readers that emerged from this study were children with a strong moral compass with solid connections to books, ones who needed to see themselves within the quality literature they were reading, and children who need thoughtful

differentiation and caring, patient allies to help them navigate their way through their difficult and unusual reality into adulthood.

Keywords: affective, perceptions, Dabrowski, Vygotsky, Halsted, gifted, readers, asynchrony, social, emotional, overexcitabilities, Zone of Proximal Development, identity, perfectionism, introversion, relationships

Acknowledgements

This dissertation was completed solely because I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it. I have put all of myself within its pages and feel as though it has become a dear friend. So many people in my life deserve credit for helping me fulfill this dream:

Dr. Norma Hafenstein: Her passion for gifted children has made me want to be a better advocate for these “small poppies.” I am forever changed and grateful.

Dad: The first person who ever encouraged me to pursue a degree in higher education. You have always supported my educational dreams, even if you didn’t understand them and I will never forget the influence your example had on my life.

Dr. Edward Garrigan: My uncle, the first person I ever personally knew who completed a doctorate program. When I wanted to quit, he reminded me that “this, too, shall pass.” His encouragement and calm reassurance have meant the world to me.

Dr. Shannon McQueen: My trusted colleague and great friend, the one who talked me down off many ledges, who constantly reminded me: “Actually, I can!”

Megan Henry: My study buddy, the one who kept me accountable for writing when I really wanted to take a nap. I hope you follow your dreams.

Mom, Sharon, and Shelly: Three lives that ended way too soon, just as I began this doctoral process. Three people who loved me unconditionally and always cheered me on. I did this for the three of you! I miss you more than words can express.

The DU GT Cohort: My colleagues who have become friends. Long nights of working on projects, texts to clarify assignments or remind each other of looming due dates. I appreciate each one of you and your contribution to my journey. Thanks for making me laugh when things seemed to be falling apart. I am so proud of each of you!

Table of Contents

Abstract _____	ii
Table of Contents _____	v
List of Figures _____	x
 CHAPTER 1 Introduction _____	 1
Introduction _____	1
Personal Interest as the Researcher _____	2
Problem of Practice _____	10
Statement of Purpose _____	11
Research Questions _____	11
Significance of the Study _____	12
Summary of Chapter _____	13
 CHAPTER 2 Literature Review _____	 15
Theoretical Frameworks _____	17
Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD) _____	18
Description of Overexcitabilities (OEs) _____	19
Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory _____	22
Zone of Proximal Development _____	23
Conceptual Framework _____	24
Intersection of Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks _____	27
Definitions of Giftedness _____	28
Manifestations of Giftedness in Reading _____	30
The Asynchrony of Gifted Readers _____	33
Linda Silverman and the Columbus Group _____	34
How Asynchrony Affects Gifted Readers _____	34
Parents' Perceptions _____	35
Teachers' Perceptions _____	36
The Need for Affective Supports for Gifted Readers _____	38
Bibliotherapy as an Affective Support _____	40
The History of Bibliotherapy _____	41
Bibliotherapy for Children _____	42

Other Affective Supports for Gifted Readers _____	46
Affective Supports for Gifted Girls _____	50
Affective Supports for Gifted Boys _____	50
Affective Supports for Gifted Students from Diverse Populations _____	51
Affective Barriers for Gifted Readers _____	54
Affective Barriers for Gifted Girls _____	57
Affective Barriers for Gifted Boys _____	57
Affective Barriers for Gifted Students from Diverse Populations _____	58
Similar Studies _____	59
Summary of Literature Review _____	61
 CHAPTER 3 Methodology _____	 63
Rationale _____	63
Constructivist Worldview _____	63
Research Methodology _____	64
Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship Explained _____	64
Ecology of Schooling _____	66
Community Partner _____	67
Participant Selection _____	68
Teacher Participants _____	69
Parent Participants _____	70
Participant Interviews _____	71
Research Study Design _____	72
Statement of Purpose _____	72
Research Questions _____	72
Research Questions & Rationale _____	73
Data Collection _____	74
Interview Question Rationale and Relation to Educational Criticism _____	76
Artifacts _____	87
Data Analysis _____	87
Four Dimensions of Educational Criticism _____	88
Ecology of Schooling _____	89
Transcription of Interviews _____	90
Validity of Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship _____	90
Protection of Participants _____	92
Limitations _____	93
Summary of Chapter _____	93

CHAPTER 4 Research Findings and Analysis	95
Introduction to Findings	95
Organization of Setting: Descriptions and Interpretations	96
Teacher Interviews	96
Ruby.	97
Diana.	99
Muriel.	101
Minnie.	103
Parent Interviews	106
Jane.	106
Rachel.	109
Josie.	112
Mr. and Mrs. Allan.	114
The Ecology of Schooling for Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship Revisited	117
The Intentional Dimension: Confident, Persevering, and Socially Safe	117
Perseverance	118
Socially Safe.	119
Appropriate Education.	120
Confidence.	124
The Curricular Dimension: Meeting the Needs of the Atypical Learner	126
Different Approaches Needed.	127
Nature and Needs.	129
Advocacy.	129
Positive Experiences.	131
The Pedagogical Dimension: Opportunities for Gifted Individuals to Thrive	133
Strategies.	134
Communication.	135
Self-Advocates.	135
Harnessing Strengths.	136
Bigger Understandings.	137
Loneliness.	137
Conceptual Framework Revisited	139
Halsted's Identity	140
Halsted's Perfectionism	142
Halsted's Relationships	143
Halsted's Balancing Introversion	146
Question 1: Parent and Teacher Perceptions of Affective Supports	148
Question 2: Parent and Teacher Perceptions of Affective Barriers	155
Question 3: Children's Literature Promotes the Affective Needs of Gifted Readers	157
Theoretical Frameworks Revisited	160
Dabrowski's Overexcitabilities	161

Dabrowski's Emotional Overexcitability	163
Dabrowski's Intellectual Overexcitability	170
Dabrowski's Imaginational Overexcitability	174
Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development	177
Summary of Chapter	184
 CHAPTER 5 Evaluation, Thematics, and Implications	 184
Introduction to Chapter	185
Evaluation of the Study	185
Thematics Related to Research Questions	186
Research Question One	186
Teamwork	186
Compassionate Allies.	188
Research Question Two	189
Underachievement and Reluctance.	189
Unusual Reactions.	190
Perfectionism.	191
Research Question Three	192
Powerful Literature Changes Lives.	192
Emergent Themes Within the Intentional Dimension	193
Books Open Doors	194
Censorship	196
Emergent Themes Within the Curricular Dimension	199
Perseverance and Grit	199
Questioning	201
Broaden Your Worldview	201
The Unusual Tools	202
Emergent Themes Within the Pedagogical Dimension	205
Bibliotherapy	205
Sanctuary	207
Seeing Oneself in Literature Selections	208
Differentiation is Key	209
Emergent Themes Within the Conceptual Framework	212
Reading Identity	212
Authenticity	213
Emergent Themes Within the Theoretical Frameworks	214
Dabrowski's Overexcitabilities	214
Connections with Books	215
Moral Compass.	216
The Invisible Struggle.	217

Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development _____	218
Nurture Potential. _____	218
Respectful Partnerships. _____	219
Implications _____	221
Limitations _____	227
Further Research _____	228
Summary of Chapter _____	231
References _____	237
Definition of Terms _____	248
Appendix A: Research Timeline _____	253
Appendix B: Community Partner Agreement _____	254
Appendix C: Potential Participant Letter _____	255
Appendix D: Informed Consent for Participation in a Study _____	256
Appendix E: Demographic Face Sheet _____	259
Appendix F: Interview Protocol for Teachers _____	260
Appendix G: Interview Protocol for Parents _____	263

List of Figures

Chapter 1

Figure 1.1: A First Heartbreak	2
Figure 1.2: Kindred Spirits	4
Figure 1.3: A Plot Spoiled by Voracious Readers	4
Figure 1.4: Challenge Accepted.....	7
Figure 1.5: Parent Advisory	9
Figure 1.6: Mixed Messages	10

Chapter 2

Figure 2.1: Intersection of Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks.....	28
--	----

Chapter 3

Figure 3.1: Teacher Participants	70
Figure 3.2: Parent Participants	71
Figure 3.3: Research Questions & Rationale.....	73
Figure 3.4: Teacher Interview Questions & Rationale	77
Figure 3.5: Parent Interview Questions & Rationale	86

Chapter 4

Figure 4.1: Book Recommendations from Ruby's Class.....	99
Figure 4.2: A Powerful Resource.....	141
Figure 4.3: Affective Fridays Google Doc	148
Figure 4.4: Reading Reflections	150
Figure 4.5: Million Dollar Word Club Tracker	151
Figure 4.6: Visualizing/Verbalizing/Reading Rubric	152
Figure 4.7: Positive Affective Resources.....	153
Figure 4.8: A Listening Adventure	154
Figure 4.9: A Resource for Introverts	155
Figure 4.10: Resources that Promote Affective Growth.....	157
Figure 4.11: The Most Influential Books in this Study	158
Figure 4.12: Resources for Teaching Overexcitabilities.....	163
Figure 4.13: Books that Influenced Gifted Readers in this Study	165
Figure 4.14: A Different Way to Organize Books.....	166
Figure 4.15: Mental Health Check.....	167
Figure 4.16: Books that have an Impact	169
Figure 4.17: Using Book Quotes as Inspiration.....	170
Figure 4.18: Safe Spaces for Gifted Readers	171
Figure 4.19: Overflowing Bookshelves	174
Figure 4.20: Reading Nook.....	175
Figure 4.21: Books that Make a Difference.....	177
Figure 4.22: Graphic Novels with Heavy Content.....	180
Figure 4.23: Bridging Fiction and Nonfiction	182
Figure 4.24: A Book for Reading Together and Taking Action	183

Chapter 5	
Figure 5.1: #Ownvoice.....	195
Figure 5.2: Books Open Doors	196
Figure 5.3: Muriel's First 'Sensitive Souls' Book.....	198
Figure 5.4: Perseverance	200
Figure 5.5: Books to Broaden Your Perspective	202
Figure 5.6: A Shift in Traditional Thinking.....	204
Figure 5.7: Changing Attitudes.....	205
Figure 5.8: Overcoming Adversity	206
Figure 5.9: Opportunity to see Oneself in Literature.....	209
Figure 5.10: Everyone is Special in Their Own Way	215
Figure 5.11: Supportive Partnerships Open Doors	221

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

We pay a price for everything we get or take in this world; and although ambitions are well worth having, they are not to be cheaply won, but exact their dues of work and self-denial, anxiety and discouragement.

— Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*

This study seeks to examine the perceptions of parents and teachers on supports and barriers that exist in the affective development of elementary gifted readers. Gifted readers face many unique challenges and opportunities due to their high level of reading ability. Halsted (2009) explains that gifted children have specialized needs that go beyond the general social and emotional needs of all children (p. 11). Halsted continues that in order “to understand their emotional needs, we need to recognize the extras in the developmental tasks they face” (p. 12). Their affective development is very different from that of their same-age peers, especially when it comes to their reading capabilities and selections (Halsted, 2009). Gifted readers are able to comprehend books at much higher levels than what they may be prepared for, especially in regard to their affective or socioemotional development (Reis et al., 2004).

Parents and teachers need to fully understand the challenges and opportunities that exist for gifted readers. Then they can better support the affective development of these readers so that the asynchrony existing between what they are capable of reading

and what they are developmentally ready for may be eased (Silverman, 1997). The ultimate goal of this study is to provide direction for teachers and parents to support elementary gifted readers in coping with the social and emotional challenges associated with their reading development. Parent and teacher perceptions of affective reading supports and barriers will be analyzed in order to better understand how to enrich and enhance the reading experiences of gifted readers.

Personal Interest as the Researcher

My first experience with a book that left an imprint on my heart was the story of *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White (2006). I was seven years old and my aunt was visiting from Indiana for the summer. As a child of a military father, interactions with extended family were always precious because they happened so rarely. Until this point, I was apathetic to books, not caring about reading. My aunt and I took turns reading the novel that summer while my siblings played in organized baseball and softball games. I remember feeling so connected to her as we read. I was devastated when we reached the ending and Charlotte was so cavalier about her impending death. "After all, what's a life, anyway? We're born, we live a little while, we die" (White, 2006, p. 154). I will never forget how that book haunted my soul. It took lots of processing and talking it out before I could admit that I loved the story, in spite of the shock and despair I felt at the end.

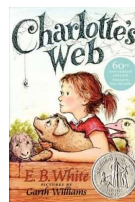


Figure 1.1
A First Heartbreak

The second experience I had with literature affecting me deeply was with a book that validated my feelings of being a redhead in a family full of blondes and brunettes. As one can imagine, I suffered a lot of teasing and my parents were asked many questions from strangers about my hair. My siblings were relentless in their teasing and some names still sting to this day. The first experience I had that deeply connected me with a character was with Anne Shirley, a redhead from Prince Edward Island, Canada. After reading *Anne of Green Gables* by L.M. Montgomery (1998), learning that Anne had the same struggles, the same frustrations, the same comments from others somehow gave me more confidence. I had a kindred spirit, someone who understood exactly what I was going through. A quote from the book, one of many that resonated deeply with me, is "It [red hair] will be my lifelong sorrow" (Montgomery, 1998, p. 26).

A beloved cousin and pen pal (who always lived far away) also loved Anne and her silly adventures. We bonded deeply over our mutual love of the books and their setting, the breathtaking Prince Edward Island, Canada. I knew we would always have things to talk about when I would visit over summer vacation. I was always in awe of the sheer volume of books this cousin consumed each month, and she confided in me that she used books as an escape, since she was horribly teased and lonely at school in small town America with no friends. Other kids saw her as weird and someone to make fun of to make themselves feel better. Books and characters were her friends. At the time, I did not understand that she was a gifted reader herself, using books to meet her affective needs. This was my first experience with overexcitabilities. Years later, as young adults, we took a trip together to Prince Edward Island, simply because we wanted to see the place that had captured our hearts and was made famous by L.M. Montgomery and her Anne series.

We spent ten glorious days exploring the island and talking about the books. She was my first ever kindred spirit book buddy.

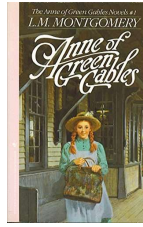


Figure 1.2
Kindred Spirits

As a teacher of gifted students, many interesting interactions with students have caused a desire within me to research gifted readers. The first experience was during my first year of teaching gifted readers. As any good teacher would, I spent hours carefully selecting engaging texts, reading the books myself multiple times to make sure they would be challenging and interesting for my students and coming up with fun activities and quizzes to check comprehension. We had just finished our first novel and would be starting the next genre the following afternoon. My gifted readers begged me multiple times to tell them the name of our next novel, a realistic fiction novel that would introduce the idea of foreshadowing and other literary techniques that I was excited to teach them. This powerful story has a few twists and a mystery that evolves over the course of the story. As the final bell of the day was ringing, and they continued to plead, I blurted out the title, *Walk Two Moons*, thinking nothing of it.



Figure 1.3
A Plot Spoiled by Voracious Readers

When the group got to my classroom the next afternoon, they reported that they already knew the plot of the story and the mystery was spoiled. I could not comprehend how they knew all of this information until two of my gifted readers raised their hands and told me they had convinced one of their moms to take them to the public library, found and read the entire book the night before, and reported all of the important information to the entire group in morning lineup. They were surprised that I was disappointed because they had really enjoyed reading the book. We went ahead with the novel study, and I was surprised that they actively read the story again. I was dumbfounded since it was my first experience with how quickly gifted readers consume books and how much they are able to recall, even though they read so quickly. From that day on, I have never revealed my book selections ahead of time, but I know that many of my gifted readers sneak around to find the titles and read ahead anyway.

For the first nine years I was the gifted and talented teacher, I also ran the school library. My gifted readers were frequent fliers of the library and we would often have great conversations about books when they came in for checkout. I quickly learned that many of these students outgrew our school library by the time they were in fourth or fifth grade. I would scour great book recommendations, review award winner lists, do internet research, and ask all of my middle school teacher friends to give me good book recommendations that would still be appropriate for my students. No matter what title I gave them in our collection, someone had read it, usually multiple times. In our district, we have a partnership where students can borrow books from middle and high school collections. When my students became interested in middle and high school titles, it would always make me nervous to order these books. I was very concerned about how

the content of these books would affect the affective development of my precious elementary students, who were still so young and innocent. I would often call parents to discuss my concerns; they would do the same with me. It was a great partnership and my first experience where I worried about the affective development of my students while trying to balance what they could handle developmentally versus what they could read academically.

A parent recently told me about an experience with her gifted reader's affective needs. She mentioned that any vacation they take must revolve around proximity to Barnes and Noble bookstores. Her son is a voracious reader who usually reads in the evenings. He finishes books quickly and always needs back-up books. He is often unable to stock up on reading material because his reading selection depends on his mood in the moment. She explained that she must select hotels based on their proximity to the Barnes and Noble stores that are open late (usually until 11 pm). Some stores are only open until 9 pm, but those do not work as well for his reading routine.

This mother maps out events and activities on vacation based on her son's unusual reading habits. Otherwise, he has outbursts and cannot cope without reading material. When at home, they are able to keep a scheduled routine that works for his needs, so when on vacation, she tries to keep a similar routine. She has tried e-readers and stocking up on books recommended for his age, but he likes the feel of actual books and is not content unless he can browse for his reading material at Barnes and Noble, which is a safe place for him. He refuses to visit the library since other people have used those books; he only wants to read new books that no one else has dirtied. Apparently, books "speak" to him and that is how/why he selects them. She revealed to me that she

feels alone in her quest to keep him reading appropriately but knows that he is happiest when his parents allow him frequent opportunities to visit the bookstore -- at all hours -- day or evening. She expressed to me that she would love to connect with other parents who experience similar situations and joked that they could share resources such as maps of various Barnes and Noble locations in cities around the country. Providing information and research to parents like this might help them realize that the unique needs of gifted readers are not so foreign after all.

A final situation that helped me solidify my decision to pursue a research study about gifted readers happened recently as I was trying to decide what to research. A fourth grader, “Aurora,” who was a gifted reader, was participating in our Battle of the Books Club. One of the books that students were required to read was *No Talking* by Andrew Clements (2009). One day Aurora came to class particularly quiet, which was unusual for this bubbly girl. After class, I called her over to see if she was okay. She nodded and smiled when I asked if she was having a good day. She nodded again at my next question. It was in that moment I realized she was not speaking for a reason. I asked her if she was not talking on purpose. She excitedly nodded her head and pointed to her copy of the book *No Talking*.

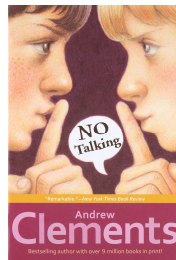


Figure 1.4
Challenge Accepted

For the next month, Aurora proceeded to communicate through charades and sticky notes, as well as other nonverbal means of communication. I was shocked that she was committed to this test at school and home for an entire month. When the month was over, she was asked why she felt the need to put herself through such a test. She responded that she really wanted to know what the characters in the book were experiencing and wanted to test herself to see if she could do it too. During that month, I listened to the concerns of a few teachers, who found it frustrating to communicate with her. They wanted to know if I thought this behavior was “normal.” I had to share with them that gifted readers often connect to characters and events in stories more deeply than other children and that rather than being frustrated with her they should embrace her experiment and encourage her to accomplish her goal. As long as she wasn’t hurting anyone else, what was the harm in allowing her to complete her challenge? I was amazed that she completed a month of silence. She secretly confided in me later that she accidentally slipped twice, but mostly stayed true to her goal of learning what characters in the novel went through. This experience was the catalyst in my decision to explore a topic related to gifted readers and the intensity that they bring to the books they read.

Additionally, it is apparent that parents and teachers often receive mixed messages about what is appropriate for children. As I was preparing for this research project and completing the literature review, the book cover in Figure 5 (below) appeared on a neighborhood social media networking site I was perusing. The post was written by a distraught mother who was seeking advice. She had found this copy of *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, by C.S. Lewis, at a thrift store. The mother was distressed because she had been allowing her very capable daughter to read this book, as it was one

she had read as a young child as well. This copy of this particular book had an orange ATTENTION label, alerting teen parents that this book may include PG-13 themes. The copy her daughter was reading was an updated version with a different cover and no warning label. The neighbors who were responding to her post had very mixed advice – some said to stop her daughter from finishing the book, others encouraged her to read it again herself to check the content. Some parents suggested that they only allow their children to read books that list the recommended ages on the back. A few parents pointed out that their children had seen various versions of the movies, based on the book, the most recent one, a Walt Disney version, came out several years ago. These parents thought that surely it was appropriate for a nine-year-old if movies had been made about the book.

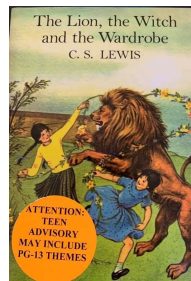


Figure 1.5
Parent Advisory

As a former fifth grade teacher, this is a book I had read with many groups of eleven and twelve-year-olds over the years. I paused for a minute to reflect on whether or not I had damaged children in my care by exposing them to an inappropriate book. I did a quick google search and discovered a plethora of book covers of the same book from various years (see Figure 1.6). It became quickly apparent to me that there are all kinds of mixed messages out there for parents. One title from Figure 1.6 reads, “A Story for Children” while another advertises that this book was a major motion picture while an

ominous lion stares intently at the reader. This experience reaffirmed my belief that there is a lack of understanding on the part of parents, teachers, and even book publishers and marketers, to meet the affective needs of gifted readers.



Figure 1.6
Mixed Messages

Problem of Practice

According to the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), gifted readers experience asynchronous development where their reading level can exceed their age by several years (NAGC, 2018). All gifted readers experience a certain level of imbalance between their maturity level and their reading ability (Reis et al., 2004). “In gifted children in particular, intellectual development can move rapidly, while social, emotional, and physical growth remain tied to chronological age” (Halsted, 2009, p. 23), which can be frustrating and unnerving for gifted children. Ford et al. (2000) state, “the printed word as part of the solution of personal problems and the promotion of mental well-being has a long history” (p. 236). Similarly, Halsted (2009) asserts:

a child who is unwilling or unable to talk about things that are bothering him, or perhaps even to admit them to himself, can often identify with a character in a book strongly enough to experience an emotional release – a catharsis – when that character undergoes an emotional experience. He can also acquire some insights into his own situation. (p. 45)

Although popular in counseling, medicine, and other fields, few educators have used literature to address affective or socioemotional issues and concepts with students (Ford et al., 2000). According to Reis et al. (2004),

Little research has focused on challenging talented readers or using some of the pedagogy of gifted education (e.g., critical and creative problem solving and thinking, acceleration, curricular modification and differentiation, independent study, advanced content, self-selected interest-based opportunities) to encourage and develop advanced reading. (p. 316)

The dearth of knowledge regarding parent and teacher perceptions of the reading supports and barriers on the affective development of gifted readers suggests that more research in this area is needed. This problem of practice directly meets the criteria set for by the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED). According to Buss and Zambo (2010):

Researching a *problem of practice* aimed at improving the lives of individuals, families, organizations, and communities develops scholarly practitioners and aligns with CPED's second principle (Prepares leaders who can construct and apply knowledge to make a positive difference in the lives of individuals, families, organizations, and communities). (p. 6)

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyze the perceptions of parents and teachers of reading supports and barriers on the affective development of gifted readers.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. What do parents and teachers perceive as the most effective reading supports that promote the affective development of young gifted readers?
2. What do parents and teachers perceive as the major barriers that hinder the affective development of elementary gifted readers?

3. How can children's literature be used to support or hinder the affective development of gifted readers?

Significance of the Study

An Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship study on the parent/teacher perceptions of the affective supports and barriers for gifted readers is important because it may shed light on how to better support gifted readers. As Eisner (2011) explains,

Applied to education, educational criticism is an effort to reveal what is important in a practice, a textbook, a teaching performance so that others less perceptive in that domain or perceptive in different ways can participate in what the critic claims is there. (p. 4)

Being able to shed light on the affective issues that gifted readers face is a goal that I hope to accomplish through this study. Being a critic and a connoisseur are important to this study because:

Connoisseurs are people who come to know, and critics are people who can render what they come to know in a language that is accessible to others and that enables others to "re-see" the work, the performance, or the object at hand. (Eisner, 2011, p. 3)

The asynchrony that exists between the academic and affective development of gifted readers "is a factor that should be considered by the adults who make decisions concerning gifted children" (Halsted, 2009, p. 23). When adult advocates of gifted readers understand their unique and challenging characteristics, they can make informed decisions about grade skipping, accommodations to help level the playing field for these students working with much older peers, and appropriate reading material for each individual student.

In order for gifted readers to have their needs met, they must have supportive adults in their lives. Significant adults can aid gifted readers in their journey to success.

“These youngsters are vulnerable, and the attitudes that they perceive in significant adults can make a tremendous difference in their attitudes toward themselves and their giftedness” (Halsted, 2009, p. 35). Having understanding adults in their lives could be the difference for gifted readers to feel like they are successful rather than a failure.

To be happy, well adjusted, and feel as though their talents are being used, “gifted children must develop the potential that lies within them” (Halsted, 2009, p. 20). Adult allies can help gifted readers realize their full potential. According to Sullivan and Strang (2002), “in attempting to help students with socio-emotional difficulties, school professionals are searching for ways to promote the skills and cognitive strengths necessary for successful adjustment, both inside and outside the classroom” (p. 73).

The research discovered in this study could guide teachers and parents of gifted readers to better understand their affective nature and meet their asynchronous needs in reading. As Eisner (2011) explains:

Educational connoisseurship and educational criticism represent an effort to employ what the arts and humanities as partners with the social sciences have to offer in advancing our understanding of the process and effects of education. In an age of high-stakes testing, it is a perspective we badly need. (p. 7)

Summary of Chapter

This chapter serves as an overview of an Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship study on parent and teacher perceptions on the supports and barriers for the affective development of gifted readers. The personal interest of the researcher was shared, then the problem of practice was introduced. A statement of purpose was given

and then research questions were stated. Finally, the significance of this study was shared, where the researcher explained why this study is important for gifted education.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This study seeks to examine the perceptions of parents and teachers about affective supports and barriers that exist for elementary gifted readers. The persistent problem of practice is the dearth of knowledge regarding parent and teacher perceptions of the reading supports and barriers on the affective development of gifted readers. According to Halsted (2009), there is a real need for adult understanding of the asynchrony that exists between a gifted reader's ability level and their age level. This asynchronous chasm directly influences the affective development of gifted readers and caring adults must learn to support gifted readers into adulthood (Halsted, 2009, p. 7).

Gifted and advanced readers gain very little, if anything at all, from the reading curriculum in schools today (Caruana, 2020). However, all readers can benefit from affective support because "teachers who are working on social– emotional skills are doing important work that supports later growth in the social–emotional domain as well as the academic area" (Doyle & Bromwell, 2006, p. 559). Doyle and Bromwell (2006) go on to explain, "Emphasizing the overlapping areas between emergent literacy and social– emotional learning honors children's development and creates a more powerful learning experience in both domains" (p. 562). They also clarify, "Books with social–emotional content present models of adults and children solving problems and interacting, and they have the potential to connect children emotionally with the experiences of the characters"

(Doyle & Bromwell, 2006, p. 558). Social growth and maturity are the two factors identified to have the most impact on academic achievement (Foley-Nicpon et al., 2011; Neumeister et al., 2013; Weinfeld et al., 2013; Wormald et al., 2015). Gifted students have additional sensitivities that drive them to excel. As Halsted (2009) explains, “An intellectually gifted child will not be happy or complete, and certainly not self-fulfilled, until he is using his intellectual ability at a level approaching his full capacity” (p. 50).

There is an imbalance between what gifted readers can read and what they are developmentally ready to read, especially among young gifted readers (Reis et al., 2004; Halsted, 2009). Parents and teachers can be the bridge between what students are capable of reading on their own and what is developmentally appropriate. This literature review is an exploration into the current research available regarding the asynchrony of gifted readers and their affective development. First examined are the theoretical frameworks around developmental theory and affective development. Next, definitions of giftedness are provided and a comprehensive picture of a gifted reader is presented. Then, the conceptual framework of four specific dimensions of affective development for gifted readers is explained. The asynchrony of gifted readers is presented in the following section, along with parent and teacher perceptions of how asynchrony affects gifted readers. The need for affective supports follows, with a brief history of bibliotherapy and its effectiveness for gifted readers. Specific supports and barriers on the affective development of gifted readers are explained, including how specific populations of gifted readers are affected, including gender specific considerations and gifted students from historically underrepresented and other diverse populations. Finally, similar research findings on parent and teacher perceptions into the affective development of gifted

readers are evaluated. Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship is the best methodology for this study because, as Eisner (2011) explains, “Perhaps the most significant contribution of educational connoisseurship and educational criticism in the context of educational evaluation is the importance it assigns to both perception and representation” (p. 7). Since I will be studying perceptions of parents and teachers and the representation of gifted readers, I can begin to make recommendations for change.

Theoretical Frameworks

A theoretical framework provides the structure and support for the rationale for a study, the problem statement, the purpose, the significance, and the research questions (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The framework serves as the “foundation from which all knowledge is constructed (metaphorically and literally) for a research study” (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Parent and teacher perceptions of reading supports and barriers for elementary gifted readers are analyzed in this study to determine how they promote or hinder affective development. In order to address the persistent problem of practice, the theoretical frameworks will utilize developmental theory. Kazimierz Dabrowski’s Theory of Positive Disintegration (Dabrowski, 1964; Daniels & Piechowski, 2009) and Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory (Cherry, 2018; Vygotsky, 1979) are the two developmental theories used to frame the research. Developmental theory is essential in understanding child development because “it allows us to fully appreciate the cognitive, emotional, physical, social, and educational growth that children go through from birth and into early adulthood” (Cherry, 2019).

Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD)

Kazimierz Dabrowski developed his Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD) in 1964 on the foundation of two concepts: developmental potential and multilevelness (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009). This theory suggests that going through difficult and unsettling periods in life (disintegration) can be positive experiences that prepare the person for further growth and development (Halsted, 2009, p. 17). Dabrowski's theory "describes how human beings transform themselves from self-serving, conforming individuals to self-aware, self-directed persons who transcend their primitive natures and strive to 'walk the moral talk'" (Mendaglio, 2002, p. 15). According to Daniels and Piechowski (2009), developmental potential is dependent on strength of endowment and multilevelness where human development can vary according to level and type of development (p. 7). Mendaglio (2002) states "An important theme of TPD is the movement from an initial egocentric approach to life to an altruistic one. The factors needed for positive disintegration and their operation are primary concerns of TPD" (p. 15).

In Dabrowski's theory, the concept of developmental potential contains the following components: talents, specific abilities, high general intelligence and overexcitabilities, which are the sensitivity and capacity to be intensely stimulated and to stay stimulated (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009). According to Dabrowski's theory, "we often see emotional intensity in gifted children, which is a positive sign of potential for advanced emotional development" (Silverman, 1997, p. 50). "Young gifted children seem to be highly aware of the world around them, of their place in it, and of the relationships between people and places, time and spaces" (Tucker & Hafenstein, 1997, p. 67).

Asynchrony occurs when the combination of “cognitive complexity and emotional intensity results in awareness for which the child may not be emotionally ready” (Silverman, 2013, p. 33). Mendaglio (2002) suggests, “Being sensitive to students’ reactions to such events as puberty, deaths in their families and personal crises is not unique to a Dabrowskian perspective. However, seeing these events as opportunities for personal growth in gifted students is a contribution of TPD” (p. 19). Dabrowski explained that those who are prone to disintegration will often exhibit one or more of five different overexcitabilities (Wiley, 2016, p. 8). Psychomotor, sensual, imaginative, intellectual, and emotional overexcitabilities exist for gifted students. The researcher believes that Dabrowski’s Theory of Positive disintegration can help explain why gifted readers have affective difficulties.

Description of Overexcitabilities (OEs)

The word overexcitability is used in Dabrowski’s description, rather than excitability, to convey that these are special types of excitabilities that are distinguished by characteristic forms of expression (Piechowski, 1979, p. 28). Overexcitability is a direct translation from the Polish word that means “superstimulability” or an unusually strong neurological reaction to stimuli (Halsted, 2009, p.18). The five overexcitabilities in Dabrowski’s theory are psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imaginal, and emotional (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009; Halsted 2009; Piechowski, 1979).

Overexcitability means, “Persons may require less stimulation to produce a response, as well as stronger and more lasting reactions to stimuli” (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009, p.8). The dominant overexcitability in each person will influence the type of response they experience (Tucker & Hafenstein, 1997, p. 73).

Overexcitabilities can sometimes look like pathology and gifted children may be referred for medical or psychological treatment (Webb, 2000). For example, a gifted child's overexcitability might appear, to the untrained individual, as ADHD. There is a distinct difference between overexcitabilities and diagnoses like Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). "The energy of a gifted child is focused, directed, and intense. Young gifted children are able to concentrate for comparatively long periods of time on subjects that interest them" (Tucker & Hafenstein, 1997, p. 73). It is vital for parents and teachers to understand how overexcitabilities can influence and drive a child's development. "Behaviors which may have been viewed as indicators of psychological problems are more positively understood as manifestations of advanced development" (Tucker & Hafenstein, 1997, p. 75). Understanding that "gifted children are often intense, not only in the depth of their feeling, but also in their commitment to an interest or a cause and in their manner of expressing that commitment" will help educators and parents have greater tolerance for and provide appropriate guidance for gifted children (Halsted, 2009, p. 19). Rather than feeling a need to "treat" a gifted learner for some type of pathology, parents and teachers can nurture and guide gifted learners to better understand and manage their overexcitabilities.

In addition, it is vital for parents and teachers to understand how overexcitabilities manifest in gifted readers so that they can protect and nurture these characteristics. Halsted (2009) suggests, "A heightened sensitivity may be the first trait of giftedness that parents see in a young child" (p. 19). Webb (2000) reports that gifted individuals have "a drive to understand, to question, and to search for consistency" that is very intense (p. 5). These characteristics often result in overexcitabilities, which can generate "an intense

idealism and concern with social and moral issues, which can create anxiety, depression, and a sharp challenging of others who do not share their concerns” (Webb, 2000, p. 5).

Because of this reality, Webb (2000) explains, “Many of our brightest and most creative minds are not only going unrecognized, but they also are often given diagnoses that indicate pathology” (p. 3). Psychologists, psychiatrists, pediatricians, and other healthcare professionals are misdiagnosing many gifted children with these disorders, rather than understanding that these characteristics could be indications of giftedness (Webb, 2000, p. 4). “Gifted children can easily be misdiagnosed when their behaviors are misinterpreted. Giftedness is not pathological and cannot be diagnosed using the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), nor is it considered a medical condition of any kind” (Bilyeu, 2012).

Halsted (2009) explains that for adults, the intensity and sensitivity of the gifted are usually met with a degree of tolerance. Children are not as understanding or tolerable of other children with these intensities (p. 19). Halsted goes on to explain:

Gifted children who exhibit emotional overexcitability need the support of an adult who takes Dabrowski’s view that *the emotional extremes that these children experience are not a sign of neurosis, but an indication of potential for growth.* (p. 19)

In Dabrowski’s TPD, “certain prerequisites are needed for the journey from egocentrism to altruism. One is familiar to us, namely, a facilitative social environment; the other, developmental potential, is unique to TPD” (Mendaglio, 2002). Providing students with a positive social environment and nurturing their developmental potential are key components for teachers and parents to consider when working with gifted readers since

“our interventions should be aimed at helping people understand their emotions in the context of TPD principles” (Mendaglio, 2002).

In this study, parent and teacher perceptions on the affective supports/barriers of gifted readers will be examined. Understanding that many gifted students experience the overexcitabilities that Dabrowski explained related to their affective development will help the researcher explain why gifted readers struggle and convey to teachers and parents that these are qualities that should be embraced, not treated as pathology. A better understanding of the affective manifestations of giftedness can help teachers and parents better support the affective development of gifted readers.

Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory

Dabrowski’s Theory of Positive Disintegration explains how overexcitabilities may manifest in gifted readers. More information is needed to explain how parents and teachers can bridge the gap in the affective development of gifted readers. In Lev Vygotsky’s Theory of Sociocultural Theory, developed in 1978, children are born with basic biological constraints on their minds (Cherry, 2018). Each culture provides what Vygotsky referred to as 'tools of intellectual adaptation' (Vygotsky, 1978). These tools allow children to use their mental abilities to adapt to the culture in which they live, and Vygotsky suggested that cognitive development can differ between different cultures (Cherry, 2018). The researcher believes that Vygotsky’s theory can help better explain how caring adults can help gifted readers bridge the asynchronous gap that exists between the academic and affective development of gifted readers.

Vygotsky believed that social interactions were critical to cognitive development. In the Sociocultural Theory, Vygotsky “posits that the social experience shapes the ways

of thinking and interpreting the world” (Jaramillo, 1996, p. 135). In the classroom setting, students learn and make sense of the world through interacting with their peers, teacher, manipulatives, learning experiences, and their contextual setting (Jaramillo, 1996). According to Cherry (2019), Vygotsky believed it is with the help of more knowledgeable others that people are able to progressively learn and increase their skills and scope of understanding (Vygotsky, 1978).

Zone of Proximal Development

According to Vygotsky, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Cherry, 2018; Morelock & Morrison, 1999; Silverman, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978). In addition, Vygotsky (1978) proposed that instruction creates development because learning and development take place in the ZPD. “Vygotsky saw the role of education as providing children challenging activities at which they can succeed with sensitive adult guidance” (Morelock & Morrison, 1999, p. 196). Morelock and Morrison go on to explain that tasks within the ZPD are too difficult for the child to do alone. These tasks must be performed with guidance and assistance from adults or older children who are more familiar with the tasks in order for the child to feel successful and safe (p. 197).

The ZPD is a key factor in the asynchrony of gifted readers (Silverman, 1997, p. 45). Independently, gifted readers are able to access text that exceeds their developmental level, sometimes by many years. According to Innovative Learning (2011), teachers and parents can provide scaffolding support to help bridge the gap of the ZPD for gifted

readers. "Scaffolding refers to the way the adult guides the child's learning via focused questions and positive interactions" (Innovative Learning, 2011). Vygotsky alleged that the ZPD creates an optimal opportunity to individualize instruction to match each student's developmental level (Silverman, 1997, p. 46; Silverman, 2013, p. 30). If the environment does not present challenging tasks for a student and does not stimulate a child's intellect by providing a sequence of new goals, a child's thinking will not reach or will be significantly delayed in reaching the highest stages (Vygotsky, 1978). One of the primary objectives of this study includes being able to match the student's ZPD level with affective supports through scaffolding.

Conceptual Framework

This study examines parent and teacher perceptions on affective supports and barriers of gifted readers in promoting or hindering four aspects of social-emotional development that are common to gifted readers. These aspects, as identified by Halsted (2009), are establishing an identity, balancing introversion with the social expectations of others, fostering and maintaining relationships, and perfectionism (p. 12). The researcher believes these components help explain what gifted readers struggle with and how identifying their specific affective difficulties can help parents and teachers better meet their complex needs.

The first aspect of social-emotional development that gifted readers may grapple with is establishing an identity. Gifted children often have unique needs that can affect their social-emotional development (Neihart et al., p. 1). They often have identities that differ from the identities of their same-age peers (Cross, 2016; Cross, 2018; Gatto-Walden, 2013; Halsted, 2009; Piechowski, 2013). "Because they can be so greatly

stimulated, and because they perceive and process things differently, gifted children are often misunderstood” (Piechowski, 2013, p. 122). Halsted (2009) suggests that a gifted child must “recognize and accept an identity that is different from the norm and that may not be popular or acceptable to peers or even to family” (p.12).

Cross (2016) describes how gifted children believe that others can perceive giftedness as a negative attribute. “Wanting normal interactions, gifted students fear they will be treated differently when others learn of their exceptional abilities, so they consciously manage the information others have about them” (p. 42). Cross goes on to explain, “When gifted students frequently perform better than peers, they may feel threatened in situations where they feel their peers are constantly making upward comparisons against them” (p.45). In the case of students from diverse populations, studies have shown that high-achieving African American students chose significantly fewer friends with similar academic orientations than White or Asian students, which could lead to poorer achievement and underachievement (Cross, 2016, p. 46). Among twice-exceptional students, social difficulties with peers were the largest area of difficulty, as defined by teachers and parents (Cross, 2016, p. 47). Twice-exceptional is a term used to describe a student who is both gifted and disabled. “These students may also be referred to as having dual exceptionalities or as being gifted with learning disabilities (GT/LD). This also applies to students who are gifted with ADHD or gifted with autism” (NAGC, n.d.-b). Twice-exceptional is often referred to as “2e”.

The second affective need that is prevalent with gifted children is balancing their introversion with the social expectations of others (Cross, 2016; Halsted, 2009). Gifted children often require time alone, sometimes more than most other people can understand

(Burruss & Kaenzig, 1999). Gifted children must “learn to cope with mixed feelings about their own need for time alone – aware that they also need time with other people and yet uncertain how to balance these divergent needs with the expectations of others” (Halsted, 2009, p. 13). According to Silverman (1997), socialization of the gifted “has been a major concern since the earliest writings in the field. It was feared that brilliant children were doomed to live in social isolation and alienation” (p. 47). Gross (1999) notes that highly gifted children may learn to camouflage their abilities within the first few weeks of school (p. 212) in order to fit in with the social expectations of their peers.

A third affective need that gifted children often experience is learning how to get along with others, even though others might reject them (Gatto-Walden, 2013, p. 200). According to Judith Halsted (2009), gifted children speak and act with unusual intensity, which is difficult for other children to understand or accept. Their same-age peers may see gifted children as domineering or controlling (Gatto-Walden, 2013, p. 199). In addition, gifted children frequently have heightened sensitivity to the comments and actions of others, so being misunderstood or rejected can actually be more painful for them than for most other people (Gatto-Walden, 2013, p. 202). As a result, healthy relationships can be more complex for gifted children to navigate and difficult for others to understand (Halsted, 2009, p. 13).

The final social-emotional aspect of the conceptual framework for this study is the reality that many gifted children can also suffer from perfectionism. Perfectionism is the belief that one’s worth as a human being depends on being perfect. Perfectionists may set impossible goals for themselves, suffer from Imposter Syndrome, and/or fear they will

lose the regard of others if they can't continue to demonstrate exceptionality (Winebrenner, 2001).

When perfectionism is balanced, it can manifest as a healthy pursuit of excellence (Neihart, 2016, p. 30). When perfectionism is added to the intensity that characterizes many gifted children, it can become unbalanced and have a negative effect on their lives (Halsted, 2009, p. 40; Neihart, 2016, p.42). Gatto-Walden (2013) explains that with many gifted children, it is common to experience “self-doubt, anxiety, and stress [that] all result from dissatisfaction with one’s performance or not achieving a personal goal” (p. 210). Halsted (2009) asserts that in order to battle crippling perfectionism, gifted children must learn that failure is not disastrous. Parents and teachers need to understand various factors that comprise perfectionism in gifted learners and their role in the development of perfectionism, which could include psychological distress, despite high levels of achievement (Freeman & Garces-Bascal, 2016, p. 18; Neihart, 2016, p. 35).

Parent and teacher perceptions into the affective development of gifted readers are vital to the success of these readers. According to Halsted (2009), merely providing them with books is not enough (p. 7). Halsted explains:

Knowledge of gifted children, discussion techniques, and children’s literature will maximize the benefits that books offer. By filling the gaps in their knowledge, parents, teachers, counselors, and librarians can bring gifted children and books together more effectively. In doing so, they can help gifted children be themselves – comfortable in their present world and poised to grow into happy, productive adults. (p. 7)

Intersection of Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

The following diagram explains how the researcher has overlapped the conceptual and theoretical frameworks. The possible overexcitabilities and questions about the ZPD

that can be answered and explained by the conceptual framework are categorized in Figure 2.1 below. The specific overexcitabilities that might be discovered in each of Halsted's (2009) affective components are listed, along with the ZPD that runs along the bottom of the diagram – what does the ZPD look like in each of Halsted's (2009) affective components and what are appropriate scaffolds for each of the four affective components and overexcitabilities? These are the key components of this study.

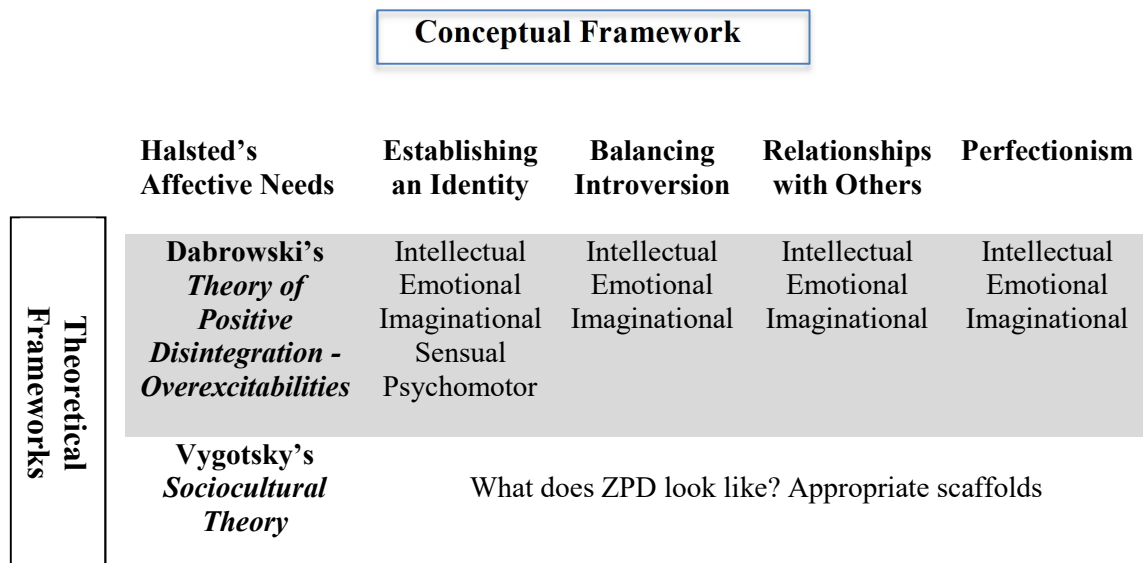


Figure 2.1
Intersection of Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

Definitions of Giftedness

In order to understand the complex needs of gifted learners, one must first understand what giftedness means. The first formal, national definition of giftedness in the United States came from The Marland Report of 1972 (National Association for Gifted Children [NAGC], n.d.). This report was the first to alter giftedness into a multi-dimensional concept that is still seen in schools in the United States today (Mendaglio, 2002). This definition was “issued encouraging schools to define giftedness broadly”

(NAGC, n.d.). This definition “represented an inclusive approach to defining giftedness by designating the categories of general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking, leadership ability, visual and performing arts, and psychomotor ability as the targets for identifying gifted students” (Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2013, p. 16). It went on to further specify “the target population as the upper 3 percent to 5 percent of school-aged children” (Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2013, p. 16).

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), a leading and prominent advocacy group, created national programming guidelines in 1998 and then revised them in 2010 to include standards for Pre-K through Grade 12 that provide guidance in programs that serve gifted learners (NAGC, n.d.-a). NAGC (2016) defines gifted individuals as:

Those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in the top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains. Domains include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system (e.g., mathematics, music, language) and/or set of sensorimotor skills (e.g., painting, dance, sports).

The NAGC (2016) goes on to explain:

The development of ability or talent is a lifelong process. It can be evident in young children as exceptional performance on tests and/or other measures of ability or as a rapid rate of learning, compared to other students of the same age, or in actual achievement in a domain. As individuals mature through childhood to adolescence, however, achievement and high levels of motivation in the domain become the primary characteristics of their giftedness. Various factors can either enhance or inhibit the development and expression of abilities.

Federal education policy, the No Child Left Behind Act (United States Department of Education, 2002), defines gifted and talented students as:

Students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in a specific

academic fields and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities. (p. 1959)

In addition to national considerations of giftedness, the Colorado Department of Education (2018) also has a specific definition of giftedness that comes from the Exceptional Children's Education Act (ECEA). ECEA recognizes the following fourteen areas:

- General Intellectual Ability
- Specific Academic Aptitudes
 - Reading, Writing, Math, Science, Social Studies, World Languages
- Specific Talent Aptitudes
 - Psychomotor, Visual Arts, Dance, Music, Performing Arts (theater, speech and debate), Creative or Productive Thinking, and Leadership. (Colorado Department of Education [CDE], 2018)

For the purposes of this study, the Colorado definition of Specific Academic Aptitude in Reading (CDE, 2018) will be used to define gifted readers.

Manifestations of Giftedness in Reading

According to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), there are two pathways to identify a child as gifted in the specific academic aptitude of Reading (CDE, 2017). The first pathway is a score in the 95th percentile or above on one or more batteries of a cognitive test and demonstration of 95th percentile or higher aptitude on two specific academic measures (CDE, 2017). The second pathway is used in absence of 95th percentile score on a cognitive assessment (CDE, 2017). A comprehensive body of evidence that demonstrates gifted academic ability may be built using at least three or

more content-specific measurement tools from criterion – or norm-referenced achievement tests, norm-referenced observations scales and/or performance evaluations that demonstrate ability at the 95th percentile or higher (CDE, 2017).

The Gifted Education Programming Standard 1: Learning and Development states:

Educators, recognizing the learning and developmental differences of students with gifts and talents, promote ongoing self-understanding awareness of their needs, and cognitive and affective growth of these students in school, home and community settings to ensure specific student outcomes. (NAGC, 2010, p. 8)

NAGC Standard 1.4.1 explains that “educators provide role models (e.g., through mentors, bibliotherapy) for students with gifts and talents that match their abilities and interests” (Ford & Grantham, 2013, p. 53).

Children who are gifted in reading also have unique and diverse needs. According to Weber & Hedrick (2010), gifted readers tend to read earlier and at an advanced level, read better, use advanced processing in reading, and demonstrate advanced language skills. In addition, they spend more time reading than their peers, continue to read a great deal as they grow into adulthood, and typically read a variety of literature (p. 56). Research on intellectually gifted children, particularly the highly gifted, reveals that even in early childhood, there are substantial differences from the developmental patterns observable in same age-peers of average ability (Gross, 1999). Young gifted readers are also able to use context and picture cues more successfully than their peers to aid word identification and comprehension (Moore, 2005). According to Wood (2008):

Gifted and talented readers read easily and voraciously, with amazing speed and incredible comprehension. They also are passionate about what they read. For them, reading is not the mere process of translating symbols into meanings but an intense need to explore, investigate, fantasize, and make connections with

concepts and ideas. Gifted and talented readers are, by definition, highly verbal and use advanced language and vocabulary with ease. (p. 18)
Gifted and talented readers are complex beings with specific needs and challenges. The intellectual and emotional development of gifted readers must be considered when guiding their growth and development (Halsted, 1990; Halsted, 2009; Neville et al., 2013; Reis et al., 2004).

In addition to the positive aspects of giftedness in reading, there are negative characteristics associated with gifted readers. Silverman (1997) explains, “Gifted individuals often experience their ‘gifts’ as distinct disadvantages that make life more difficult” (p. 37), since they can be held to higher standards and be expected to achieve at higher levels than their peers. Kingore (2001) reports that young gifted readers can display problem behaviors. These problem behaviors include self-criticism, inability to deal with failure, boredom with grade-level curriculum, inappropriate behavioral outbursts or reactions, sloppy work, demanding of their parents' and teachers' attention, demanding of other students, inconsiderate to the needs and wants of others, and difficulty transitioning from one subject to the next during the school day (p. 31). According to Halsted (2009), young gifted readers may push themselves to read any text they can decode before they have the emotional maturity to comprehend the material. Thus, it can be difficult to find advanced level books for young readers that contain age-appropriate material (p. 83-84).

Also, many teachers, well-versed and highly qualified to teach reading to beginning readers and struggling readers, are not prepared to meet the needs of their gifted and accelerated readers (Caruana, 2020). Because gifted readers generally make up such a small percentage of a general education teacher's caseload, usually less than 10%,

it is easy to overlook or ignore their needs, while focusing on meeting the needs of the middle or lower 25% of students in their classrooms, who make up the overwhelming majority (Caruana, 2020).

The Asynchrony of Gifted Readers

An aspect of development that often defines gifted children is the indication of asynchrony (Silverman, 1997). Due to the discrepancy in their ability and their age level, asynchrony is prevalent among gifted learners (Cross, 2016, p. 42). NAGC (2018) describes asynchrony as the term used to describe the mismatch between cognitive, emotional, and physical development of gifted individuals. Some gifted students are emotionally immature, while others may be much more mature than their peers (Cross, 2016, p. 42). In other situations, some gifted children will have uneven development between their physical and mental capabilities (Cross, 2016, p. 42).

Asynchrony is not static; it increases with age, as well as with intelligence and may look very different in each child (Cross, 2016; NAGC, 2018; Neville et al., 2013; Silverman, 1997). According to the Duke University Talent Identification Program's blog called *Gifted Today* (2019), asynchrony means:

Being out-of-sync within oneself (uneven development), out-of-sync with age mates and the expectations of the classroom, having heightened emotions and awareness, and being vulnerable, due to all of these developmental and psychological differences from the norm.

Gifted Today (2019) goes on to explain that all gifted children are more advanced mentally than others of the same chronological age, and most have disparities between their intellectual abilities (as indicated by mental age) and their physical abilities (which are closely aligned to chronological age).

The asynchronous development of young gifted children “means they can be very articulate in discussion, descriptions and story-telling, but not yet have the skills to write or draw their ideas” (Morelock & Morrison, 1999, p.199). This development is “mirrored in external adjustment difficulties because the gifted child often feels different from, or out of place with, others” (Silverman, 1997). Asynchrony can be frustrating and confusing for young gifted children, who do not yet have the skills or coping mechanisms to make sense of their uneven development (Duke University, 2019).

Linda Silverman and the Columbus Group

Jean-Charles Terrassier, who was a French psychologist, coined the term “dyssynchrony” to describe “the psychological and social ramifications of the uneven development of gifted children” (Duke University, 2019; Silverman, 1997). Taking Terrassier’s work a step further, Linda Silverman and The Columbus Group created a more extensive, positive definition of this concept that was described as *asynchronous development* and highlights the vulnerability of gifted individuals to the world around them:

Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching, and counseling in order for them to develop optimally. (Silverman, 1997)

How Asynchrony Affects Gifted Readers

Uneven development is a common characteristic of gifted readers (Reis et al., 2004). Research suggests “that talented readers read earlier than their peers, read at least two grade levels above their chronological grade placement, and may be self-taught”

(Reis et al., 2004). According to Silverman (1997), “the greater the degree to which cognitive development outstrips physical development, the more out-of-sync the child feels internally, in social relationships, and in relation to the school curriculum” (p. 40). At various points in their elementary school development, gifted readers read three or four times as many books as most children their age and continue to do a great deal of reading when other children’s reading typically tapers off (Halsted, 2009, p. 92).

For the gifted, their early reading gives them access to an information bank that is not usually accessible to children until several years after school entry, so gifted readers are ready for more complex reading material at a much younger age (Gross, 1999). Caruana (2020) explains that, at the elementary level, teachers are solely focused on the five components of literacy instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension), which are skills that gifted students have already mastered. In order to develop their reading potential, Wood (2008) explains:

Gifted and talented readers read easily and voraciously, with amazing speed and incredible comprehension. They also are passionate about what they read. For them, reading is not the mere process of translating symbols into meanings but an intense need to explore, investigate, fantasize, and make connections with concepts and ideas. (p. 18)

Parents’ Perceptions

Families of gifted children face unusual challenges and unique issues that arise with the asynchronous development of gifted children. “Language use, the complexity of relationships, moral and spiritual development, and the family’s relationship with the larger society are all changed by the presence of intellectually gifted children and parents within the family crucible” (Kearney, 2013, p. 273). Gross (1999) notes that research has consistently shown that parents are significantly more successful than teachers in

identifying giftedness in the early childhood years (p. 212). However, many parents may not understand how to nurture the gifts and talents their children are exhibiting (Gross, 1999).

Parenting a gifted child can feel like a lonely struggle. According to Kane (2013), often parents use other parents as a barometer of how their children are performing. When parents of gifted children recognize that their children do not fit the description of typically developing children, they can feel anxious and concerned about the well-being of their children fitting in with peers (p. 277). Parents may also feel isolated and alone in their struggle, as gifted children make up a small percentage of the general population.

Teachers' Perceptions

Teachers have a range of children with diverse abilities in general education classrooms. Dealing with a variety of abilities in a classroom is complicated and time-consuming for teachers in today's classrooms. "Juxtaposed with their struggle to address the diverse learning needs of their students are federal mandates, state standards, and local curriculum requirements. It is no wonder that teachers often feel frustrated, out of control, and dispirited" (Wood, 2008, p.17). Teachers are often able to see and understand the qualities that make gifted children unique, even when faced with the reality of such dichotomous classrooms (Lee, 1999, p. 194). Teachers usually describe gifted and talented children as excellent, having potential, being rare, being noticeable, possessing innate or God-given ability, being motivated as well as demonstrating asynchronous development (Lee, 1999, p. 194).

With the fluctuating needs of learners in a classroom, dealing with the asynchronous development of gifted learners can be an overwhelming reality. Meckstroth (2013) explains:

Intellectually overexcitable children can be challenging to a classroom teacher who may have trouble keeping up with them. Such cognitive complexity can enable these children to alternate viewpoints, which may be received as criticism or correction to their teachers. In addition, gifted children's divergent thinking abilities may lead them to hold a range of opinions concurrently about a single idea. (p. 328)

The fact that many gifted readers may have uneven development, complex cognitive processes, and emotional intensity set them apart from their chronological peers and result in their having less available emotional support from their same-age mates (Neville et al., 2013; Neihart et al., 2016). As a result, gifted children may feel confused, misunderstood, and alone.

According to Gross (1999), the majority of gifted children enter school with the reading accuracy and comprehension of children many years older. If teachers do not recognize the gifted child's precocity and respond to it appropriately, the child may stop reading, or deliberately decrease the quality and quantity of their reading after only a few weeks at school (p. 211). "In order to deal effectively with gifted children, teachers need to understand and work with both the psychological and intellectual facets of giftedness" (Tucker & Hafenstein, 1997, p. 74). Teachers have a responsibility to look out for gifted readers and help them achieve their true potential, even if they are independent and competent readers. "Teachers need to be protective and supportive of these emotionally vulnerable precocious children" (Meckstroth, 2013, p. 340).

Differentiated instruction must be used to ensure that all learners experience continuous growth in reading (Caruana, 2020). However, many teachers find it too difficult to implement in general education and gifted classrooms where reading levels are increasingly widening at the elementary and middle school levels (Caruana, 2020). Caruana (2020) explains that results of in-depth qualitative comparative case studies indicate that talented readers receive minimal levels of differentiated reading instruction in only about one-fourth of classrooms.

The Need for Affective Supports for Gifted Readers

Research supports the need for gifted students to interact with appropriately complex literature. In a case study entitled *Reading Instruction for Talented Readers: Case Studies Documenting Few Opportunities for Continuous Progress*, Reis et al. (2004) found that all teachers had access to some challenging books appropriate for talented readers somewhere in their schools, but in some urban settings, these resources were very limited. However, hundreds of below-grade-level books were available for students reading below grade level (Reis et al., 2004).

Availability of appropriate resources for gifted learners can be a problem. Reis et al. (2004) argue that a moral obligation exists to provide rich learning opportunities that challenge all students. Without specialized reading instruction that meets their needs, talented readers may regress in their reading ability (Caruana, 2020). Not providing gifted readers with appropriate resources may obstruct their progress in reading, and it denies them the invaluable opportunity to interact with appropriately complex texts (Caruana, 2020; Reis et al., 2004). In a study of what writers read in childhood, Caruana (2020) found that many famous writers were reading texts well beyond their grade level while

they were still in elementary school. A few examples: Maya Angelou read Shakespeare, Beverly Cleary listened to her mother read *A Christmas Carol* before the age of five, Debra Dickerson read Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* five times, and Zora Neale Hurston read *Gulliver's Travels* (Caruana, 2020).

“Talented readers need opportunities to challenge themselves and their abilities and to engage and think about complex texts” (Reis et al., 2004, p. 318). For advanced readers to continue to develop and refine their reading comprehension and thinking abilities, they must have access to books with developed characters, dynamic plots and expansive vocabulary. Howell (1987) suggested that one way to provide advanced readers with challenge is to encourage them to read good literature that features an extensive range of vocabulary in context. In addition, gifted and talented readers need opportunities to challenge themselves and their abilities and to engage with and think about complex texts (Caruana, 2020; Reis et al., 2004). The most common strategy suggested by experts to meet the needs of advanced readers is to accelerate their reading by providing them with material that is above their current grade level (Reis et al., 2004).

Another research article, *Recognizing and Adapting Instruction for Early Readers* (Lamb & Feldhusen, 1992), found that nearly all the highly gifted children they studied were precocious readers, but that schools often disregarded their precocity and subjected them to the normal level of instruction presented to all children. Many gifted students are early and sophisticated readers that have developed reading preferences, tastes, and favorite genres at an early age (Caruana, 2020). Gifted readers may surpass the reading experiences of their teachers or they are forced into reading programs and instruction that

they do not need (Caruana, 2020). There is a need for schools to identify precocious readers and adapt instruction to meet their special needs.

Bibliotherapy as an Affective Support

In the article *Using Books to Nurture the Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Students*, Schlichter and Burke (1994) explain that by sharing in the experiences of characters they read about, children often are able to articulate their own feelings about issues a story character is facing. Many gifted students are ridiculed by peers for unique ideas and feel weighed down by parental expectations. Sometimes, they place unrealistic goals of perfection on themselves. Bibliotherapy can be used as a tool to teach the importance of the reader's feeling response to literature and to the characters in texts. Its focus is not on comprehension, but on helping individuals recognize and evaluate their response to the literature (Schlichter & Burke, 1994).

Using books to teach gifted learners that others have struggled with similar experiences is a powerful way to aid their social and emotional development and help gifted readers see that they are not alone in their struggles (Halsted, 2009). According to Beers and Probst (2017),

Without a text, a student is limited to her own perceptions and insights. With the text, she has the benefit of interaction, if she accepts the invitation, with one other person – the author – and perhaps more if we accept the characters as others. (p. 27)

If the child participates with others in a large group, small group or partnership, they can begin to understand the thoughts, feelings, and connections that others make to the same books (Beers & Probst, 2017).

The History of Bibliotherapy

The concept of bibliotherapy has been around since ancient times (Moy, 2017, p.16). According to Janella Moy's (2017) research, the connection between writing and medicine can be traced to the Ancient Greeks (800–156 BC). From the worship of Apollo (the Greek god of literature and the healing arts) to Aristotle's use of the medical term *katharsis* in his *Poetics*, the Greeks found the written arts had medical value for humans. Viewing and listening to plays served as an emotional release, or catharsis, and was encouraged by physicians in both Greece and later in Rome (Moy, 2017). According to *Bibliotherapy: Practice and Research*, "the prescribed use of books to heal the human condition appears to have started in institutional, medical and correctional facilities in the Middle Ages to help people cope with mental and physical ailments" (Jack & Ronan, 2008, p. 164). The use of bibliotherapy can be traced through various time periods in history in many different cultures (Ford et al., 2000, p. 236; Moy, 2017, p.16).

The use of reading as a therapy for treating mental disorders and depression was adopted in the mid-eighteenth century by European physicians working in jails and institutions for psychiatric patients (Moy, 2017). In 1916, an American Minister, Samuel McCord Crothers created the term *bibliotherapy* in his *Atlantic Monthly* article, "A Literary Clinic." The word 'bibliotherapy' originates from the Greek words for book 'biblion' and healing 'therapeia.' He combined the Greek words to describe bibliotherapy as a "process in which specific literature, both fiction and non-fiction, was prescribed as medicine for a variety of ailments" (Jack & Ronan, 2008, p. 165).

In more recent times, many fields have recognized the benefits of using bibliotherapy to treat conditions such as depression, alcoholism, and anxiety (Moy,

2017). It has become more popular in the United States as a means of self-help because it is very easy to implement, is cost effective, and has shown to have beneficial results (Moy, 2017). Results seem to indicate that bibliotherapy may be able to be used more confidently in the prevention of life's problems and the promotion of emotional and physical health (Marrs, 1995, p. 864). Sullivan and Strang (2002) write that religious teachers and advisers use sacred texts to guide the spiritual and emotional health of communities. Clinical psychologists, counselors, and librarians often assign books and journals to help individuals with psychological needs (Sullivan & Strang, 2002, p. 75). Health professionals frequently provide books, leaflets, and case-study brochures to help patients cope with emotional stress associated with office visits or surgical procedures (Sullivan & Strang, 2002, p. 75). In the twenty-first century, bibliotherapy's continued use by psychiatrists and therapists helps patients to recognize the similarities between the thoughts and emotions of fictional characters and their own thoughts and emotions (Moy, 2017).

Bibliotherapy for Children

In 1936, bibliotherapy was written specifically for use with children (Jack & Ronan, 2008). According to *Bibliotherapy: Practice and Research* (2008), researchers Bradley and Bosquet advised physicians on the use of books for children presenting with behavioral and personality disorders. They offered a bibliography of useful materials and suggested that reading could serve four therapeutic functions: overcoming resistance to schooling, developing specific interests and hobbies, informal schooling (when regular school is unavailable due to illness), and as a supervised activity (Jack & Ronan, 2008). Until this time, children were primarily taught to read for religious instruction. It wasn't

until the 1850's that children were taught to read for pleasure (Jack & Ronan, 2008). Even then, professionals worried about how secular books could affect young readers. Censorship guidelines and moral value assessments were placed on the literature of that time. "In the indexing of these moral values, the early seeds of bibliotherapy for children can be seen" (Jack & Ronan, 2008, p. 169).

In today's world, bibliotherapy is a form of guided reading that helps children cope with and solve problems, understand themselves and their environment, build self-esteem, and meet the developmental challenges of adolescence (Winebrenner, 2001, p. 113). Using book discussions to meet the emotional needs of children is called developmental bibliotherapy (Halsted, 2009; Winebrenner, 2001). "Developmental bibliotherapy offers a way of assisting individuals who are facing a particular life stage or a specific situation, as giftedness, which they can be better prepared through reading and discussion" (Halsted, 1990). Judith Halsted (1990) goes on to suggest that rather than just recommending a book to a child, bibliotherapy includes:

Three components: a reader, a book, and a leader who will read the same book and prepare for productive discussion of the issues the book raises. To be effective, the leader must be aware of the process of bibliotherapy: identification, in which the reader identifies with a character in the book; catharsis, the reader's experiencing of the emotions attributed to the character; and insight, the application of the character's experience to the reader's own life. The leader then frames questions that will confirm and expand on these elements. (p. 5)

The goals of bibliotherapy must be for parents and teachers to assist young people with the challenges of developmental tasks through a responsive interaction with literature (Schlichter & Burke, 1994). "However, the crux of bibliotherapy is to move the questions beyond the story, encouraging students to make personal insights and use the story as a catharsis for their feelings" (Wood, 2008, p. 23). In a study researching the

effects of bibliotherapy on aggression in children, the researchers reported that “children could easily connect to their inner self through their identification with the characters in the literature, allowing them to understand the other's aggression as well as their own” (Shechtman, 1999).

In an article titled, “Helping High Ability Students Overcome Math Anxiety through Bibliotherapy”, bibliotherapy is described as “the use of reading to produce affective change and to promote personality growth and development” (Herbert & Furner, 1997). It is an attempt to help young people understand themselves and cope with problems by providing literature relevant to their personal situations and developmental needs at appropriate times (Herbert & Furner, 1997). Classroom teachers using this approach hold a fundamental belief that reading will influence thinking and behavior, and through guided discussions, selected texts can be used to focus on specific needs of students. While proponents of bibliotherapy techniques are cautious in the claims they make for the benefits in this article, there is substantial evidence to suggest that bibliotherapy is effective with children of above-average ability (Herbert & Furner, 1997).

Another article, “Bibliotherapy in the Classroom: Using Literature to Promote the Development of Emotional Intelligence” (Sullivan & Strang, 2002) discusses the use of literature in the growth of emotional intelligence for gifted learners. There is clear evidence that gifted learners can struggle emotionally. The subject of this article is directly related to gifted readers and provides helpful research. According to the authors, bibliotherapy is a child-friendly, noninvasive method to teach about emotional intelligence (Sullivan & Strang, 2002). It uses reading, which is a skill that is familiar to

students, and in the case of gifted readers, a skill at which they excel. Incorporating bibliotherapy into the academic curriculum is a natural process that will, at the same time, improve a child's reading skills and help a child recognize individual and cultural differences (Sullivan & Strang, 2002). Placing an emphasis on social competence prepares students for the future challenges that they will face. Bibliotherapy in the classroom can help children acquire the socio-emotional competence they will need to become successful in school and beyond (Sullivan & Strang, 2002).

Books and conversations about them can be tools for children to use to recognize and articulate how it feels to grow up differently than others. Due to both their intellectual and artistic interests (Halsted, 2009, p.103), gifted readers naturally appear different than other students. Hebert (1991) writes, "...the world of fiction offers a safe place for them to explore, discuss and evaluate the behaviors of gifted characters who may reflect their own interests, problems and concerns" (p. 210). Wood (2008) explains, "The opportunity for gifted and talented readers to discuss themes, characters, author's perspective, or emotional response to a piece of literature is an essential component" of any quality reading program (p. 19). Halsted (2009) states that gifted children are more likely to respond with enthusiasm and develop a close relationship with the adult who talks about books with them (p. 92).

Susan Winebrenner (2001) emphasizes, "Reading a story or novel about other gifted kids is a safe way to investigate, clarify, and validate their feelings. Confronting issues objectively through fictional characters gives them practice in dealing with their own real-life issues" (p. 113). Books can help readers reflect within themselves to recognize things that they might not notice otherwise. Beers and Probst (2017) explain:

When the reader notices what is going on inside himself and feels the emotion or raises the question that the text evokes, he is doing more than simply decoding, more than simply word calling, more than simply memorizing what the text offers him. He is instead opening himself up to the text, interacting with it, accepting its invitation into the fictional world or – if non-fiction – recognizing its intrusion into his world, and using it to help him make sense of his own experience. (p. 25)

Other Affective Supports for Gifted Readers

In addition to bibliotherapy, which is the practice of interacting with literature to nurture the affective development of gifted readers, it is vital to understand the need for differentiated experiences for gifted readers to nurture their academic potential, which also has positive effects on their social emotional development (Reis et al., 2004, p. 318). In order to provide both academic and affective growth, “talented readers need opportunities to challenge themselves and their abilities and to engage and think about complex texts” (Reis et al., 2004, p. 318). Some of the oldest research available about advanced readers speaks of adjusting reading instruction for gifted students. Grace Munson (1944), stated that “the gifted should not waste time on pointless stories that are merely soporifics, but should be supplied with the works of classic writers in children's literature and with factual science and social-studies reading materials” (p. 46).

Munson (1944) goes on to explain that in the middle and upper elementary grades, the gifted child will have the mental power and reading skill of the average high-school student, or better. She argues against exposing them to some content that is at their reading level. “The understanding of certain human relationships requires experience in living, no matter how advanced the intellectual power may be. Literature that involves

depressing psychological abnormalities, depths of knowledge in specific areas or advanced esthetic appreciation, must be reserved for later years” (Munson, 1944, p. 46). She believed that gifted children exposed to higher-level literature before adequate social, academic and esthetic maturities are attained might miss the true meaning and develop a superficial sophistication (Munson, 1944). Munson (1944) advocated for adjusting the reading program to the gifted, while keeping in mind that some literature will not be appropriate for gifted readers.

In more recent research, the need for affective supports seems evident, as the social and emotional needs of gifted learners are better understood. In their book *Disrupting Thinking: Why How We Read Matters*, Beers and Probst (2017) introduce many reasons why reading should include mindset shifts beyond just gaining information. If students only believe reading is to gain information, they will lose the opportunity to have “intimate conversations with the text, with the author, with oneself, and then ultimately with others” (Beers & Probst, 2017, p. 48). In addition, Beers and Probst (2017) explain that solely teaching students to read to extract information, which is called efferent reading, children must be taught to read aesthetically, or in a way in which they become aware of themselves and the effects a text is having on them (p. 49). Furthermore, compassionate thinking might enrich these kinds of conversations and require us to understand the motivations of people offering perspectives outside our own (Beers & Probst, 2017, p. 49).

Teachers who work with gifted learners need practical classroom strategies to address the social emotional growth of their students (Halsted, 2009; Reis et al., 2004; Robinson, 2013), which will impact and strengthen their perceptions of how affective

supports help gifted readers. Educators are urged to create supportive environments where students feel comfortable expressing how they feel (Beers & Probst, 2017; Hebert & Kent, 2000). Sensitive teenagers sometimes experience overwhelming emotional issues. Using appropriate literature may serve as a catalyst in getting young people through their hurt and affecting meaningful change (Hebert & Kent, 2000). According to Beers and Probst (2017), “A reader who is encouraged to read nonfiction from an aesthetic stance and not merely the efferent stance will become an empathetic and compassionate reader” (p. 49-50). Reflecting on moral issues and allowing students to express their moral reasoning is important to developing critical reading ability (Caruana, 2020). All children benefit from explicit reading instruction that is appropriate for their rate and level of learning (Reis et al., 2004; Wood, 2008).

According to Weber and Hedrick (2010), another critical factor for gifted readers is the choice of reading comprehension strategies. The most effective ways to enable these readers to interact with complex themes in literature are through the use of rereading, drawing inferences, predicting, evaluating, and relating content to other themes, issues, and problems found in various content areas (p. 57-58). They go on to explain, “Higher-level questioning and shared inquiry provide opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills, which is a must” for gifted readers (Weber & Hendrick, 2010, p. 58). These skills must be explicitly taught for gifted readers to use them effectively. “If we read actively, assertively, thoughtfully, responsibly, then any text we read may offer us the possibility that we can reshape ourselves” (Beers & Probst, 2017, p. 59).

In order to address the unique affective needs of gifted readers, various instructional techniques can be implemented by teachers and parents that are good for both the academic and social-emotional growth of these students. In creative reading, “the printed page serves as the source for imaginative and original thought production by the reader. For creative readers, the text becomes the impetus for research discoveries, divergent responses, and invention” (Wood, 2008, p. 23). Inquiry reading “offers gifted and talented readers the opportunity to conduct independent research in an area of particular interest” (Wood, 2008, p. 23). In another form of appropriate instruction for gifted readers, critical reading is appropriate:

...Because gifted and talented readers attain independence in reading earlier than most students, instruction should move from a focus on skill development toward instruction in inferential and interpretive reading, such as: analyzing text to detect author bias; inferring hidden meanings; locating, organizing, and synthesizing information related to a given topic; and understanding elements in literature including figures of speech, connotations, idioms, plot, characterization, setting, and voice. (Wood, 2008, p. 23)

According to Sousa (2009), many novels written for children address affective concerns. “The adults who discuss these books with gifted young students can help them cope with the additional considerations that being gifted add to the process of maturing” (Sousa, 2009, p. 152).

Finally, listening to the reading experiences of others can broaden and enrich the individual’s otherwise limited and narrow experience with a text (Beers & Probst, 2017, p. 27). Since we all bring our unique personalities to the texts we read, listening to the interpretations of others can teach us more about the world in which we live. If a child collaborates with others in a large group, small group or the entire class, “then she has the

rich resources of many minds brought to bear upon the same text” (Beers & Probst, 2017, p. 27).

Parents and teachers share a responsibility to support and nurture the academic and affective development of gifted children (Robinson, 2013). They must partner together effectively to share common perceptions of gifted children that “optimize the opportunity for the gifted student to find joyful engagement and zest in learning, courage in the face of challenge, healthy talent development, and improved academic progress” (Robinson, 2013, p. 244). In addition, Robinson (2013) states:

Both parents and educators need to listen carefully to one another and to keep their eye on the goal: a student who is energized, challenged, learning at a rate and level commensurate with ability, acquiring academic skills to support continued growth, and happy to be doing so. (p. 242)

Affective Supports for Gifted Girls

Gifted girls benefit from reading about subjects and topics that interest them and relate directly to their lives. Halsted (2009) reports that gifted girls often choose to read about horses, cats, crafts, and friends. In addition, they tend to select books about pets, deer, and bears (p. 85). Halsted (2009) goes on to explain that biographies about eminent women can provide role models for girls. Gifted girls who are not personally acquainted with women in high-level careers might be inspired by these women’s life stories (p. 118). Subjects and topics that interest them or directly relate to their lives are a key component of affective supports for girls.

Affective Supports for Gifted Boys

Gifted boys also benefit from choice in their reading material. According to Halsted (2009), gifted boys tend to choose books that involve sports, space, and science.

In addition, they like to read about sharks, snakes, and dinosaurs (p. 85). Halsted (2009) goes on to explain that gifted boys often benefit from biographies of men who overcame difficulties and achieved success and deeper self-understanding because of struggles (p. 118). “A majority of gifted boys and men externalize negative experiences and internalize the positive” (Gatto-Walden, 2013, p. 208). This ability often allows them to maintain a sense of power in decision-making and confidence in their undertakings (Gatto-Walden, 2013, p. 208). Choice and seeing others struggle can directly benefit the affective development of boys.

Affective Supports for Gifted Students from Diverse Populations

In Multicultural Literature and Gifted Black Students: Promoting Self-Understanding, Awareness, and Pride, Ford et al. (2000) advocate that gifted students, especially gifted black students, should use experiences with literature to promote self-understanding, awareness and pride. These students might focus on learning to express feelings, setting realistic goals, making appropriate choices, handling competing pressures (peer, school, family), improving social relationships, being persistent, improving problem solving skills, and coping with change (Ford et al., 2000, p. 236). The authors explain that multicultural literature offers minority children rare opportunities to see themselves in the materials they read which can be such a powerful experience (Ford et al., 2000, p. 240). Books give children an opportunity to look *outside* of themselves, an opportunity to see another person's perspective or another group's worldview (Ford et al., 2000, p. 236). Children must be able to read about “successful individuals from their cultural background with respect to similarities in age, abilities, and the like” (Ford &

Grantham, 2012, p. 53). Parents and teachers should be mindful of exposing children to multicultural literature to aid their affective development.

Multicultural literature appeals to all children and has value for all learners. According to Ford and Grantham (2012), “to increase identification with role models, they must come from culturally different backgrounds and be included in all materials. Multicultural literature is used extensively” (p. 53). Through encountering children from other cultures, all students can learn to value the similarities and differences among people (Ford et al., 2000). “Children who see themselves reflected in the literature have an opportunity to grow inside. Children who see others in the literature are also able to grow” (Ford et al., 2000, p. 240). Children who learn about the plight of others might learn to respect others at a deeper level than otherwise possible. “Responsive, responsible and compassionate reading might ultimately help us create the readers a democracy requires” (Beers & Probst, 2017, p. 56).

Students have little exposure to multicultural literature, even in today’s classrooms (Ford et al., 2000). The issues in these texts are powerful and can benefit all children, so parents and teachers should focus on providing these materials to children. Ford et al. (2000) explain that these texts include discrimination, peer pressures, and underachievement. The authors argue this is important because all students can identify with the situations and characters contained in rich literature, regardless of race or class (Ford et al., 2000). These situations cause students to think about complex issues that plague members of our society, which helps them step out of their own experiences and begin to understand the diverse experiences of others (Ford et al., 2000). In addition, white students gain increased understanding of the dilemmas and experiences of highly

able black students, which is another benefit of multicultural bibliotherapy (Ford et al., 2000). Powerful books can promote discussions about racial pride and identity, which leads culturally different students to be more likely to do well in school (Ford & Grantham, 2012, p. 54).

The inclusion of a variety of texts that are representative of a variety of cultures and ethnicities is a vital part of culturally responsive classroom. In the Greene Culturally Responsive Gifted Model (Greene, 2017), Robin Greene explains that in order to be truly culturally responsive for students of color, an intersection of culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally responsive gifted pedagogical practices, and multicultural gifted competencies must merge in a responsive classroom for gifted students of color (Greene, 2017, p. 160). The Greene Culturally Responsive Gifted Model can be used as a guide for research-based and research evidenced best practices for educators (Greene, 2017).

Without these experiences, a lack of empathy and understanding of what members of our society experience daily will persist among all cultural groups (Ford et al., 2000). Ford and Grantham (2012) state “when educators know about pre-encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization identities, they will have a greater understanding” of their students of color (p. 52). Beers and Probst (2017) explain how reading has the ability to change a person:

The reading experience becomes a catalyst for change in our lives. And once you have found that reading can change you, can change how you see the world, can change how you view yourself, then you are more likely to turn to reading again and again, anticipating the possibility that the book will give you some new idea, some new perspective, some new vision that may change who you are slightly or dramatically. (p. 59)

Reading about the lives of others is a powerful catalyst that can promote lasting and meaningful change within a person.

Affective Barriers for Gifted Readers

Although there are varieties of approaches to properly program for gifted readers, many barriers still exist for this diverse and unique group of learners. The first barrier that gifted readers experience is the failure of adults to acknowledge that gifted readers need support and guidance (Halstead, 2009, p. 50). In the article, “Meeting the Affective Needs of Bright Boys through Bibliotherapy”, Hebert (1991) suggests the most damaging factor for gifted readers has been the lack of researchers acknowledging that gifted children have any problems. Hebert (1991) points out that gifted students have an early mastery of reading skills, advanced reading ability and interest in books, which makes adults believe they do not need explicit literacy instruction. Wood (2008) describes the environment of public education today:

With the current climate of educational accountability, high-stakes testing, and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 mandate to raise reading and math scores to proficiency levels, school districts are not as concerned with instructional methods and curricula for students functioning at proficiency levels or above. In order to meet the mandate, additional services, such as afterschool tutoring, must be made available to those students targeted for intervention. District administrators often find they must reallocate resources in order to provide these services. In many states, this has meant eliminating or severely reducing other programs, such as those for gifted and talented students. (p. 19)

In addition, many classrooms and school libraries are ill equipped to handle their voracious appetite for reading. According to Weber and Hedrick (2010), “Gifted students have a greater need for large numbers of books with increased depth, scope, and variety than might be found in most traditional school or classroom libraries” (p. 57). Wood (2008) explains why gifted readers do not often thrive in traditional classrooms:

Experts in the field of gifted education have long advocated that in order for advanced readers to develop literacy skills in accordance with their abilities and interests, appropriate reading instructional practices should offer more than traditional basal reading texts. Because gifted and talented readers have little need for skill-based reading instruction, the use of typical classroom basal texts and workbooks is inappropriate, and even may have a negative effect on advanced readers' attitudes toward reading. (p. 23)

The article, "Helping High Ability Students Overcome Math Anxiety Through Bibliotherapy", Herbert and Furner (1997) describe how students who experience anxiety in math, as well as reading, can be helped through the implementation of bibliotherapy and reading about others who struggle in similar ways. The authors explain how expectations are often very high for gifted readers with society, family, and self, contributing to the belief that perfection is the norm. Parents, teachers and friends may convey to gifted students that academic perfection is necessary for them to be accepted and makes up the biggest part of their identity (Herbert & Furner, 1997). Herbert and Furner (1997) also suggest that gifted students will strive for perfection out of a sense of responsibility to make their parents look good and to win approval from teachers and parents. Gifted young people may feel great pressure to achieve academic perfection and avoid even the smallest occasions of failure in order to gain acceptance and avoid feelings of guilt (Herbert & Furner, 1997).

According to Sullivan and Strang (2002), gifted children who do not understand how to interpret their own emotions and the emotions of others frequently lack the ability to manage their own emotions properly. They often exhibit aggressive classroom

behavior, which generally leads to peer rejection, which can increase additional stress and frustration on the part of the student (Sullivan & Strang, 2002).

Another barrier for gifted readers is a lack of desire to read, “Some highly intelligent and able children simply choose not to spend their leisure time reading” (Halsted, 2009, p. 95). These reluctant readers may resist reading, but it is to a child’s advantage to read in order to hone the skill of reading and to gain a vast amount of information by reading (Halsted, 2009, p. 96). Adults should not allow gifted readers to see themselves as non-readers and should encourage gifted readers to find books that interest them. They do not have to become voracious readers, but they should practice reading on a regular basis to develop the critical skill for success in school (Beers & Probst, 2017; Halsted, 1990; Halsted, 2009).

In addition, students need to care about a topic or subject area in order for real learning to take place (Beers & Probst, 2017; Noddings, 2013). This is especially true for gifted readers who need to find value in their reading material in order for it to be worth their time. If they do not find value in or connections to literature, gifted readers will not progress and thrive. Wood (2008) explains that for high-ability readers, a lack of appropriate reading material and/or a lack of direct teacher instruction in reading may result in “stagnant reading growth, underachievement, boredom, low motivation for reading, or outright refusal to read” (p. 19). When a text matters to them, “we are on our way to having responsive readers. But the text won’t matter to them unless it touches them emotionally or intellectually” (Beers & Probst, 2017).

Finally, gifted students are not often seen as a priority group of learners. They may be viewed as elitists in classrooms or programs that do not deserve accelerated

curriculum or programming, causing them to not embrace their giftedness (Gatto-Walden, 2013, p. 201). They are at the mercy of society, where “the value of the gifted to society often depends on the shifting winds and priorities of their culture” (Silverman, 1997, p.38). Often, gifted programs and trained teachers for gifted students are vulnerable to district cost reductions or eliminations when budgets become tighter (Halsted, 2009).

Affective Barriers for Gifted Girls

Affective barriers for gifted girls can be powerful and consuming. Gifted girl readers are more likely to lower their aspirations in order to fit in with their age level peers (Halsted, 2009, p. 29). Adolescent gifted girls are at-risk for underachievement, especially if they believe they must choose between academic achievement and popularity or intimacy (Halsted, 2009, p.42). Being avid readers often sets gifted girls apart from their classmates, leaving them without anyone to discuss their reactions to literature or the ability to experience the validation of others who enjoyed the reading the same material (Halsted, 2009, p. 510). Girls tend to exhibit less flexibility in reading choices than boys, preferring fiction, and are less willing than boys to read nonfiction (Halsted, 2009, p. 79). In addition, girls are now found to “attribute failure to not working hard enough rather than a lack of knowledge or skills” (Freeman & Garces-Bascal, 2016, p. 18). “Gifted girls and women often find it hard to believe in their ability to choose and determine the future” (Gatto-Walden, 2013, p. 207-208).

Affective Barriers for Gifted Boys

One barrier that affects gifted boys is their emotionality (Hebert, 1991). Typically, sensitive gifted boys tend to cry easily. In a society where emotions are often repressed, these boys are seen as weak and immature (Silverman, 1997). “Common issues for

underachievement in gifted boys include social immaturity, emotional problems, antisocial behavior, and a low self-concept” (Halsted, 2009, p. 42).

Gifted boy readers may try to hide their academic ability in order to appear “sufficiently masculine” (Halsted, 2009, p. 29) in front of their peers. This phenomenon could result in a decline in reading among boys in a specific school or classroom and lead to underachievement among gifted boy readers. Gifted boys usually regard themselves as having higher ability in math and science rather than in language arts and the humanities, regardless of their actual abilities and performance in these areas (Freeman & Garces-Bascal, 2016, p. 18). This reality could hinder them from pursuing an interest in reading.

Affective Barriers for Gifted Students from Diverse Populations

Students from diverse populations have many affective barriers in their educational experiences (Halsted, 2009, p. 56). Black males identified as gifted often find their identities, self-efficacy, and self-esteem in limited domains, such as sports, music and acting, rather than academics in which they are capable (Freeman & Garces-Bascal, 2016, p. 19). According to Ford and Grantham (2012), “an understanding of and appreciation for students’ self-concept and self-esteem is incomplete and inadequate when racial identity and pride are excluded” (p. 52). Many students experience issues that could negatively influence their accessibility to books, their ability to read at home, and their limited exposure to appropriate role models. “Without question, children’s potential for intellectual development is affected by divorce, poverty, malnutrition, a lack of health care, struggling single parents, frazzled parents in two-income families, and other social problems, including safety in schools” (Halsted, 2009, p. 59). Ford and Grantham (2012) fervently plead:

Students who differ from the mainstream or status quo have been neglected too long in gifted education policies, practices, and programs: this is the time to make amends – to do what is right educationally, legally, and morally for all gifted students, regardless of their race, gender, income, and/or socioeconomic status. (p. 48)

Similar Studies

Although there have been numerous studies pertaining to gifted children in general, few studies have focused on gifted readers and supporting their affective development (Reis, et al., 2004). There is room for research around parent and teacher perceptions of affective supports and barriers that support/hinder the healthy development of gifted readers. Additional research is needed to examine the effects of literature on young gifted readers and what they experience affectively as they navigate challenging texts.

In a meta-analysis of research entitled *A Meta-Analysis of Bibliotherapy Studies* (Marrs, 1995), it appears that bibliotherapy does have a moderate degree of effectiveness. The most obvious positive effect is the efficacy of self-help through bibliotherapy (Marrs, 1995). In addition, bibliotherapy may be able to be used more confidently to aid the promotion of emotional and physical health. Several bibliotherapy studies used in the meta-analysis addressed problems of interest to community psychologists and conducted research on populations that historically concern psychologists (e.g., the elderly, correctional populations, the bereaved). The meta-analysis did not report any direct research about the effects of bibliotherapy on gifted children and their asynchronous development, especially gifted readers and the perceptions of parents and teachers.

In one research study conducted in Canada, Jacqueline Lynch (2002) investigated the correlation between a parent's efficacy beliefs and their child's reading achievement

(p. 55). Parents who believed they had some influence over their child's accomplishments were more "proactive and successful in cultivating their child's competencies than parents who did not" (Lynch, 2002, p. 55). Lynch (2002) stresses that it is vital for parents to understand the consequences of their beliefs in relation to their children's academic attainment (p. 65). Although this study was directly interested in parental involvement with student achievement, it can offer some insights into a child's affective development and self-concept, which are directly tied to academic achievement (Lynch, 2002).

Because bibliotherapy is a developing discipline, especially in relation to the development of gifted readers, it is very clear that perceptions of parents and teachers into how to support the affective development of gifted readers through bibliotherapy is limited, with gaps in the literature present. Additional studies would strengthen our understanding of affective supports and their potential for utilization by parents and teachers of gifted readers.

It is important to explore the ways in which literature can meet the social and emotional needs of our gifted students. Discovering reasons behind the fact that some gifted readers develop a lifelong passion for reading that they carry with them throughout their lives could help us lay the groundwork for other gifted learners. Many students read some books repeatedly because of a connection to a character or a thrilling plot or a lesson they learned that resonated with them long after the last page was turned. We must cultivate a passion and awareness of the affective benefits of literature through additional research, especially for parents and teachers to help their gifted children navigate the reality their asynchrony creates.

Summary of Literature Review

This literature suggests that there is a great need for parents and teachers to understand how gifted readers deal with asynchronous development between their reading ability and level of maturity and also understand how to support their affective development. Using the theoretical framework of developmental theory, the researcher will examine how Dabrowski's TPD theory, with regard to overexcitabilities, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory, especially the ZPD and scaffolding, manifest for gifted readers in the four affective areas of the conceptual framework. These four affective areas include establishing an identity, balancing introversion with the social expectations of others, relationships with others, and perfectionism.

The Colorado definition of Specific Academic Aptitude in Reading will be used to identify parents and teachers of gifted students for this study. Gifted readers face many challenges in their asynchronous development. The literature explored how gifted students are impacted by the asynchrony, and parent/teacher perceptions were presented. The need for affective supports was examined and various affective supports, including bibliotherapy, were explained. Affective barriers for gifted readers, including girls, boys, and students from diverse populations were also examined to gain a perspective of what gifted readers face. Limited additional research was presented, which demonstrates why there is a need for this study. The dearth of knowledge regarding parent and teacher perceptions of the reading supports and barriers on the affective development of gifted readers suggests that additional research in this field is desperately needed.

Elliot Eisner (1998) suggests that the programs we offer in schools reflect the directions in which we believe children should grow (p. 13). Our gifted learners deserve

the richest opportunities we can give to them. Eisner (1998) goes on to say, “It is through experience that the content literacy makes possible is acquired” (p.15). The unique affective needs of gifted readers deserve special consideration as they develop and grow. The ultimate goal of reading is “to become more than we are at the moment; to become what we did not even know we wanted to become” (Beers & Probst, 2017, p. 59). Parents and teachers deserve a chance to learn more about the nature and needs of gifted readers, as well as the affective supports and barriers that promote or hinder the affective development of these children.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Rationale

As a connoisseur of teaching, literacy, and gifted learners, it was determined that Education Criticism and Connoisseurship was the best methodological approach for this study. Eisner's (1998) aim in creating this methodology was to further the improvement of education. In this methodology, the researcher must have sufficient knowledge to discern nuances of the learning environment and program (Uhrmacher et al., 2017). In addition to teaching elementary students for twenty-four years, the researcher holds a Master of Arts Degree in Literacy and National Board Certification in Literacy for Early and Middle Childhood. Furthermore, the researcher has a K-12 Gifted and Talented Specialist endorsement in Colorado and has taught elementary gifted learners for a decade. The education, credentials, and experiences have contributed to the researcher developing a passion for gifted learners and honing the ability to effectively analyze issues related to gifted readers. The target audience for this study is gifted readers, their parents, gifted learning teachers, and general education teachers who work with gifted readers.

Constructivist Worldview

The interpretive worldview associated with this research is social constructivism. This philosophical stance suggests that multiple realities are constructed through our

lived experiences and interactions with others (Creswell, 2013). In addition, the goal of research in social constructivism is “to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Creswell and Creswell (2018) explain that social constructivism is concerned with several assumptions:

- Human beings construct meaning as they engage with the world they are interpreting;
- Humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives;
- The basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community (p. 8)

In social constructivism, “the researcher’s intent is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world” (Creswell, 2013, p. 8). Using the qualitative approach of open-ended questions, interviews, and the specific contexts in which people live and work, a researcher can better understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). The goal of constructivist research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied, since their stories are the ones we are telling (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). This study was specifically created with open-ended questions and relies on the participants’ views in order to better understand the affective supports and barriers that gifted readers face.

Research Methodology

Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship Explained

The aim of this study aligns with the goal of Elliot Eisner (2017) who believed in using qualitative inquiry to enhance education practices. Qualitative research brings opportunities for a deeper understanding behind research issues and a more personal lens to view education. Creswell (2013) states that “all researchers bring values to a study, but

qualitative researchers make their values known in a study” (p. 20). Qualitative research allows us to examine nuances in education. Eisner (2017) states that the ability to see what is subtle but significant is crucial, especially in educational matters (p. 21).

Experience is a form of human achievement and depends on an act of the mind (Eisner, 2017, p. 21). The teaching of reading is an art form. “In the arts, as in the connoisseurship of teaching, for example, awareness is the product of cultivated attention” (Eisner, 2003, p. 153). “Educational connoisseurship and educational criticism are efforts to use and extend aims and methods employed to heighten awareness of works of art to educational practice” (Eisner, 1998, p. 67). The major function of educational criticism is “the expansion of perception and the enlargement of understanding” (Eisner, 2017, p. 113).

At the very core of this methodology, connoisseurship is the art of appreciation while criticism is the art of disclosure (Eisner, 1998; 2011; 2017; Uhrmacher et al., 2017). Eisner clarified that “by criticism I do not mean the negative appraisal of something but rather the illumination of something’s qualities so that an appraisal of its value can be made” (Eisner, 2002, p.214). The educational qualitative researcher has a powerful voice and platform in which to influence needed changes in education (Eisner, 1998; 2017). Eisner (2017) explained that the creation of new visions of educational inquiry can “not only broaden the ways in which we study schooling, but even more importantly, can expand our conception of human cognition and help us develop new forms of pedagogical practice” (p. 245). This research study examined Eisner’s five dimensions of schooling (Eisner, 1998; 2017; Uhrmacher et al., 2017) as they related to

the perceptions of teachers and parents about reading supports and barriers and their effectiveness on the affective development of gifted readers.

Ecology of Schooling

Educational connoisseurship explores the ecology of schooling through five dimensions, which include intentional, structural, curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative (Eisner, 1998; 2017; Uhrmacher et al., 2017). “The aim of connoisseurship is to engender an awareness of the qualities that constitute some process or object and to grasp their significance” (Eisner, 2003, p.153). The first dimension, called the intentional dimension, deals with the goals or aims, both general and specific, which are formulated for the school or classroom (Eisner, 2017, p. 73). The organizational forms of schools, which can or cannot be conducive to the attainment of a given set of educational values, are considered the second, or structural dimension (Eisner, 2017, p. 74-75). According to Eisner (2017), one of the most important areas for educational connoisseurship to consider is the curricular dimension, which focuses on the content, activities and goals employed to engage students (p. 75) and is the third dimension of schooling. The fourth dimension, also called the pedagogical dimension, considers “the very qualities of teaching that typically elude standardized observation schedules and standardized achievement tests” (Eisner, 2017, p. 77). Finally, the evaluative dimension, which is the fifth dimension of schooling, explores the ways in which evaluation practices, especially those embodied in tests, influence student outlooks (Eisner, 2017, p. 80).

Since the “overall aim [of the Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship methodology] is to seek improvement in the real world” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 4), the researcher hopes to improve the educational experiences for gifted readers as a result

of this study. The Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship method provides inside knowledge, since “the often vivid nature of criticism provides a behind-the-scenes perspective which others may not be able to experience firsthand” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 5). Also, Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship is uniquely situated to answer research questions about the perceptions of parents and teachers on the affective supports and barriers of gifted readers, since the purpose of this method is to “recommend improvements to the educational environment” that is being studied (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 4). In addition, “connoisseurs believe that their interests are worthwhile and shared by others who care about the quality of their engagement within these interests” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 10). Parent and teacher perceptions around the affective needs of gifted readers is a meaningful topic for research that could provide valuable information for teachers, parents, and gifted readers alike.

Community Partner

A community partner is a vital part of this study. According to Buss and Zambo (2010), “the community and researcher perform critical actions aimed at social transformations” (p. 6). Research must be done in collaboration with a community partner, who will benefit from the results. Outcomes must be accessible to others, according to CPED’s second principal (Buss & Zambo, 2010). The community partner for this study was “Green Gables Gifted and Talented” (Green Gables GT) [pseudonym]. Green Gables GT is a parent affiliate group that has recently reemerged after disbanding many years ago. Dr. Louis, a founding member of the steering committee, as well as parent of two gifted children, agreed to collaborate as a community partner (Appendix B). The Green Gables GT website (2018) states:

We are a community of parents, family, guardians, and educators for gifted students within the Green Gables [pseudonym] School District and an affiliate of the Colorado Association for Gifted and Talented (CAGT). We are working together to inform one another to advance strategies to meet the needs of our gifted students and all gifted children and teens.

Participant Selection

As a general rule, Uhrmacher et al. (2017) recommend a participant group of four in educational criticism and connoisseurship research (p. 28). This study interviewed four parents and four teachers of gifted readers in order to have an adequate sample size. The participants in this study were parents and teachers of gifted readers. Parent participants were recruited from the Community Partner, Green Gables GT, and teacher participants were recruited from the Green Gables [pseudonym] School District Gifted Services Department.

For the recruitment process for this project, the researcher sent an email to all elementary GT teachers in the Green Gables District, explaining the project and asking for teacher participants to be interviewed after gaining permission from the District Assessment Office. Four teachers responded with an interest to be interviewed. In addition, with permission from the Community Partner, the researcher wrote a recruitment post on the Green Gables GT website explaining the project and asking for parent participants. Four parents agreed to be interviewed. Each potential participant was then provided with an additional letter that explained all aspects of the project to determine if they were interested in participation (see Appendix C) before they agreed to participate in this study.

All participation in this study was completely voluntary. Informed consent paperwork was collected prior to interviews so that participants could make informed

decisions about their participation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 93). The utilitarian framework of Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship “roots ethical judgement in the idea of greatest good for the greatest number of people” and “is helpful in thinking about informed consent and recruitment, avoidance of harm, and confidentiality in writing the report” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 27). Participants gave permission to be recorded in the interviews. In addition, the researcher tried to anticipate cultural, religious, gender and other differences so that they were respected throughout the duration of the research and analysis phases of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 93). Finally, the researcher sought to have a diverse array of participants “by considering culture, gender, class, grade level, educational background, and other factors” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 28). However, teacher participants were women, since the overwhelming majority of gifted and talented teachers in the district are women.

Teacher Participants

Teachers participating in this study are highly educated, all with master’s degrees. The range of experience with gifted students ranges from four years to twenty-six years. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect the privacy and confidentiality of teacher participants.

Participant List [With Pseudonyms]	Date	Time	Location	Experience with GT students	GT Endorsement
GT Teacher #1: “Ruby” *Exceeding Expectations school	10/26 /19	3:00 PM	Teacher’s home	4 years Master’s Degree	K-5
GT Teacher #2: “Diana” Gifted Magnet School *Exceeding Expectations school	10/27 /19	12:15 PM	Panera Bread	13 years Master’s Degree	K-12
GT Teacher #3: “Muriel” * Meeting Expectations School	10/28 /19	4:20 PM	Peet’s Coffee	26 years Master’s Degree	K-6
GT Teacher #4: “Minnie” * Approaching Expectations School	10/29 /19	7:30 PM	Phone Interview due to storm	16 years Master’s Degree	K-5

Figure 3.1
Teacher Participants

*School ratings as reported by *Summary Performance Framework Results* (Green Gables School District, 2019) and are based on performance and participation on Colorado state assessments.

Parent Participants

For parents participating in this study, the parents who agreed to be interviewed were mostly mothers with only one father agreeing to participate in the study. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect the privacy and confidentiality of parent participants.

Participant List [With Pseudonyms]	Date	Time	Location	Number of children who are GT Reading	Age of child when identified
Parent #1: “Jane”	11/14/ 2019	3:45 PM	Phone Interview	2 (boy and girl) both are IDs	3 rd grade (boy) 1 st grade (girl)
Parent #2: “Rachel”	11/15/ 2019	11:45 AM	Starbucks	2 (girls): both twice- exceptional	5 th grade 3 rd grade
Parent #3: “Josie”	11/23/ 2019	11:00 AM	Starbucks	2 girls: 1 twice- exceptional 1 talent pool	1 st grade 3 rd grade (talent pool)
Parent #4: “Mr. and Mrs. Allan”	11/25/ 2019	4:30 PM	Legends Coffee	2 girls: 1 ID, 1 talent pool	4 th grade 2 nd grade

Figure 3.2
Parent Participants

Participant Interviews

Teacher interviews were conducted in October of 2019. Member checking took place in November of 2019. Parent interviews were conducted in November of 2019 and member checking took place in December of 2019 and January of 2020. Each parent and teacher came from a different school, representing eight schools with varying demographics around the large, suburban school district, as described in “Summary Performance Framework Results” (Green Gables School District, 2019).

Teacher participants were all female, which is largely representative of the makeup of elementary school teachers. According to a study led by University of Pennsylvania professor Richard Ingersoll, the United States has witnessed a “slow but steady” increase in K–12 educators who are women (Wong, 2019). “During the 1980–81 school year, roughly two in three—67 percent—public-school teachers were women; by

the 2015–16 school year, the share of women teachers had grown to more than three in four, at 76 percent” (Wong, 2019). Parent participants had mainly daughters, with the exception of Parent #1, Jane, who had a son. Mr. and Mrs. Allan are a married couple with Mr. Allan being the only male parent who was interviewed, otherwise all other parents were female.

Research Study Design

This research study is a small, qualitative study. The researcher used Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship as the methodology. Parents and GT teachers were interviewed to gain their perspectives about the lived experiences of the young gifted readers in their lives. “The complexities and significant qualities of educational life can be made vivid through a method used to describe, interpret, and evaluate other cultural forms. This method is one of criticism; in education it can be regarded as educational criticism” (Eisner, 2002, p. 381).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research study was to examine parent and teacher perceptions of the reading supports and barriers on the affective development of gifted readers.

Research Questions

Research questions were designed to elicit emergent themes and were “open ended and exploratory, but still provide a guide for the researcher’s imagination” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 26). Three questions guided this study. An explanation of each of the three research questions follows.

1. What do parents and teachers perceive as the most effective reading supports that promote the affective development of young gifted readers?

2. What do parents and teachers perceive as the major barriers that hinder the affective development of elementary gifted readers?
3. How can children's literature be used to support or hinder the affective development of gifted readers?

Research Questions & Rationale

Figure 3.3 explains the rationale for each of the three research questions in this study and how they were designed. The citation explains how they are grounded in the literature from Chapter 2, the Literature Review. The interview questions, aligned with the Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship methodology, were designed to answer the research questions. Each interview question was tailored to elicit specific responses from either teachers or parents, depending on the lens and experience of each type of participant.

Research Question	Rationale	Citation
Question 1: What do parents and teachers perceive as the most effective reading supports that promote the affective development of young gifted readers?	This question was designed to examine what parents and teachers perceived as the most effective reading supports for their child/children. This question explored reading supports that parents/teachers perceived to promote positive affective development. Affective development pertained to the social and emotional growth of gifted readers. To answer this question, parents and teachers were given a series of interview questions that probed this concept. They were given opportunities to explain their perceptions of how books and reading have helped their gifted readers develop positive social emotional connections to reading.	Creswell, 2013 Creswell & Creswell, 2018 Eisner, 2003; 2017 Halsted, 2009 Robinson, 2013 Uhrmacher et al., 2017
Question 2: What do parents and teachers perceive as the major	This question was designed to examine what parents and teachers perceived as the greatest barriers that hinder gifted readers from positive affective development. Affective development pertained to the social and emotional	Creswell, 2013 Creswell & Creswell, 2018 Eisner, 2003; 2017 Halsted, 2009 Robinson, 2013

barriers that hinder the affective development of elementary gifted readers?	growth of gifted readers. To answer this question, parents and teachers were given a series of questions that probed this concept. They were given opportunities to explain their perceptions of how negative experiences with books hindered their gifted readers from developing positive social emotional connections to reading.	Uhrmacher et al., 2017
Question 3: How can children's literature be used to support or hinder the affective development of gifted readers?	This question was designed to examine how parents and teachers perceive literature playing a part in their gifted reader's development. The researcher was looking for stories and vignettes about positive and negative experiences with books and how children's literature shaped the attitudes and affective growth of gifted readers over time. Parents and teachers were asked to give suggestions of ideas that worked/didn't work to help the affective development of gifted readers. These ideas were shared as part of the research data around parent and teacher perceptions and will shape suggestions for further research. Ideas will be shared with others in order to help other parents and teachers effectively support the social emotional growth of gifted learners in the future.	Creswell, 2013 Creswell & Creswell, 2018 Eisner, 2003; 2017 Halsted, 2009 Reis, et al., 2004 Robinson, 2013 Uhrmacher et al., 2017

Figure 3.3
Research Questions & Rationale

Data Collection

This study used interviews as the main source of data collection. The Institutional Review Board at the University of Denver, Green Gables School District, and Green Gables GT thoroughly reviewed research requests. Research approval from each of the three organizations was obtained before this project began. The questions used for this qualitative study were semi-structured and open-ended interview questions. In a constructivist worldview study, “the more open-ended the questioning, the better, as the

researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life settings” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). Interviewing as a data-collection technique was selected because it is an authentic way to access deep understandings and unique perspectives of multiple stakeholders. “With a skillful interviewer, the interview is often superior to other data-gathering devices” (Best et al., 2017, p. 315). In *Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship*, “research questions that are designed to elicit emergent themes are open-ended and exploratory but still provide a guide for the researcher’s imagination” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 26).

In addition, through the interview format, the interviewer was able to explain the purpose of the study and collected only the kind of information that was needed. Certain types of confidential information were obtained that an interviewee might be reluctant to share in other forms of data collection (Best et al., 2017, p. 315). Interviews took place at times and locations that were convenient to the interviewees, as a way to put them at ease, so they were able to freely share important information about their experiences with gifted readers.

Interviews were conducted through face-to-face interaction and over the phone, depending on what the wishes and circumstances of the interviewee, in order to make them more comfortable. Participants signed an Informed Consent Form (Appendix D) where they chose whether or not they wanted to be audio recorded and voluntarily participate in this study. A fact sheet (Appendix E) was used to collect demographic information from participants. This gave the researcher an opportunity to settle into the interview and prepare all recording devices for use (if the participant agreed to such terms). Interview subjects were informed that all information was to remain confidential,

pseudonyms were assigned, and participants were informed that all audio recordings will be destroyed at the end of the research project according to the guidelines of the University of Denver and its Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The interviews began with the participants explaining who they are and how they relate to gifted children (parent or teacher). The interview protocols (Appendices F and G) consisted of twenty open-ended questions that enabled the participant to speak without restrictions about their experiences with gifted readers. Interviews lasted anywhere from forty-five minutes to one hour in length. Throughout the interview process, interviewees were encouraged to speak freely and add their own interpretations to the questions.

Since the educational critic describes, interprets, evaluates, and generates themes, the research interview questions in this study were amenable to such processes (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 27). Interview questions must make space for exploring unknown areas while simultaneously providing direction and shape to the study (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 25). Educational criticism “requires a level of trust and respect between the researcher and the participants” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 27) so the researcher worked diligently to gain the trust of interviewees before the interview process began by smiling, answering questions, and asking if the interviewee needed any additional information before the interview began.

Interview Question Rationale and Relation to Educational Criticism

The following figures, Figure 3.4 and Figure 3.5, explain the rationale behind each interview question in the Interview Protocol for Teachers (Appendix F) and the Interview Protocol for Parents (Appendix G). The literature from Chapter 2, the problem

of practice, and the methodology were used to establish the questions used by the interviewer to answer the three research questions.

Question	Rationale for Question	Citation	Relation to Educational Crit
Tell me about your experiences with gifted readers at your school.	This question served as an introduction to the study and was used to ensure the interviewee understood gifted readers. It also produced vignettes for the study	Creswell, 2013 Creswell & Creswell, 2018 Halsted, 2009 Reis et al., 2004 Uhrmacher et al., 2017	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Curricular Intentional Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation
What success do you have with gifted readers?	This question sought to understand the positive aspects of gifted readers and possible affective supports/barriers	Creswell, 2013 Creswell & Creswell, 2018 Halsted, 2009 Wood, 2008	Dimension of Schooling: Intentional Pedagogical Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
How do you nurture their love of reading in your classroom?	This question sought to understand whether or not the teacher provided affective supports in the classroom, which could be a barrier if not	Beers & Probst, 2017 Reis et al., 2004 Wood, 2008	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation
What challenges do you experience with gifted readers?	This question sought to understand the negative aspects of gifted readers and possible affective supports/barriers	Beers & Probst, 2017 Halsted, 2009 Kingore, 2001 Reis et al., 2004	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Evaluative Curricular Pedagogical Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation
What general or specific characteristics do you notice about gifted readers in the following areas: Identity • How do gifted readers see themselves?	This question sought to probe the areas of affective development that make up the conceptual	Daniels & Piechowski, 2009 Gatto-Walden, 2013 Gross, 1999	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Pedagogical Evaluative Curricular

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you see any evidence of overexcitabilities in gifted readers? Do they seem to be more/less aware of moral issues? <p>Introversion vs Social Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How much time do they spend reading vs spending time with others? Do you see any evidence of arrogance among gifted readers? How are the social skills of gifted readers in your experience? <p>Relationships with others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do gifted readers find peers? Do the relationships of your gifted readers revolve around books/characters? How are their relationships with peers/adults? <p>Perfectionism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do gifted readers feel a need to be perfect all the time? Do you see them reluctant to take risks or lacking motivation? Does multipotentiality keep them from making reading choices? 	framework of this study	Halsted, 2009, p.12 Herbert, 1991 Herbert & Furner, 1997 Kingore, 2001 Sullivan & Strang, 2002 Reis et al., 2004 Winebrenner, 2001 Wood, 2008	Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
<p>How do you go about making decisions about reading selections/choices for gifted readers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do these vary from grade-level or below-grade-level readers? Home? 	This question sought to understand if/how teachers differentiated for gifted readers, which could be affective supports/barriers	Gross, 1999 Halsted, 1990; 2009 Reis et al., 2004 Wood, 2008	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Pedagogical Curricular Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
What are your experiences with the library habits of gifted readers?	This question sought to understand if teachers truly understood the needs	Halsted, 1990; 2017 Reis et al., 2004	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional

	of gifted readers and to see if they provided opportunities to nurture their strength areas	Weber & Hedrick, 2010	Pedagogical Curricular Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
Do you notice differences between boy and girl gifted readers?	This question sought to understand if there are differences between boy and girl gifted readers and their affective development, which could also become supports/barriers	Silverman, 1997 Halsted, 2009 Freeman & Garces-Bascal, 2016 Gatto-Walden, 2013	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
What is the experience of gifted readers from diverse populations in your classroom?	This question sought to understand if there were considerations made for diverse populations and their affective development	Beers & Probst, 2017 Ford et al., 2000 Freeman & Garces-Bascal, 2016 Halsted, 2009	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Pedagogical Curricular Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation
What are your experiences with the affective needs of gifted readers in your classroom?	This question sought to understand if teachers understood that gifted readers have unique affective needs	Reis et al., 2004 Robinson, 2013 Sullivan & Strang, 2002 Wood, 2008	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Pedagogical Curricular Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
How do you help gifted readers navigate their asynchrony in reading between reading level and age level?	This question sought to understand if teachers made accommodations for the asynchrony that exists for gifted readers	Reis et al., 2004 Robinson, 2013 Silverman, 1997 Sullivan & Strang, 2002 Wood, 2008	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Pedagogical Curricular Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation
What precautions, if any, do you implement to help gifted	This question sought to understand if	Halsted, 2009 Silverman, 1997	Dimension of Schooling:

readers with their book selections? Do you see similar or different habits from parents?	teachers recognized the asynchrony in gifted readers and what they did to aid their affective development	Sullivan & Strang, 2002 Wood, 2008	Structural Intentional Pedagogical Curricular Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
What have you noticed about how your gifted readers debrief about books/literature?	This question sought to understand if/how teachers differentiated for gifted readers, which could be affective supports/barriers	Beers & Probst, 2017 Ford et al., 2000 Gross, 1999 Hebert & Kent, 2000 Wood, 2008	Dimension of Schooling: Intentional Curricular Pedagogical Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of themes
How do you support the affective development of your gifted readers?	This question sought to understand if teachers knew that gifted readers have unique affective needs	Gatto-Walden, 2013 Ford et al., 2000 Halsted, 2009 Reis et al., 2004	Dimension of Schooling: Intentional Pedagogical Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
What kinds of affective barriers exist for gifted readers at your school?	This question sought to understand if teachers knew that gifted readers have unique affective needs	Gatto-Walden, 2013 Halsted, 2009 Robinson, 2013	Dimension of Schooling: Intentional Structural Curricular Pedagogical Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
How do you approach gifted readers who read/want to read challenging material that you may deem inappropriate for their age? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is this an issue for parents of gifted readers? 	This question sought to understand if teachers made accommodations for the asynchrony that exists for gifted readers	Halsted, 2009 Reis et al., 2004 Robinson, 2013 Silverman, 1997 Wood, 2008	Dimension of Schooling: Intentional Structural Curricular Pedagogical Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation

Do you have any experience with bibliotherapy for gifted readers?	This question sought to understand if teachers had experience with a support for gifted readers and how it has worked/not worked with their students	Ford et al., 2000 Jack & Ronan, 2008 Halsted, 2009 Herbert & Furner, 1997 Marrs, 1995 Winebrenner, 2001 Wood, 2008	Generation of Themes Dimension of Schooling: Intentional Curricular Pedagogical Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
How do you see books/quality literature influencing/changing gifted readers?	Many people can identify a book that changed them – did teachers see this reality with their gifted readers?	Beers & Probst, 2017 Halsted, 1990; 2009 Robinson, 2013	Dimension of Schooling: Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
What other stories do you have about gifted readers in your classroom or school clubs?	This question allowed teachers to talk freely about gifted readers in their classrooms. Researcher found vignettes to use for Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship	Creswell, 2013 Creswell & Creswell, 2018 Eisner, 1998; 2017 Uhrmacher et al., 2017	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Curricular Pedagogical Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with gifted readers in your classroom or school or what you hear from home?	This question allowed teachers to talk freely about gifted readers in their classrooms. Researcher found vignettes to use for Ed Criticism and Connoisseurship	Creswell, 2013 Creswell & Creswell, 2018 Eisner, 1998; 2017 Uhrmacher et al., 2017	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Curricular Pedagogical Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes

Figure 3.4
Teacher Interview Questions & Rationale

After creating interview questions for teachers based on the research questions, the researcher then tailored the interview questions to be more appropriate for parent participants, but still align with the original questions. Some questions are identical to the

teacher questions but many were altered to be more appropriate for the home setting and help the researcher get a feel for what gifted readers experience in their home environments on a daily basis.

Question	Rationale for Question	Citation	Relation to Educational Crit
Tell me about your early experiences with you gifted reader(s).	This question sought to understand the early experiences of parents with their gifted readers and the beginning of asynchrony. It also lead to vignettes for the research study	Creswell, 2013 Creswell & Creswell, 2018 Uhrmacher et al., 2017	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Curricular Intentional Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation
What does a day in the life of your gifted reader(s) look like? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How much time do they spend reading vs spending time with others? 	This question sought to understand the daily experiences of parents with their gifted readers and what the day-to-day experiences are of living with a gifted reader	Beers & Probst, 2017 Halsted, 2009 Reis et al., 2004	Dimension of Schooling: Intentional Pedagogical Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
How do you nurture their love of reading in your home?	This question sought to understand whether or not the parent provided affective supports at home, which could be a barrier if not	Beers & Probst, 2017 Reis et al., 2004 Wood, 2008	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation
What challenges do you experience with your gifted readers at home? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you hear about the same issues happening at school? 	This question sought to understand the negative aspects of gifted readers and possible affective supports/barriers. It also explored the home-school connection and whether it was a support/barrier	Beers & Probst, 2017 Halsted, 2009 Kingore, 2001 Reis et al., 2004	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Evaluative Curricular Pedagogical Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation
What general or specific characteristics do you notice about your gifted reader(s) in the following areas:	This question began to probe the areas of affective development that	Daniels & Piechowski, 2009	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional

<p>Identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do gifted readers see themselves? • Do you see any evidence of overexcitabilities in gifted readers? • Do they seem to be more/less aware of moral issues? <p>Introversion vs Social Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much time do they spend reading vs spending time with others? • Do you see any evidence of arrogance among gifted readers? • How are the social skills of gifted readers in your experience? <p>Relationships with others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do gifted readers find peers? • Do the relationships of your gifted readers revolve around books/characters? • How are their relationships with peers/adults? <p>Perfectionism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do gifted readers feel a need to be perfect all the time? • Do you see them reluctant to take risks or lacking motivation? • Does multipotentiality keep them from making reading choices? 	<p>made up the conceptual framework of this study</p>	<p>Gatto-Walden, 2013 Gross, 1999 Halsted, 2009, p.12 Herbert, 1991 Herbert & Furner, 1997 Kingore, 2001 Sullivan & Strang, 2002 Reis et al., 2004 Winebrenner, 2001 Wood, 2008</p>	<p>Pedagogical Evaluative Curricular Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes</p>
<p>How do you go about making decisions about reading selections/choices for your gifted reader(s)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your experience mirror or differ from that of the school? 	<p>This question sought to understand if/how parents differentiated for gifted readers, which could be affective supports/barriers, as well as the home-school connection</p>	<p>Gross, 1999 Halsted, 1990; 2009 Reis et al., 2004 Wood, 2008</p>	<p>Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Pedagogical Curricular Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes</p>
<p>What are your experiences with the library habits of your gifted reader(s)?</p>	<p>This question sought to understand if parents truly</p>	<p>Halsted, 1990; 2017 Reis et al., 2004</p>	<p>Dimension of Schooling: Structural</p>

	understood the needs of gifted readers and provided opportunities to nurture their strength areas	Weber & Hedrick, 2010	Intentional Pedagogical Curricular Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
If applicable, do you notice differences between boy and girl gifted readers?	This question sought to understand if there were differences between boy and girl gifted readers and their affective development, which could also become supports/barriers	Silverman, 1997 Halsted, 2009 Freeman & Garces-Bascal, 2016 Gatto-Walden, 2013	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
How do you help your gifted reader(s) navigate their asynchrony in reading between reading level and age level?	This question sought to understand if parents knew about and made accommodations for the asynchrony that exists for gifted readers	Reis et al., 2004 Robinson, 2013 Silverman, 1997 Sullivan & Strang, 2002 Wood, 2008	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Pedagogical Curricular Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
What precautions, if any, do you implement to help your gifted reader(s) with their book selections? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you feel supported by the school? 	This question sought to understand if parents recognized the asynchrony in gifted readers and what could be done to aid their affective development	Halsted, 2009 Silverman, 1997 Sullivan & Strang, 2002 Wood, 2008	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Pedagogical Curricular Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
What have you noticed about how your gifted reader(s) debriefs about books/literature?	This question sought to understand if/how parents differentiated for gifted readers, which could be affective supports/barriers. It also sought to understand their attitude about books being too mature for	Beers & Probst, 2017 Ford et al., 2000 Gross, 1999 Hebert & Kent, 2000	Dimension of Schooling: Intentional Curricular Pedagogical Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of themes

	their children or if they allowed their children to read anything they want		
How do you support the affective development of your gifted reader(s)?	This question sought to understand if parents understood that gifted readers have unique affective needs	Gatto-Walden, 2013 Ford et al., 2000 Halsted, 2009 Reis et al., 2004	Dimension of Schooling: Intentional Pedagogical Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
What kinds of affective barriers exist for your gifted reader(s)?	This question sought to understand if parents knew that gifted readers have unique affective needs and certain aspects of their development can be barriers	Gatto-Walden, 2013 Halsted, 2009 Robinson, 2013	Dimension of Schooling: Intentional Structural Curricular Pedagogical Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
How do you approach your gifted reader(s) who read/want to read challenging material that you may be deemed inappropriate for their age?	This question sought to understand if/how parents differentiated for gifted readers, which could be affective supports/barriers It also sought to understand their attitude about books being too mature for their children or if they allowed their children to read anything they want	Halsted, 2009 Reis et al., 2004 Robinson, 2013 Silverman, 1997 Wood, 2008	Dimension of Schooling: Intentional Structural Curricular Pedagogical Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
How are your experiences as a parent of a gifted reader the same or different from friends/family?	This question sought to understand if parents work together with others to meet the affective needs of their children, a fact which could be considered for supports/barriers	Halsted, 2009 Robinson, 2013	Dimension of Schooling: Intentional Structural Curricular Pedagogical Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes

Do you have any experience with bibliotherapy for gifted readers?	This question sought to understand if parents had experience with a support for gifted readers and how it has worked/not worked with their students	Ford et al., 2000 Halsted, 2009 Herbert & Furner, 1997 Jack & Ronan, 2008 Marrs, 1995 Winebrenner, 2001 Wood, 2008	Dimension of Schooling: Intentional Curricular Pedagogical Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
How do you see books/quality literature influencing/changing your gifted readers?	Many people can identify a book that changed them – did parents see this reality with their gifted readers?	Beers & Probst, 2017 Halsted, 1990; 2009 Reis et al., 2004 Robinson, 2013	Dimension of Schooling: Dimension of Ed Crit:
What kinds of clubs or other activities are your gifted reader(s) involved in?	This question sought to understand if parents worked together with others to meet the affective needs of their children, a fact which could be considered for supports/barriers	Robinson, 2013 Creswell, 2013 Uhrmacher et al., 2017	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
What other stories do you have about your gifted reader(s)?	This question allowed parents to talk freely about their children as gifted readers. Researcher found vignettes to use for Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship	Creswell, 2013 Creswell & Creswell, 2018 Eisner, 1998; 2017 Uhrmacher et al., 2017	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Curricular Pedagogical Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes
Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences as a parent of gifted reader(s)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Or anything you hear from the school about your gifted reader(s) that you'd like to share? 	This question allowed parents to talk freely about their children as gifted readers. Researcher found vignettes to use for Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship	Uhrmacher et al., 2017	Dimension of Schooling: Structural Intentional Curricular Pedagogical Evaluative Dimension of Ed Crit: Description Interpretation Evaluation Generation of Themes

Figure 3.5
Parent Interview Questions & Rationale

Artifacts

In addition to conducting interviews, the researcher also collected artifacts from teacher and parent participants. Only those artifacts which were deemed relevant were collected, as “their relevance depends upon the connections the researcher is able to make, which are in turn reflective of the researcher’s perceptivity and imagination” (Uhrmacher, et al., 2017, p. 34). Artifacts collected for this project included photographs of classroom libraries, photographs of classroom reading nooks, pictures of school libraries, photos of gifted readers’ reflections about reading, reading journals, google documents that showed running conversations between teachers and students, and photos demonstrating how teachers grouped books affectively for their gifted readers. In addition, important and influential book covers are pictured throughout this project as artifacts. Measures were taken to eliminate identifying student, teacher, or school location information so that no identifiers could be gathered from the photographs or other artifacts that were collected.

Data Analysis

The methodology choice of Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship influenced the data collection and analysis. Educational Criticism allows the author freedom of expression and puts the researcher in charge of the overall narrative told (Eisner, 2017). After conducting interviews, data from the interviews was transcribed into notes. Notes were annotated and coded into various emerging themes in the four dimensions that structure the research method (Eisner, 2017; Uhrmacher et al., 2017).

These codes will be explained in the following chapters through rich language and effective descriptions.

Four Dimensions of Educational Criticism

Educational criticism is uniquely situated to analyze the problem of practice in this study. Parent and teacher perceptions of reading supports and barriers on the affective development of gifted readers were assessed through four dimensions that structure the research method: description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics (Eisner, 2017, p. 88; Uhrmacher et al., 2017). Description enables the reader to visualize what a place or process is like, helping them “see” what the critic is attempting to help them understand (Eisner, 2017, p. 89). Interpretation is making vivid what the critic has experienced through explanation of meaning (Eisner, 2017, p. 95). In the evaluation dimension, critics must describe and appraise, making judgements about the educational value of what is observed (Eisner, 2017, p. 99-100). The final dimension, thematics, uses critical analysis to create themes extending beyond the research to other situations (Eisner, 2017, p. 103). The themes are identified through “the recurring messages that pervade the situation about which the critic writes” (Eisner, 2017, p. 104). Thematics “articulates the patterns, big ideas, and anticipatory frameworks for other educational situations” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 54).

In addition, the researcher created vignettes with the research data. Educational criticism thrives on vignettes (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 31). The data analysis sought to convey the perceptions of teachers and parents into the affective supports and barriers of gifted readers through rich, thick description (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200).

Triangulation and member checking were implemented to add validity to this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200).

As an Educational Critic and Connoisseur, the research will allow parents and teachers to “see and hear what the critic has experienced” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 37). In addition, “because the critic’s descriptive aims are to invite and engage readers in the process of learning to see and hear, description in educational criticism seeks to be vivid and expressive” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 46). Finally, this research “not only explores and honors the complexity, but it also may lead to a deeper appreciation for such intricate workings while informing decision-making” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 50).

Ecology of Schooling

In this research study, the researcher focused on three dimensions of schooling, which include the intentional, curricular, and pedagogical aspects of school as they relate to the perceptions of parents and teachers on the affective development of gifted readers. Information about the other two dimensions, school structure and evaluation, didn’t align with the data collected in this study, so those two dimensions were not addressed. Through teacher and parent interviews, the researcher highlighted the intentional dimension, which allowed her to thoroughly understand the goals and intentions of each teacher and parent as they related to the affective development of gifted readers. The curricular dimension allowed the researcher to analyze how teachers and parents are providing appropriate curriculum and enrichment opportunities for higher-level thinking that gifted readers crave while at the same time mediating the content that young gifted readers might be exposed to. Finally, the researcher explored the pedagogical dimension as she learned how the needs of gifted readers were being met both inside and outside the

classroom, whether in a pull-out enrichment model or through direct instruction by teachers, as well as what learning opportunities looked like for gifted readers and what pedagogical practices were/were not being implemented.

Transcription of Interviews

Once the interviews were complete, each interview was transcribed into a document where each interview question had the interviewee's answer following in a narrative. The researcher then listened to the audio recordings again while comparing them to the written transcriptions to make sure the transcriptions were accurate and complete. Once the accuracy of transcriptions was completed by the researcher, the transcription documents were returned to interviewees for member checking. Interviewees were encouraged to completely review the documents for accuracy and completeness. Once interviewees reviewed the documents, they informed the researcher that the transcripts were in fact a complete and accurate representation of their interviews.

Validity of Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship

According to Uhrmacher et al. (2017), educational criticism may be interrogated for validity in a few ways (p. 59). Consensual validation is "agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, evaluation and thematics of an educational situation are right" (Eisner, 2017, p. 112). In order to reach consensual validation, or the state of shared belief, an educational critic must demonstrate structural corroboration and referential adequacy (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 59). This occurs in a few ways: when evidence is secured through structural corroboration or by having more than one educational critic independently prepare an educational criticism of the same school or classroom (Eisner, 2017, p. 112).

Structural corroboration “may be described as the presence of a coherent, persuasive whole picture” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 59). Structural corroboration, “like the process of triangulation, is a means through which multiple types of data are related to each other to support or contradict the interpretation and evaluation of a state of affairs” (Eisner, 2017, p. 110). When seeking structural corroboration, researchers look for recurrent behaviors and actions that inspire confidence that they are characteristic of the situation being studied, rather than exceptions (Eisner, 2017, p. 110). It requires a mustering of evidence and the weight of evidence becomes persuasive and compelling (Eisner, 2017, p. 111). Multiple data sources warranted interpretations and appraisals that were left to the critic to explain through their own signature of writing (Eisner, 2017, p. 111).

Referential adequacy answers the following questions: Is the criticism useful? Does the critic’s work allow for the audience to see education in a new way and for purposes deemed important? (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 60). Referential adequacy is “achieved through member checking, interview questions dealing with the significance of the topic, and attending to contemporary and historical trends in education” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 60). The critic is not out to tell the “truth” about a situation, but their criticism could be one of many on the same topic (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 60). An educational critic’s work “is referentially adequate when readers are able to see what they would have missed without the critic’s observations” (Eisner, 2017, p.114). Enlightening others by sharing the perceptions of teachers and parents about reading supports and barriers that help or hinder the affective development of gifted readers will be an important component of this research.

Protection of Participants

To minimize any potential risks associated with confidentiality, the following precautions were implemented:

- All participants were assured that their participation was completely voluntary. They could refuse to answer any questions at any time and could terminate their consent to be interviewed at any point in the interview.
- All participants were provided with a Potential Participant Letter before their interview was scheduled (Appendix C). This letter explained the nature of the research project in detail and explained how the interviews would take place.
- All participants signed a detailed Informed Consent Form (Appendix D) before the interviews began. This document explained risks, asked participants to give consent to be audio recorded, and provided contact information about the faculty sponsor in the event that additional questions or concerns arose.
- All participants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality of their identity and any identifying factors about their specific locations were removed.
- Participants were assured their audiotapes will not be archived, only used for transcription and accuracy purposes of this research project, and then will be destroyed according to the guidelines set forth by the University of Denver.
- Finally, member checking was utilized to allow participants to be involved in confirming the accuracy and completeness of each of the interviews.

Limitations

The main limitations of this study revolve around the size of the study. Since it was a small study focused on gifted readers, generalizations to other types of gifted students or situations cannot be made (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 202). In addition, this study took place in a suburban metropolitan area, so generalizations to gifted readers in other environments or parts of the United States or world may not be feasible. Even though the study sought to be neutral, parent participants in this study were well-educated, with the lowest educational level of any parent participant being a bachelor's degree, with the majority holding a master's degree. One parent had a Juris Doctor (JD) degree. In addition, all teachers in this study ended up being women, while three out of four parent participants were also women. Also, since it is a qualitative methodology, the researcher used self-reflection to create an honest interpretation, while acknowledging that background, gender, culture and other factors in the life of the researcher may have created bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200-201). All attempts were made to eliminate bias in this study, but some bias may still occur unintentionally.

Summary of Chapter

Education should be concerned with the moral, personal, and spiritual development of human individuals (Noddings, 2013). As a member of the education community, this researcher is interested in making an impact on gifted students. Gifted children are more than statistics on a page or a test score. They are living, breathing, functioning members of school systems who will grow up to be members of our society. Gifted readers are an especially vulnerable population that does not receive a lot of

affective support in classrooms, due to their perceived independence, lack of need for direct reading instruction, and advanced abilities.

Analyzing teacher and parent perceptions of affective reading supports and barriers that gifted readers experience provided needed insights about how to nurture and support the social and emotional development of these children at home and at school. As a result, parents and teachers may gain insight and awareness into how to better guide young gifted readers to have successful reading experiences. Eisner (2017) eloquently explains that “to know what schools are like, their strengths and their weaknesses, we need to be able to tell others what we have seen in ways that are vivid and insightful” (p. 22). Eisner (2017) goes on to explain that Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship is a valuable research option because it broadens “the forms in which the educational world is described, interpreted, and appraised, and by diversifying the methods through which content is made available and teaching methods are used, the politics of practice become more generous” (p. 246).

CHAPTER 4

Research Findings and Analysis

Isn't it splendid to think of all the things there are to find out about? It just makes me feel glad to be alive--it's such an interesting world. It wouldn't be half so interesting if we know all about everything, would it? There'd be no scope for imagination then, would there?

- Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*

Introduction to Findings

Through details and descriptions, the researcher hopes to enlighten the reader with the information gained through interviews conducted with parents and teachers into the affective needs of gifted readers. In this chapter, the researcher submits detailed descriptions of the interviews conducted with four parents and four teachers of gifted readers. The researcher offers her interpretations of those descriptions, utilizing Eisner's Ecology of Schooling (Eisner, 2017; 1998; Uhrmacher et al., 2017) as a guide, namely the intentional, curricular, and pedagogical dimensions. Additionally, while organizing data for the dimensions of schooling, the researcher reflected upon Eisner's (2002) questions: (1) What does the situation mean to those involved? (2) How does this classroom [or home setting] operate? (3) What ideas, concepts, or theories can be used to explain its major features? (p. 229).

In this chapter, the researcher hopes to introduce the reader to four gifted education teachers and four parents of gifted readers through detailed descriptions of their academic and home settings. Vignettes will be presented as a way to accurately describe and explain the information obtained through the interviews that were conducted. The thematics derived from this study will be discussed in Chapter 5 as implications, evaluations, and thematics are explored in detail.

Organization of Setting: Descriptions and Interpretations

According to Eisner (2017), “To interpret is to place in context, to explain, to unwrap, to explicate” (p. 97). He goes on to explain, “If description deals with what is, interpretation focuses upon why or how” (Eisner, 2017, p. 98). The researcher in this study went to great lengths to accurately describe and interpret what was gleaned from interviews of parents and teachers. Introductions to the teachers and parents of gifted readers interviewed for this study are shared in this section.

Teacher Interviews

All gifted and talented teachers in this study were qualified to teach gifted students and had an endorsement with the state of Colorado to do so. They were also highly educated; each one had obtained a master’s degree. In the Green Gables District, each school has a gifted and talented teacher that directly supports gifted learners at the school. The teachers interviewed in this study came from four different schools in the district. Teachers were asked questions from the Teacher Interview Protocol (see Appendix F).

Ruby.

We learn more about the world when reading from different characters' perspectives.

- Ruby

Ruby is a GT Teacher at a school that has higher socioeconomic demographics, most students are from upper middle-class income homes, and the school consistently exceeds expectations on state assessments (Green Gables School District, 2019). Her school services students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade. She has been officially teaching gifted learners for four years and has four children of her own who are identified gifted readers. When she taught in the general education classroom, she also worked with gifted readers, but she did not have formal experience with gifted students at that time. Currently, she works with gifted readers, grades kindergarten through fifth, in the Green Gables School District. Five years ago, she obtained a master's degree in gifted education, which she describes as her passion area. She selected her own home as the location for the interview. The researcher texted her a few minutes before getting to her home letting her know she would be on time. Ruby was waiting for the researcher on the porch when she arrived. The researcher was immediately put at ease by her demeanor, smile, and introduction. The interview was conducted at the kitchen table. Ruby talked through the interview questions for over an hour with the researcher.

Ruby was engaging and the interview felt like a conversation. There was a slight breeze wafting through the open windows of her home, which made the temperature comfortable and relaxed. The researcher was surprised that over an hour had passed when the interview was over. Ruby talked through the questions naturally and often she had

answered part of a later question earlier in her responses. She was able to provide insights into what her gifted classroom is like, as well as the affective development of her own children, who are also gifted readers.

As Ruby discussed her experiences with gifted readers with ease, she was able to give some insight into living with and teaching gifted readers in rural areas. Ruby lived and worked in rural communities for many years before moving a year ago for her husband's job transfer. Her family had recently relocated to our large suburban district, where she now works as a teacher of gifted students. She had great insights into the gifted readers at her school, as well as experiences with her own gifted children. Ruby is passionate about reading great books and greatly enjoys her newfound position working with gifted readers. Although not her first year teaching gifted readers, this is her first year in Green Gables School District.

Ruby has a wealth of reading resources available to her students and enjoys sharing book lists to engage her gifted readers. Her students are encouraged to share their recommendations with each other, and their book recommendations hang prominently in her classroom. At any given time, Ruby has multiple book lists available for all types of gifted readers and their parents. Ruby also shares lists that her own children, who are now in middle and high school, have created for younger readers to enjoy. She explained that her elementary gifted readers are often highly motivated to read books that older children have suggested and enjoyed. In her words, "there is never an excuse to not be with a good book, regardless of your preference or ability."

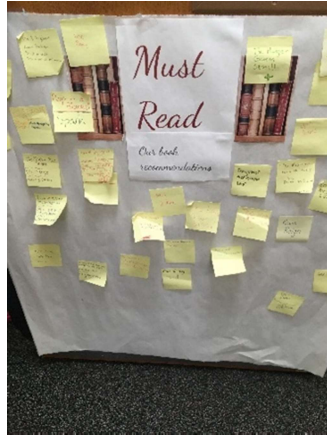


Figure 4.1
Book Recommendations from Ruby's Class

Diana.

It is like gifted readers see themselves in those books and they want to emulate those characters because they want to be part of that world.

- Diana

Diana is a GT teacher at the district's magnet gifted school. This school services kindergarten through eighth grade students. She was also a GT teacher and director of gifted education in a small neighboring district for seven years before accepting a position at the Green Gables School District's magnet school last year. Gifted children are accepted to this school from all demographic areas around the district. This is a very high performing school on state assessments (Green Gables School District, 2019). She has thirteen years teaching experience with gifted students and holds a master's degree. Diana has taught gifted readers from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

The interview with Diana took place around lunchtime at Panera Bread. This was the chosen location of the interviewee. The morning of the interview, she texted the researcher to see if we could move the interview 30 minutes later, which was not a

problem. Diana greeted the researcher with a smile and thanked her for her flexibility. By the time the interview got started, it was close to lunchtime. The researcher noticed the restaurant became a bit noisier than she was expecting, so we relocated to a different spot that was a bit quieter. It was still a little distracting for the researcher, but Diana seemed super focused and continued with her responses as if she did not even notice the noise around us.

Like Ruby, Diana spoke freely and openly; answering questions seemed to be a very natural process and she seemed at ease throughout the entire process. She gave many insights into the inner workings of a magnet school and the pressures that students feel, as well as the pride they feel for attending such a school. Gifted students at this magnet school experience a lot of competition among peers, pressure from teachers and parents to perform at very high levels, and large workloads, including hours of homework each night. Parents who are not happy with the education of their children at traditional schools in the district are often referred to this school in order to better meet the needs of their gifted children. Even though the school educates a large percentage of gifted learners, very few teachers are formally trained in working with the nature and needs of gifted students. This is something Diana is working hard to change, but her suggestions and offers to provide professional development have not been well received at her school to date. In the coming years, the number of gifted students at this school is expected to increase significantly as it continues its transition to a true magnet school. At this time, there is still a large number of students who are not identified as gifted but are high-ability and high-performing students, as this is a requirement to get into the school, which implements an application and referral process for admission. Although Diana meets with

small groups of students, pushes into some classes, and teaches a session of math each day, the majority of her time is spent behind the scenes on paperwork and phone calls. She is responsible for writing and progress monitoring over 250 Advanced Learning Plans, testing students for gifted identifications, providing universal screeners for all second and sixth grade students, and communicating with parents and teachers of those gifted learners regularly.

Gifted students at this school pride themselves in being formally identified as gifted. Traditionally, certain eighth graders, enrolled in the school since kindergarten, refer to themselves as “The Mighty Niners.” The atmosphere at this school is competitive and fast-paced. Parents are extremely involved in the education of their children and have very high expectations for content and student performance. Parents are required to volunteer forty hours each year at this school for each child that attends, so many parents are around and visible each day in the school. Many changes are happening at Diana’s school this year and next year, as the Green Gables School District is attempting to streamline applications for the next academic year. Their ultimate goal is to turn this location into a facility for only gifted and twice-exceptional students, many of whom struggle to have their diverse needs met in traditional schools in the district.

Muriel.

Characters from books are mentors for life.

- Muriel

Muriel has been teaching gifted children for 26 years and holds a master’s degree. Her experience is with gifted children in grades kindergarten through sixth grade, with students at her current location being in grades kindergarten through fifth grade. Muriel

currently teaches at a school where students come from middle class socioeconomic demographics and her school has been given the designation of meeting state expectations (Green Gables School District, 2019). She selected Peet's Coffee as the location for the interview. The researcher arrived a few minutes before her, so she was able to organize her supplies on the small, round, high-top table before the interview began.

Muriel is quietly confident in her demeanor and speech. She is wise and reflective and very thoughtful. As we talked, conversations around us buzzed, but we were focused on our task and Muriel was not bothered by the other conversations in the room. Gifted children in her school are serviced through a pullout model. In addition to providing project-based learning opportunities for younger gifted students, she teaches a ninety-minute language arts block for a fifth-grade group that includes gifted and non-gifted learners who are high achieving and motivated to learn. Muriel is incredibly passionate about reading and she believes that teaching reading is her real strength area.

Although the population at her school appears to be largely white, her students have incredibly diverse backgrounds, many speaking European languages as their first language, with Russian being the most prevalent. The largest diversity group at her school is the large number of religions that her students' practice. Muriel believes in respecting the backgrounds of all of her students and strives to find books and other academic resources that reflect the lives of her students, so that they might see themselves in the content that she presents to them. She works tirelessly to accomplish this task, spending a lot of her own money buying books that honor her students.

At the end of the interview, Muriel thanked the researcher for listening and mentioned how much she enjoyed talking about teaching gifted readers. She was very happy to have the opportunity to share her experiences and talk about her reality. Later, weeks after the interview, Muriel sought the researcher out to reiterate how much she enjoyed the experience of being interviewed. Being able to talk about gifted readers and her passion for teaching reading to gifted children had been reignited. She felt reinvigorated from the interview experience. Through the interview, she was reminded of why she got into teaching gifted readers in the first place and her passion for providing them with quality literary experiences was confirmed in her mind by our interview conversation.

Minnie.

Gifted kids just love books and want to be with books all the time.

- Minnie

Minnie has been teaching gifted children for sixteen years and holds a master's degree. Her experience is with gifted students in kindergarten through fifth grade and currently teaches at a school with a lower income demographics. Her school is on priority improvement status with the state (Green Gables School District, 2019). This is due to overall low performance on state assessments for all grade levels (Green Gables School District, 2019). Her school has been given the label of "approaching expectations" with the state of Colorado (Green Gables School District, 2019). Minnie's school educates an incredibly diverse population of students, coming from many different backgrounds and ethnicities.

The interview with Minnie was supposed to take place after school at Panera Bread. This was the chosen location of the interviewee. The morning of the interview, she emailed that the weather was changing her plans as a blizzard was blowing into town. We decided that a phone interview later that evening would be the best solution, considering the weather forecast was looking bad for the following day as well. The researcher called her at 7 PM and spent an hour on the phone for this interview. Starting out, the researcher was nervous about the phone format of the interview, but it proved to be just as effective as a face-to-face interview. The researcher obtained valuable information and felt as if the interview was important and complete, even if it was not a face-to-face interview. A roaring fire was raging in the researcher's fireplace and fresh snow was falling to the ground, at first gently, but later at a much faster pace.

The biggest challenge at Minnie's school is finding gifted readers who qualify to be formally identified. The students at her school are not performing at the higher levels required for the first pathway the state of Colorado uses for formal identifications (Colorado Department of Education, 2017). Although other pathways exist for gifted identifications in the state (Colorado Department of Education, 2017), to date, she has been unsuccessful in getting permission from Green Gables to have any students identified using the other pathways. Her number of identifications have dropped dramatically as the state has gone to a more rigorous model, using a 95% standard on cognitive and academic measures for most identifications (Colorado Department of Education, 2017). Minnie worries that without the use of local norms for gifted identification, currently not practiced in the Green Gables School District, she will continue to struggle to identify gifted learners, especially gifted readers in her largely

underrepresented population of diverse students. The Colorado Department of Education clarifies, “In some cases, Administrative Units choose to develop local norms on nationally norm-referenced cognitive and achievement tests to ensure access and inclusion of students from underrepresented populations in gifted programs, or to show qualifications for specialized programming” (Colorado Department of Education, 2015).

At this time, she is able to program for gifted potential and service high-ability students who are not formally identified as gifted. She worries that due to the large mobility at her school, many of her high-ability students will not receive gifted services when these students move away from her school without a formal identification. It is a constant struggle, and Minnie has met with district officials on a few occasions to voice her concerns. She has volunteered to be a pilot school for the use of local norms but has not heard back from district officials if this is a feasible option. Minnie is willing to go above and beyond the required expectations for the students at her school. Her passion is contagious, as the researcher began to reflect on her own practices with gifted learners after this interview.

Minnie was very well versed in the affective needs of gifted learners and shared a wealth of information about how she meets the social and emotional needs of her gifted readers. Minnie implements “Affective Fridays.” On these days, the only focus in her classroom is around affective topics. During this time, she allows students to share their successes and struggles with her and with each other on these days. As a group, they read picture books about affective topics for gifted readers and discuss what they have learned. Their affective goals on ALPs are priorities for her and she has her students visit these goals often and reflect on their progress. She believes every gifted student she works with

suffers from some level of perfectionism and they report to her that they often feel overwhelmed and stressed with both academics at school and with things going on in their home lives.

Teachers in this study were well versed in the nature and needs of gifted readers. They appeared to be highly in tune with how gifted readers are supported in the classrooms in their schools. Gifted teachers were passionate about supporting the diverse needs, both academic and affective, that gifted readers in their schools' experience.

Parent Interviews

Parent interviews were conducted in November of 2019 and member checking was conducted in December 2019 and January 2020. Parents selected locations and times of their choice for interviews. The researcher found that all parents who participated in this study were eager to share their experiences with their own children as gifted readers. The parents in this study ranged from having a lot of experience with their children being gifted to a parent who has just recently been introduced to the idea that her daughters are gifted or being monitored for a gifted identification in the future. Each parent came from a different school in the Green Gables School District. Parents were asked questions from the Parent Interview Protocol (see Appendix G).

Jane.

What if she is meant to cure cancer and we aren't adequately preparing her?

- Jane

The interview with Jane took place over the phone. This interview took the researcher off-guard, as Jane's experience was a bit different in terms of her gifted readers. Jane's two gifted children do not seem to be "typical" gifted readers. The

researcher was not expecting to hear that they are not necessarily interested in being immersed in books. Jane describes them as “well-rounded,” having many interests outside of school. Although they both excel at reading, they are not always interested in reading during their free time like other gifted readers in this study. Jane and her husband have offered their children many other options for extracurricular activities in an attempt to keep them well rounded and expose them to many different types of activities.

Jane wants her children to find joy outside of school, as she was raised by a mother who constantly questioned her grades. Her own mother focused on what Jane could be doing better, rather than celebrating the fact that she was an incredibly successful student who worked hard and consistently did well for herself in school. If she brought home five As and one A-, Jane’s mother would question what went “wrong” in the class where she had the lower grade. This is a pattern that she promised herself she would never repeat with her own children, as it caused her a great deal of stress and anxiety in her own childhood. She does not want her children to feel the pressure of perfectionism.

The gifted readers in this household have a wide variety of interests outside the academic realm and are kept busy with sports and other activities. Both children will read when encouraged, but they do not naturally gravitate toward this activity. Jane introduces her children to various popular fiction books, the first book in a popular series, or other books she thinks might interest them, but her children do not necessarily turn to books to fill their time. She wonders if there is not a real passion for reading because as parents, they did not explicitly model reading for pleasure. While both parents enjoy reading, they are not modeling a lot of reading at home, mainly because they both work and have their

kids involved in so many other activities outside of school. Jane mentioned that she wants to start modeling reading for pleasure at home, although with both parents working full-time and the number of activities her kids are involved in, this is something that might be a struggle.

Jane's biggest concern is that the school is not meeting the academic needs of her children. She reports they never have homework, never study for tests, and continue to maintain straight A grades. She reports that she and her husband continually tell their children that effort is what matters, but they keep waiting for teachable moments to reinforce this reality, and so far, their children have not had any real difficulty in school to date. They are continually telling their son, "you need to be on top of your game to get ready for high school!" but he continually gets straight As with minimal effort and does not have to study. He completes all homework on the bus. It worries them that he does not understand how to struggle or work hard for anything.

They are especially worried about their daughter, who is excelling with minimal effort. Teachers have reported to the parents since kindergarten (she is now in fourth grade) that they are afraid they are not teaching her anything. The gifted teacher often questions whether the parents should take her out of the neighborhood school and relocate her to a gifted magnet school. The parents above all want her to be happy and well adjusted, which she is at her current school. She has never voiced a concern about not being challenged, and she seems to find joy in everything she studies. At the same time, Jane and her husband fear that moving her elsewhere might add additional pressure and unwanted expectations. However, they worry that they are selling her abilities short. What if she is the one who is meant to cure cancer? Is keeping her at the current school

going to allow her the same preparation as another, more rigorous environment could? Right now, they are not sure if they want to pile additional pressure and stress on the delicate shoulders of a happy, healthy fourth grade girl who just wants to enjoy school, hang out with her friends, bake, and dance. Jane mentioned that many tears have been shed and a lot of sleepless nights have been spent agonizing on this issue. She and her husband do not want to sell their daughter short or deny her of any opportunities that might shape her future in a different way, but the bottom line is that they want her to be happy.

Rachel.

Why am I conducting this orchestra alone every single time? I just want the best for my kids.

- Rachel

Rachel has two twice-exceptional girls, both identified as gifted in reading. She is a passionate advocate for her daughters and has had to work tirelessly to get the schools to understand how to service twice-exceptional learners. Rachel's older daughter deals with anxiety as her disability and the younger one has ADHD, as well as a visualization disability that keeps her from picturing stories in her mind as she reads. The older daughter's biggest hurdle in school has been making and keeping friends. With a very high vocabulary and an ability to express herself even from a young age, she sometimes isolates her peers. Reading is her escape from her anxiety. As a result, she has done relatively well in school, but has experienced major anxiety and peer relationships have been an ongoing struggle.

Rachel's younger daughter was reading four years above grade level in kindergarten, and now in fourth grade, she is reading slightly below grade level. She has

made no reading growth in three and a half years, and she often spends her time fake reading, daydreaming, lip reading, or imitating reading. This has been a major concern of the parents throughout her school career while school officials and administration have expressed a lack of worry because she was above grade level until this year. She has been diagnosed with a visualization deficit, which keeps her from being able to make movies in her head with books to help her comprehend what she reads. Rachel believes that as she progressed as a reader, her daughter started reading books with fewer pictures in them (around the third grade level), she stopped being able to comprehend what she was reading, hence the reason she has been stuck at the third grade level for so long. Rachel reports that her happy-go-lucky daughter has started leaving class without permission, stealing from the cafeteria as a way to deflect attention away from academics, and has been “burning every friend down in her forest of friends” for the last few years anytime she feels socially or academically unsafe.

Rachel is struggling to have both the academic and affective needs of her daughters met. She has dealt with administrative bullying, refusal of school officials to accept both the identification and disability diagnoses, failure of schools to service for both the giftedness and disability of her daughters by asking her to choose one or the other, and deals with an overall lack of cohesive service options for her gifted readers. Above all, she wants her daughters to receive a fair and balanced education, having educators consider both the disabilities and the giftedness of both of her daughters.

Rachel’s older daughter uses books as a way to deal with social anxiety, while the younger has a strong aversion against reading. In second grade, she was crying every single day and leaving the classroom without permission to avoid reading. Right now,

both schools are continually wanting to program for the disabilities of the girls, while sacrificing time in the gifted pullout programs to do so. Until now, teachers and administrators have not been concerned with either the extreme anxiety of the older daughter, or the lack of growth of the younger daughter, since both have been performing at acceptable levels. Rachel finally took both of her children, at her own expense, to outside parties, where the older was diagnosed with anxiety and the younger was diagnosed with a visual processing disorder that was affecting her ability to maintain comprehension when reading more than a few lines of text. When she brought these diagnoses back to the Green Gables School District, she found school officials less than willing to discuss or accept the findings of outside professionals.

Rachel has created a toaster analogy to describe her younger daughter. A district psychologist told her that her daughter's processing could be described as "gifted fast but slow, where most gifted kids are gifted fast and fast." If a regular processor is a two-piece toaster, and a typical IQ person has two pieces of bread, it just works out naturally that the bread comes out adequately toasted in a reasonable amount of time. When you say to this gifted child, "We're going to do a project on Martin Luther King," out of her head pops six pieces of bread, but she has to put all of them into a two-piece of bread toaster and wait for them to be toasted. Will it get done? Absolutely! Will it be the same quality, if not better than the other product, absolutely! It is just going to take her a lot longer to get it toasted. Where a gifted-fast-and-fast kid is also dealing with six pieces of toast, but he/she has a convection oven. They are putting all the bread in at once and it is coming out quickly, beautifully toasted.

Rachel reports that it is a constant struggle to stay afloat of her daughters' education. Being an advocate can be a lonely and isolating experience. She said that in the end, it will all be worth it, but the days can be long and exhausting. She smiled and lamented, "My girls are going to kill it as adults, but we've got a long way to get there!" As an advocate for her daughters, she must work tirelessly to ensure that they are progressing and receiving both enrichment for their strength areas and remediation for their deficits. Rachel feels like she is the mom that schools dread hearing from, but, if it means her daughters receive a quality education, she must be "that mom" for now.

Josie.

We keep telling her she's an amazing reader, so now it's more of a part of her identity.

- Josie

Josie has two daughters. The older daughter is in the Talent Pool for an identification in reading. According to Colorado Department of Education (2015),

A talent pool is defined as a group of students who demonstrate an advanced or even exceptional ability in a particular area, but at this time do not meet the criteria for gifted identification. Often students in a talent pool are provided advanced or gifted programming services. As students are presented with additional levels of challenge and rigor, increased achievement may occur. A student may meet the criteria for gifted identification at a later date. (p. 15)

The younger daughter was identified as gifted in reading in first grade but is beginning to struggle with underachievement now that she is in second grade.

This family is just learning about what a gifted identification really means and are actively seeking resources to help their daughters succeed. Before she was identified as gifted, their younger daughter was also identified as ADHD with anxiety and was put on a 504 plan. According to the state of Colorado, a Section 504 plan is "the part of the

Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that guarantees specific rights in federally funded programs and activities to people who qualify as disabled” (Colorado Department of Education, 2020).

Over the past few years, Josie’s gifted daughter started identifying as a “bad” kid and would often get in trouble due to her inability to sit still and concentrate for long periods. Once she was identified as a gifted reader, the parents sought to use the identification to help form a more positive identification for their daughter by telling her she was smart and very competent. Josie now believes that her daughter finally believes that she is, indeed, a smart young lady with a lot of potential. However, they still fight issues of underachievement from time to time and worry that she will fall into patterns of underachieving in order to fit in with her grade level peers. Sometimes, she even fights her parents on reading for homework, which was surprising and confusing to the parents, considering her gifted label.

Josie has sought out other parents involved with Green Gables GT, this researcher’s community partner, as a resource to help her connect with other parents of gifted children. Josie hopes that by finding other parents dealing with the same issues, she can better understand her own daughter’s needs and find resources to help when she is confused about what is going on with the underachievement of her gifted child. She feels fortunate to know that there are other parents experiencing the same things that she is and she is learning “every single day” about what it means to parent a gifted child and how to navigate those waters effectively. Josie is researching, reading multiple resources, and reaching out to this researcher’s community partner, Green Gables GT, in an effort to better understand how to raise a gifted child. She is also interested in finding ways to help

her older daughter show her true potential so that she may be moved from the talent pool to a formal gifted identification in reading. Josie believes her older daughter doesn't always show her ability on reading assessments, which is why she hasn't yet been formally identified.

Even though there are issues with underachievement, Josie and her husband are not extremely concerned at this time. Their daughter is so young that she is still doing well in school, regardless of not giving every assignment her absolute best or not wanting to read challenging material. Both daughters are overall doing well in school and Josie is happy with their educational and social emotional development. She is somewhat worried that academics might become more challenging for their underachieving daughter. Her ADHD and anxiety could interfere as she progresses through school and the academic content becomes more challenging. Josie is actively seeking out resources to help her better understand how to be a supportive and positive influence on her daughter.

Mr. and Mrs. Allan.

Put the book away and do your chores!
- Mr. Allan

Mr. and Mrs. Allan are a married couple with two gifted daughters. Both girls are competitive gymnasts, which takes up a large chunk of their time away from school. The act of reading is heavily promoted in the Allan household, as both parents are voracious readers. This busy family seeks creative ways, like reading in the car on the way to competitions, to get thirty minutes of reading time for their daughters into their packed schedule each day. The older daughter is currently in the talent pool for reading but was formally identified as gifted in math and science as a second-grade student. The younger

daughter was identified as gifted in reading in kindergarten. The girls are doing well in school and parents are overall happy with the education their daughters are receiving, as well as the social emotional development of the girls. The Allans are very dedicated to the academic development of their daughters, often providing supplemental activities during the summer to keep the love of learning alive in both girls. They are very involved as a family, with both parents attending conferences, checking homework, and communicating with teachers and school personnel equally.

Mr. and Mrs. Allan report that it is difficult to get their daughters to put down books, as they are voracious readers who consume books constantly. They laughed as they recalled how they have often found one or both of their girls hiding in the bathroom reading a book, rather than doing chores or homework. As the girls are getting older, they are beginning to share books with each other, so they always seem to have many choices for books at their fingertips. Mrs. Allan reports that other children comment on how many books are on each of the girls' bookshelves, but the bookshelves do not accurately represent the number of books owned in the household, as there are overflow bookshelves in the parents' bedroom and in the family study.

Mr. Allan explains that the girls will stay up late into the night reading if the Allans do not monitor them closely. The biggest struggle they had was when the older daughter was in kindergarten. They bought flash cards for her to practice letters and sounds. The younger daughter, who was two years younger, would pick up the cards and practice herself. It got to a point where the younger daughter was outpacing the older one, causing a lot of tension and frustration on the part of the older daughter. Once they bought the younger daughter her own flash card set and separated the girls whenever they

practiced with the flashcards, the drama, competition, and frustration ended. They struggled because they wanted to promote the academic growth of their younger daughter, but not at the expense of the older one. The Allans made sure to not share with each daughter how the other one was progressing. Without feeling competitive and threatened, both girls thrived with the flashcards. They have continued to hide information about each sibling's progress with her sister, in order to keep her from feeling competitive with and/or jealous of the other sister's progress. This is especially important to them since their younger daughter was formally identified in reading and the older daughter is in the talent pool, just missing the cutoff points for identification on a consistent basis.

At this time, the older daughter is reading three years above grade level and the younger daughter is reading four years above grade level. Mr. and Mrs. Allan feel as though they cannot confide this reality to other parents of more grade-level typical readers without feeling as though they are bragging or competing with other parents. Family members also have gifted readers a few years older, so these people have become trusted confidants who the Allans can freely ask questions and seek out advice on issues with their gifted daughters. They both expressed that having gifted daughters is a real blessing that they are so grateful to have but the reality can also be lonely and isolating at times as well.

Parents who participated in this study were passionate about meeting the affective and academic needs of their children. They had committed themselves to reading books about how to meet their children's needs, as well as reaching out to professionals and support groups to help them better understand how to support their gifted readers. Parents

in this study expressed that they did not always know what the right answers were for supporting their children but were committed to helping their gifted children succeed. They wanted their relationships with their children to be different than the ones they had with their own parents.

In the next sections of this chapter, findings based on the three dimensions of the Ecology of Schooling from Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship are presented. In Chapter 5, findings will be further analyzed and themes will be generated and interpreted through the data analysis process.

The Ecology of Schooling for Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship Revisited

Books bind more than pages.

- Lisa Van Gemert

According to Uhrmacher et al. (2017), the framework that may be used to guide observations and interviews that is based on the ecology of schooling includes curriculum, pedagogy, school structure, evaluation, and intention (p. 23). For the purposes of this research study, the intentional, curricular, and pedagogical dimensions of schooling were selected for evaluation on parent and teacher perceptions on the affective development of gifted readers, as they were the most applicable aspects of the framework for guiding the interviews in this study. The curriculum refers to content: pedagogy is about how the content is mediated, and intentions are the aims and goals of what is supposed to happen (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 23).

The Intentional Dimension: Confident, Persevering, and Socially Safe

I've done my best, and I begin to understand what is meant by "the joy of strife." Next to trying and winning, the best thing is trying and failing.

- Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*

In this research study, through the methodological lens of Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship, the researcher sought to discover the aims and goals of parents and teachers for the affective needs of the gifted readers in their lives. Overall, the message the researcher received was that both parents and teachers sought to develop confident children who understand how to persevere and feel socially safe in their school and home environments.

Perseverance. Ruby believes that gifted readers must be taught to persevere but also to allow themselves the freedom to quit reading a book that is not interesting to them. When we teach them that it is okay not to like something they are reading, they learn to be more confident in their reading selections. She explains, “Once they find the right book, they are mesmerized. It’s all about finding the right book for right now and allowing yourself the freedom to quit a book at any time if it doesn’t fit your interest.”

Ruby explains that it is important for gifted readers to understand that just because a child might be good at the act of reading, it does not mean that they have to always enjoy it, or agree with a teacher that suggested a book to you. One gifted reader finished reading a book that was recommended to her by Ruby during a silent, sustained reading period. The quiet of the classroom was shattered when the child slammed the novel shut and hurled it across the room where it hit the opposite wall and landed on the ground with a thud. Ruby was startled at first to see such a big outburst from a quiet reader who was so passionate about books. After a heartfelt conversation and lots of tears and Kleenex, the gifted reader was able to verbalize that this book was too sad for her to process and she hated the ending – she felt as though she could not accept the book the

way it ended. Through their debrief together, Ruby realized that this was the first book this gifted reader didn't enjoy and she didn't feel safe sharing her opposing opinion, so her frustration bubbled out of her in an outburst. Ruby shared,

It was too sad for her to process and she decided then and there that she couldn't accept the book or like it. It was her first experience with realizing it's okay to not like a book. Sometimes we make kids feel like they have to say they loved a title when that's not reality at all. They often find their voice with some help and realize at a certain point that they can disagree with an author or not like a book after all.

Socially Safe. Meanwhile, Diana sees herself as an advocate for all of the gifted children in her gifted magnet school. As one of only two gifted and talented teachers in the school filled with general education teachers, she does a lot of professional development for teachers about the nature and needs of gifted learners. She has many gifted students with similar needs and tries to help general education teachers embrace their relationships with gifted learners. She explains,

I would say that regarding their relationships with adults – the kids really like their teachers in the school and they will stand and talk to them instead of playing at recess. They will have these intense conversations about what is happening in the classroom or wanting to expand upon, like, 'I know this about what we are learning about...' – just having that chance to get all of their knowledge out.

Helping teachers see the value in building these unique relationships with gifted learners is a key to their success. Finding understanding and compassionate adults helps the gifted learners in her school feel more confident and secure in their learning environment.

As well, Muriel uses the pullout model to give students an opportunity to be with like-minded academic peers. When students can build relationships with other students who have similar struggles and successes, they begin to develop confidence. “I think the more safe you make in the environment, the more they are going to find their place. That is why I love the pullout model. I feel like they need that time with their academic peers.”

And Minnie believes that in order to build safe relationships with gifted readers, you must let them know you care about their successes and their failures. They must understand that adults also struggle and have to persevere through difficult times. She makes it a point to read the books herself that are important to her students. She explains,

But I do try to keep up with whatever is popular so that I can talk to them about what they are reading because I think you can have better conversations with kids and I think it shows them how much you care about them and how much you are reading. It shows that you are willing to read what they are reading.

Minnie believes that when students know you care about them and that you are a reader at home, you can begin to build a stronger, safer, authentic relationship with your students. She believes that small gestures go a long way with gifted students, who notice and remember the things teachers do to help them.

Appropriate Education. Jane laments that her kids have never really had to struggle or work very hard in school. Because academics have come easy for them, she worries that her children will not know what to do when school or life suddenly gets hard. In trying to prepare them for “the real world,” they want their children to experience perseverance skills and resilience. She explains,

It has never been asked of them, maybe, or they have never been given anything like nights at home, crying over homework, as other parents will say. We never have that and we've always been wondering about whether we are really setting our kids up for success. With our son, we would always say, 'you gotta be on top of your game, you're finishing elementary school, you're starting middle school, whatever.' Now he is a seventh grader and he still doesn't need to be on the top of his game. He gets all of his work done at school or on the bus and gets straight A's, and now we're saying, 'you're going to be at the top of your game for high school.' But, I don't really know anymore. Does he?

In trying to prepare them for the real world, Jane and her husband continually tell them to work hard, that life is not easy, that you have to work to get where you want in life, but school continues to be a breeze for her children. She wishes for harder assignments, for more rigorous expectations from the school. Also, Jane just wants her kids to be happy and healthy, so she is not one to push back at the school for harder or more demanding work for her children. She worries that they are not getting the proper practice with learning to persevere through hard times and work hard for success when everything has come so easy for them to this point.

At the same time, her kids seem happy and like going to school. As a child, Jane was pushed incredibly hard academically by her own parents, which resulted in stress and anxiety, so she consciously tries not to put the same expectations on her own children. "I think some of that is what I bring to the table with my history and it's like, I just want to be careful that I never pushed them too hard." She is proud of the fact that "they get to enjoy other fields and find joy beyond school and they feel success and that school isn't

the only measure of that.” Her children have friends and enjoy their social circles. At this time, her middle school son has learned that he actually enjoys working with his academic peers, but he still has various friends from sports and neighborhood activities that perform at more typical academic levels. Therefore, he is learning to have different friend groups.

He kind of toggles between a lot of different social groups. That has been really cool for us to see and to try and nurture that. He even recognizes it. He says, ‘Mom, there are kids that are really considered nerds and I love working with them.’ As long as he recognizes that maybe socially, he is not in that group, but he likes working with those kids because they are like-minded. But then he can be in school and he has even gotten into a few jams with that, where he is beginning to struggle with ‘Who do I partner up with?’ or ‘Who is in my group?’ because he is just navigating all of that.

As a parent to two twice-exceptional girls, Rachel has struggled to have the diverse academic needs of her daughters appropriately met. “I believe that 2e kids should be entitled to both interventions. I believe that teachers should fight for this!” In her experience, teachers have been too willing to focus on and service the disability side of her daughters’ academics, while ignoring that both are gifted in reading and a few other areas as well. She has found that many in administration and teaching believe that it should be an “either/or” scenario where they are either servicing for the disability or the exceptionality, rather than both. Scheduling, lack of qualified teachers, and lack of understanding about what twice-exceptional really means have kept her daughters from reaching their full potential in the academic setting. As a parent, Rachel has had to fight

for implementation of each and every little accommodation for both daughters in order for them to be successful. It is a constant battle, one in which she must be engaged and informed at all times. She often thinks about parents who are not able to be as involved or do not understand that they must advocate for their children to receive the best education possible. She tries to make the school understand that each and every twice-exceptional child deserves an appropriately challenging education. She explains,

That's the question we asked after every single meeting, when they ask if we have any more questions. We've probably had ten, whether they're IEP or referral or identification meetings, whatever. We say, "How does someone without us as advocates get what they need in school?" We always ask that question.

The family struggles with the idea that their daughters do not feel safe at school and they do not believe that school officials are properly versed in the needs of twice-exceptional students. They want to know what is being done for other twice-exceptional children who do not have parents that will fight this hard for their rights. Rachel explains that her advocacy has caused her to feel alienated from others, who see her as overbearing and too involved.

For her younger daughter, she explains the consequences of what happens when she is not being challenged academically:

Her symptoms when she is not feeling socially safe or not feeling academically met, are to avoid, to steal, and to take it out on her peers. It's all woven together, like what causes what, and I'm not totally sure. Those are how challenges are being presented in the school setting.

Rachel believes that without her advocacy, her daughter will continue these destructive

patterns and will not be safe. This family has sought outside counseling and outside interventions, like the Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes, whose motto is “We believe all students can learn to their potential—including those previously diagnosed with dyslexia, autism spectrum disorders, or general learning challenges” (Gander Publishing, n.d.).

Confidence. For Josie, having a formal identification for their daughter has been a game-changer. In the past, as a twice-exceptional learner, her daughter struggled with attention issues in the classroom. Once she was identified as gifted, her strength areas are beginning to be addressed, and it is changing her identity. Her exposure to other children with similar interests has helped shape a new identity for her. Josie explains,

I think, for her, last year, toward the end of the year, is when we got her assessed.

We figured out what her strengths were and what her areas of challenge were.

One of the deficits was in attention and anxiety. She has only been in the gifted program this year. Identity-wise, now that she’s doing that stuff, and there’s a group of kids that meet every couple days, and we keep telling her she’s an amazing reader, now it’s more of a part of her identity. Before that happened, she was just having a lot of trouble sitting still and doing the things the teachers wanted to do, and she wasn’t doing any actual work, writing or math. Her identity was really more negative, like troublemaker and sort of not fitting in as much.

Now that she is spending more time in the program, I would say, her identity is more tied, like where she is starting to see the strengths as well.

Josie is now learning about what it means to have a twice-exceptional child. She is learning how to nurture strength areas in order to mitigate the deficit areas. As a parent,

learning to circumnavigate the waters of twice-exceptionality has been challenging, but very rewarding. Although still struggling with bouts of underachievement, her daughter is beginning to shine in school, especially since she is beginning to identify academic peers who share similar interests. Perseverance is coming along as her confidence is improving.

Josie's daughter has participated in the district's summer program that brings together gifted and high ability learners from across the district for two weeks to study their passion areas and be around like-minded peers. In addition, she is beginning to participate in an after-school coding club with other kids in different grades. These have been very powerful experiences for Josie's daughter, who is beginning to thrive in the gifted environment. She explains,

When she was littler she was always more of a tomboy, and most of her friends were boys and they would play more physical games and stuff. We started the [Green Gables district summer] camp and stuff and so now she has found coding after school like Minecraft coding. I think that she is realizing that there are other people who share those same interests. Luckily, I think her peer group includes those types of people and she has one friend, another girl who really likes Sponge Bob and they have Sponge Bob in common. They're in the same class, and that's really nice. She has a smaller group of friends compared to other kids, but she's happy and content.

Mr. Allan, as a gifted adult, reflected on the ease of his own childhood, which was not difficult overall. However, when he went to college, he lacked the skills of perseverance and knowing how to study, how to learn, and how to apply himself when the going got tough. As a result, college was a huge struggle and he almost dropped out.

He wishes he had learned these important skills as a younger student, so he is passionate that his daughters learn to overcome obstacles and persevere at young ages so that the same reality does not happen to them when they are older.

For his older daughter, Mr. Allan has not seen her struggle to learn, as academics have come very naturally so far in her school career. So, rather than focusing on academics to teach her how to learn, “We needed her to learn how to learn. So we started her at piano because nothing had been difficult for her up until that point.” As parents, the Allans realized that is not how the real world works and they wanted their children to be ready for struggles, ready for learning difficult concepts and struggling to learn so that they can be prepared for a brighter future. If not through academics, then the Allans believe that something like piano could also teach similar lessons. Learning those valuable lessons now will help their daughters become more resilient and better prepared for future endeavors.

The Curricular Dimension: Meeting the Needs of the Atypical Learner

I feel as if I had opened a book and found roses of yesterday sweet and fragrant,
between its leaves.

- Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of the Island*

Overall, parents and teachers in this study acknowledged that they want their gifted readers to be challenged and motivated in school, even though this is a hard reality sometimes. When teachers and parents understand that gifted readers experience asynchronous development, they can better understand that their needs are very unique and unlike other readers in the general education classroom. In addition to meeting their academic needs, parents and teachers are challenged to also meet the diverse, and

sometimes extremely intense, affective needs of the gifted readers in their charge. This is not an easy task when you consider the fact that gifted readers are usually reading at levels significantly above grade level, requiring texts that are sometimes four to five years above their grade-level peers. In addition, gifted readers can often be more sensitive and intense than other children (Halsted, 2009).

Different Approaches Needed. As a teacher of gifted learners, Ruby tries to help general education teachers understand that gifted readers often need differentiated material to meet their needs. Ruby believes that teachers must understand and accept that gifted readers have unique needs. If gifted readers have already read the novel that has been assigned to the entire class or whenever the other students are practicing something that is inappropriate or unchallenging for gifted readers, teachers should understand and accept that gifted readers need additional or differentiated curriculum in order to grow at the appropriate rate. All too often, her teachers take this as a personal attack or feel somehow that their authority has been threatened. Ruby explains,

I find that teachers often take it personally if a gifted reader needs something different. When a struggling reader struggles, no one blames the teacher. The teacher provides remedial instruction and helps the child get to where they need to be academically. When we ask them to do something different for a gifted reader, they often get offended, take it personal, and become judgmental about the student. They deny the student needs anything different because they think that would mean that they are not a good teacher. Why can't it be the same as it is for struggling readers? Don't blame the kid or feel bad as the teacher – just provide something different in order to better meet their academic needs.

Diana wants her general education teachers to understand and embrace the uniqueness of gifted readers. Being able to nurture their needs and provide rigorous learning opportunities for all learners is the key to a successful classroom. She explains with a chuckle that the need of gifted readers to be immersed in books and reading books at all times frustrates many teachers in her building,

I have heard a lot of stories about gifted kids who have been punished by [teachers] taking their books away. They are not typical – they’re the kids who stay up late with a flashlight and they are tired all the next day.

She believes that teachers need to embrace their quirks and celebrate the intensities in order to meet the diverse needs of gifted readers. Diana wants teachers to see that they have a gift they should be nurturing - children in their classroom that are so dedicated to reading, that they sometimes cannot stop themselves and deny themselves of sleep.

“What amazing things can be done with such dedication!”

Muriel works tirelessly to build relationships with her gifted readers, especially those who are introverted and quiet. Getting them to feel comfortable and vulnerable, enough to open up and share their thoughts, takes a lot of time and effort at the beginning of the year. In addition, it requires an acute understanding of the specific needs of gifted learners, which can be vastly different from those of other types of learners. In order to have quality discussions about reading, Muriel spends a large amount of time at the beginning of the year building partnerships with both the gifted readers and their families.

“So, I feel like if I create a safe environment or safe partnerships, then that is going to make it more comfortable for a gifted introverted child to talk about books.”

Nature and Needs. Truly understanding what gifted readers need is a challenge that Minnie is always facing. She explains that many teachers in her building do not understand what gifted readers need in order to be successful in their general education classrooms. She believes that all teachers need to have a better understanding of the nature and needs of gifted readers. Knowing how and why they struggle, as well as what happens when they succeed, allow us to better service both their academic and affective gifts. She shared,

I would say some of my kids struggle with the Imposter Syndrome - they're not sure how they got into Gifted and they are really afraid that someone is going to figure out they shouldn't be there. I have some who struggle even with starting anything because they are afraid to do it wrong. And, I have others on the opposite end that, where they just want to get everything done really, really quickly and get it over with, because if they don't get it done right away it will create so much anxiety that it's just easier to get it done.

Imposter Syndrome can be defined as “a collection of feelings of inadequacy that persist despite evident success. ‘Imposters’ suffer from chronic self-doubt and a sense of intellectual fraudulence that override any feelings of success or external proof of their competence” (Corkindale, 2008).

Advocacy. Jane is struggling to understand if her children, especially her daughter, are having their needs met at their current schools. As parents, she and her husband worry that they are failing both of their kids. She has thoughts that their daughter might be the one to find the cure for cancer, but she is attending a regular neighborhood school, so is she getting everything she needs to prepare her for the future? She never has

homework, rarely has projects to work on at home, and does not always challenge herself academically. At the same time, she is very involved in other activities like swimming, baking and dance. The parents lose sleep over whether or not they are challenging her enough and if they should be pushing her to achieve even higher academically. Should she be moved to a more challenging school? Is she meeting her full potential? Moving to another school would put a strain on her working parents, who would be responsible for getting her across town to the gifted magnet school each day. And, Jane's daughter is happy and loves school, so should that also be a consideration?

Their personal experience is one of angst and constant questioning. Jane is persistently asking the question, "how do we nurture the full academic potential of these kids we have, while still keeping them well-rounded and not social/emotional wrecks?" They are continually beating themselves up emotionally, wondering if they are doing right by their kids and by their potential. It is a reality that is always in the back of their minds. Ultimately, Jane shared, "I think that the number one priority is I want my kids to be healthy and happy. If they have that, maybe their full academic potential isn't being realized and maybe that's okay."

Rachel switched her daughters' schools because she believes they were being unfairly treated and she felt targeted as a "troublemaker." The first school was refusing to test their daughter fairly and to be unbiased when it came to understanding her twice-exceptionality. The whole purpose of putting her daughters in the neighborhood school was for them to be close to home, make neighborhood friends, and feel like they were part of a community. After being a "room mom" for several years, developing relationships with many teachers in the building, and having her daughters at this school

for several years, it was very hard to uproot the family and move somewhere else, but she felt like she had no other choice if her daughters' academic and affective needs were going to be appropriately met. As she explains,

I burned down my friendship forest. I had to do it. There was never anything personal. But when you have people who are untrained and they are making decisions that will have potentially lasting effects, you can't stay. I was never mean, but I had to be an advocate, and it ruined relationships to the point where they were projecting their frustration with this situation on my kid.

Even after moving once, she was again told that her younger daughter's needs could be better met if she transferred to a third elementary school down the road. She feels like the schools wanted to pawn her off to another school so that her daughters are no longer their problem. As a vocal and informed advocate, she feels as though she resides in a very lonely place. She believes school officials see her as inflexible, unreasonable, and sometimes delusional. Sometimes, she feels like giving up, like accepting the sub-par solutions offered to her and her daughters. In those moments, she has to be reminded that her daughters deserve a quality education, just like everyone else and that their needs can be met, with some training, understanding, and adjustments in their classrooms. "I understand it – it isn't personal. But it's not about the adults. It is about having a system that fails these kids and that's what this is about. It is a structure that works for most, but it doesn't work for these [2e] kids."

Positive Experiences. Josie is supportive of the neighborhood school. She is happy with the educational experiences her daughters are experiencing and has developed positive relationships with both the classroom and gifted and talented teachers. At the

same time, she wonders if her twice-exceptional daughter could be getting more out of school. She explains,

Obviously, every child is different, and they all have strengths and weaknesses. I think that everyone gets to figure out their own kid and all parents have that in common. The twice-exceptionality stuff and the giftedness stuff is totally new and I'm a lot like our older daughter. She is the classic perfectionist, seeking approval from others, and I feel like I have those muscles already. The underperformance and all that stuff that I need to include – I'm learning about that. I don't hear about that as much. I'm not sure that those issues exactly are totally common and I'm not really sure what we're going to do about it. In the long run, as she gets further into her education, I think that she will probably get by in a normal classroom, but I don't know that she will be as successful as she could be if she had more project-based learning or more experiential learning. I guess I'm going to just wait and see how it manifests.

Mrs. Allan explains that her daughters are three and four years above grade level in reading. She thinks the school has done a good job inspiring intellectual curiosity within her daughters. The parents are happy to supplement what is happening at school in their own home whenever they can. She enjoys hearing about what the girls are learning, which often becomes the dinner-table conversation. She describes,

Our school does a really good job with world news and even the girls will come home and mention things like 'Did you know that in the Hindu religion they do this and this?' Then we will try to find background knowledge to build their understanding. One thing we have done is we've started giving her nonfiction

books at about a third or fourth grade level [grade level appropriate], and then introducing her to a novel on that same topic at that seventh grade level [ability level appropriate] so that she has the background information, but that it was delivered in an age-appropriate manner.

Pairing the higher-level fiction with age-appropriate nonfiction, the Allans are able to help their daughters develop the higher-level fiction storylines and comprehend at greater depths. They understand the unique needs of gifted readers are best met through a bridge between school and home. They do not mind supplementing what is happening at school with their own resources and learning along with the girls about new and different subjects. In fact, they both reported that they have learned a great deal of information from the knowledge their daughters have brought home to share with them around the dinner table. On many occasions, they have visited the local library to find more information on these topics in order to supplement their daughters' school experiences.

The Pedagogical Dimension: Opportunities for Gifted Individuals to Thrive

Oh, it's delightful to have ambitions. I'm so glad I have such a lot. And there never seems to be any end to them—that's the best of it. Just as soon as you attain to one ambition you see another one glittering higher up still. It does make life so interesting.

- Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*

Gifted readers are entitled to enrichment services, regardless of their school performance. Twice-exceptional gifted readers should be serviced for both their disabilities and their giftedness. Gifted teachers in this study reported that they often have to intervene and advocate for their students in the regular classroom, as classroom

teachers have very little experience or training for teaching gifted learners. Parents in this study reported similar frustrations.

Strategies. Ruby tries to help prepare other teachers to understand how these students operate and give them strategies to ensure success for gifted readers. She reports that many teachers in her building use gifted readers as tutors for less-able readers during instructional reading times. She is trying to change many of the classroom procedures, like using gifted readers as tutors, that are not successful or appropriate for gifted readers. She explains,

Trying to put them in groups with other students like them is important. I think it's really hard for them to be around readers who struggle, especially when reading aloud. They get very impatient and it must be such an internal struggle for them to watch someone else struggling through something that comes so naturally for them. It is not a good fit for them to read aloud with struggling readers, they don't have the patience.

Similarly, Diana services many gifted readers as the GT teacher at the gifted magnet school. Even though it is a school with a significant number of gifted students, the majority of the teachers in her building have no formal training with gifted students. It is a constant need to help them better understand how to service these unique children who have very specific needs.

It is like they [gifted readers] see themselves in those books and they want to emulate those characters because they want to be part of that world. When they are quiet and reflective I think they're in that world and they might be trying to bring that out into their own world.

Often, meeting the needs of gifted readers goes above and beyond just what happens in the classroom. Muriel believes that she must get to know not only her gifted readers, but also their families, in order to better service these unique learners and provide them with resources that will help them thrive in her classroom. She clarified,

Sometimes I feel like I need to not only know the student, but I need to know the family so that I can make sure that if a child does read a certain book, how might the family handle that book? Are they aware of it, and how we are going to talk through that issue? It's not like I ban books, but I feel that before I can put a book on my shelf I need to have read it, because I don't want them to come across something that a family might be uncomfortable with or if they are uncomfortable, how can I know how to address it with the family?

Communication. Being able to communicate with families and partner with them for the betterment of the students helps gifted readers understand that there are caring adults around them that are rooting for their success. They are not alone in the educational environment, but rather have many allies on their side. Muriel wants her gifted readers to understand that she is on their side and constantly rooting for their success.

Self-Advocates. Minnie challenges her gifted students to be advocates for themselves. When they can express their wants and needs to their teachers in a respectful way, their teachers are more willing to work with them and help provide them with the educational experiences they are looking for. She explains,

A lot of my kids just want to fly under the radar and they don't really want any challenging work. They just want to do what they do and be done with it and

read. Some of them are just people pleasers who don't want to be a bother, so they will do what they are asked, even though they are bored. So it's just teaching them that it's okay to advocate for themselves.

Sometimes general education teachers in her building just need a reminder that gifted kids need differentiation and intentional planning to better meet their needs. The more involved Minnie can keep her gifted students interested in their own education and advocating for themselves, the more they will find opportunities to succeed.

Harnessing Strengths. Rachel wants others to understand that gifted readers have strengths that should be harnessed. She believes they need to be explicitly taught to use their gifts and talents to their advantage and be proud of them. She explains,

I think the thing about readers is that gifted readers are exceptional people. They hold more information in their brains because they take it in. I don't feel like there has been anyone in my daughter's life that has helped her plan or have a lot of extra strength with her ability. I think we're all good at identifying that reading for her is a strength, but we don't empower them with them to say, 'This is your superpower, which would mean that this is the way that you could change the world! How do you transfer your asset, this gift, to impact others?'

Rachel goes on to talk about how gifted readers need to learn about their weaknesses as well as their strengths in order to be more successful,

They're in the top 5% or top 1% of people in the country, if not more broadly.

How could that change your footprint? How do you use that to your advantage?

How do you leverage it for yourself or for others? That's your charge. We have to get your Kryptonite and weaknesses out of the way in order to do that, right?

Bigger Understandings. Josie believes that books can be a way to help her daughters understand the world and how things work. Exposure to other cultures, other people's experiences and the bigger world picture will set her gifted daughters up for success. For her, quality literature can be a resource that will help them succeed. She explains,

Our school is relatively socio-economically constant and they're really just not exposed to a lot of different cultures with any of the issues that you read about in the literature, like struggles or those kinds of things. It is a nice way to give them exposure to what life is really like outside Denver, where you just one-click everything and life is super easy.

Josie goes on to explain, "I want my kids to understand society and see all the sides and understand what happened and not get watered down versions of things. Other than violence and inappropriate content I don't censor them at all."

Loneliness. All parents in this survey reported that they often hid their children's true abilities in reading from other parents of non-gifted children. Jane said that she is so thankful that she has never had to experience her children struggling to read and she considers it a blessing. She is so empathetic with people who are going through that. At the same time, every year since kindergarten, they have been told that their fourth-grade daughter may be too advanced for the neighborhood school she attends and that the school is unable to challenge her. It has been hard to hear this sentiment from multiple teachers, year after year, since they rely on teachers to meet her academic needs at school. Otherwise, she wonders, what is the point of sending her to school? Jane's daughter is constantly surprising them with the depths of her intelligence. Recently, she

got her state assessment scores back from third grade and she was in the 99th percentile on both math and language arts.

When she gets together with friends who have children that struggle academically, Jane almost feels guilty for her predicament and selfish for worrying about her kids, who are clearly thriving academically. She cannot share with her friends what they are going through affectively because she has gotten the “It must be nice to have such smart kids!” response before. She does not feel like others truly grasp the depths of her anxiety and angst about meeting the needs of her gifted children and feels like an elitist if she tries to explain why she wants her children to be challenged at the rate they deserve to be challenged. Jane believes that it is a lonely place sometimes to be the parent of a gifted child.

Mr. and Mrs. Allan feel little sympathy from others when they explain about how painful it is trying to get their children to stop reading and do chores when other parents struggle to get their children to even read grade-level texts. Mrs. Allan reports,

I would have other parents say to me, ‘School is so hard for my child - they have emotional breakdowns at night.’ Well, perfectionism is also an emotional breakdown too, but you can’t tell your friend who has a struggling learner that this is almost as difficult to deal with. Because they’re like, “Whatever! School is easy for your kid!”

Mrs. Allan explains that it can be lonely raising gifted children. Other parents don’t often believe that gifted learners can have as many, if not more, needs as their typically performing counterparts. Just because their needs aren’t academic, doesn’t mean that their needs aren’t just as important as other children.

The findings in the dimensions of Ecology of Schooling show that parents and teachers of gifted readers must be passionate and constant allies for these students.

Parents and teachers must understand that these are unique learners who require modifications in their learning environments in order to be successful and well-adjusted and to have their academic and affective needs met appropriately.

Conceptual Framework Revisited

I don't know what lies around the bend, but I'm going to believe that the best does.

- Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*

Halstead (2009) explains that gifted children “often are burdened with extra emotional and social needs and difficulties. In fact, being gifted truly complicates the usual problems of growing up” (p. 11). The four components of Halsted’s (2009) identified affective needs for gifted readers include establishing an identity, balancing introversion with the social expectations of others, relationships with others, and perfectionism. Halsted (2009) goes on to explain, “Being able to understand their [gifted people] emotional needs, we need to recognize the extras in the developmental tasks that they face” (p. 12). Parents and teachers were asked about the four components in the interview protocols.

In the next sections of this chapter, findings based on the four components of Halsted’s affective development are presented. In Chapter 5, findings will be further analyzed and themes will be generated and interpreted through the data analysis process.

Halsted's Identity

I went out looking for my dreams outside of myself and discovered it's not what the world holds for you, it's what you bring to the world.

- Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*

Participants in this study reported that gifted readers had positive views of their identity. Most participants agreed that gifted readers understand that they are far above the normal reading level of the grade and most took pride in this fact. The only teacher that reported gifted readers as being arrogant was Diana, who works at a gifted magnet school, where competition among gifted students is rampant. Being gifted in reading was described as a “badge of honor” at Diana’s school and students are competitive and can be aggressive in their quest for grades and status in the school. Otherwise, all participants agreed that gifted readers identify themselves as good readers and enjoy the label of being gifted. For the most part, having an identity as a gifted reader was a positive thing for both parents and gifted readers themselves.

Parents reported that their children did seem more aware of moral issues than other children their age. Jane reported her son feels the weight of the world on his shoulders, especially around issues of politics and immigration, which are hot topics in the news right now. Rachel said that her daughter’s moral compass points due north. This year, she ran for and won Student Council President in order to “right the wrongs” she sees happening in her school. Josie noticed her gifted reader withdrawing into herself whenever she sees someone else being mistreated, hurt, or embarrassed. Mrs. Allan said her daughter cries whenever she reads parts of the book *Out of My Mind* by Sharon Draper where others mistreat the main character because of her disability. The parent

reports that her daughter continues to pick up the book and cry every few months. The parent always asks her “why do you put yourself through that?” Her daughter responds that the book is just that important that she cannot help herself from reliving the story over and over.

Minnie had a gifted reader who also read *Out of My Mind*. After doing so, she was compelled to volunteer in the school’s Integrated Learning Center (ILC) where students with severe disabilities are taught. She wanted to show the students in her school with disabilities that there are people out there who care about them and want the very best for them. “That [book] really made a change in her, enough that she wanted to reach out to help other kids because she started to see the impact through what she had read.”

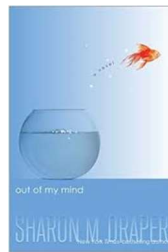


Figure 4.2
A Powerful Resource

Mrs. Allan also reported that her older daughter is socially aware of global and humanitarian issues, such as immigration and global warming, while the younger Allan daughter is more focused on local and animal social issues. For their passion project, the older Allan daughter initially started with bake sales, as she loves to bake, and it would raise money and benefitted plants for the planet. Then she said she wanted to help Ronald McDonald House, which is more humanitarian. The younger daughter, for her birthday one year, wanted to give treats, dog toys and animal food to Denver Dumb Friends

League. Mr. Allan's brother lives in Denver and they often drive by homeless people on their way to his house from their suburban home. They will notice this reality and say, "It's really sad that it's cold out and they are homeless." When they mention it, the Allans make time to talk about it and help the girls process their feelings about the heavy and often sad reality of the world around them.

Halsted's Perfectionism

Tomorrow is a new day with no mistakes in it ... yet.

- Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*

Overall, gifted readers in this study seem to struggle with perfectionism to varying degrees. All teachers reported gifted readers as struggling with this issue in their classrooms, usually feeling a great deal of anxiety in the classroom and wanting other students to see them as perfect. The GT teachers reported that their gifted readers often struggle to show weakness and worry what others will think of them if they are not seen as perfect or if they mispronounce a word during a read aloud session.

Minnie believes it is vital to address perfectionism with her students. Providing them with strategies to overcome their fear of failure is a charge she has committed herself to addressing. All of her students deserve the opportunity to work through issues of perfectionism in a safe environment. She believes that by talking about it and sharing her own experiences with being a perfectionist have helped her students better understand themselves and how to deal with the anxiety that comes along with feeling like you have to be perfect all the time, especially at school.

Parents saw perfectionism coming out in different ways at home. Mr. Allan reported that his younger daughter had a speech delay and did not speak at all for about a

year. They were so concerned that they went to the pediatrician about the issue. Since their older daughter was very precocious from a young age, they felt it was very unusual. One day, in her own time, their younger daughter began speaking in complete sentences, shocking her parents. They have since learned that if she cannot do it well, she will not outwardly try. This is a pattern that has stayed with her and become part of who she is. Now, it does not surprise them when she holds back sharing her talents until she has improved them to her comfort level before sharing them with others. She will one day appear to have a new skill or talent that no one knew she had before.

Halsted's Relationships

If one for her is a tribe, she needs only one.

- Rachel

When asked about relationships for gifted readers (Appendix F and Appendix G), teachers and parents in this study reported that relationships are important to gifted readers, but that gifted readers often feel isolated or different from their peers. Jane reported that although her son is well-rounded, enjoys athletics and academics, he often feels like his peers do not want to discuss issues that are important to him. He is, sometimes frantically, trying to discover his purpose and place in the world. He feels existential angst worrying about his purpose in life, as well as what is happening in the world around him, while his typically performing classmates are worried about what more surface-level issues that he cannot relate to, like girls or sports. Jane reports that he has cried to his parents on more than one occasion, explaining that it must be easier for them, as they already have careers and understand their place in the world. He is truly struggling internally, trying to figure out who he is and where he wants to go in life. The

struggle drains him emotionally and he feels that besides his parents, he has no one to discuss these important life issues with that is his age.

When asked about relationships with others (Appendix F and Appendix G), all participants noted that gifted readers have good relationships with adults and enjoy adult interactions, sometimes more than peer interactions. Jane believes her son has begun to realize that there are different groups of people in his school. Although he is gifted, he often prefers to spend free time with non-gifted peers, with relationships usually revolving around sports or other shared interests. However, as he is beginning to be more aware of the academic performance of others, he is enjoying working with his gifted peers on projects and other assignments where grades are shared. She reported that he recently said to her, “Mom, there are kids that are really considered nerds and I love working with them.” She believes he likes working with those kids because they are like-minded. She is relieved to see him now wanting to spend time with other gifted kids as well as the other students he typically prefers. She hopes that his academic peers might also share their struggles in figuring out who they really are and he will realize that he is not the only one at his school who is struggling to find himself.

Rachel was told by a professional to not judge her daughter’s social needs by her own social needs. If her daughter only needed one friend to be happy and content, then she was told to not push her to have more than one friend. Unless she is struggling, Rachel was told to stay out of her relationships with others and only intervene if there are issues forming and maintaining relationships. Having only one or a handful of friends is not something that feels natural for Rachel, but she has decided to embrace her

daughter's preference for a small group of friends rather than having a large social circle, like Rachel did as a child.

Josie reported that as a newly identified gifted reader, her daughter was invited to the district's weeklong summer camp for gifted and advanced learners where students select classes based on their interests. Her daughter discovered that she has a love of coding through participation in the summer camp. In addition, she has found peers with similar interests and abilities. Josie reports that her daughter has realized that friends with common interests and abilities are the best kind of friends to have. Overall, she has a smaller group of friends compared to other kids in her class, but Jane believes she is happy with her small group and has no desire to expand her friend group. She embraces both boys and girls equally, which is different than Josie's older daughter, who prefers to play only with other girls.

Mrs. Allan reported that her older daughter is not as socially confident at school as she is in the gymnastics arena, where she has lots of strong connections and common interests. She constantly tells her parents at the end of a school day, "So-and-so didn't talk to me today, what did I do wrong?" The Allans believe that she doesn't have that strong of a connection with the school kids like she does with the gym kids and just didn't feel confident enough in her friendships to ask what was going on that day. The same issue is nonexistent with this child at the gym. The friends at school that the older Allan daughter gravitates toward are all fans of Harry Potter. Her school relationships are shallower than her gym ones, where the other girls compete together and see themselves as a team.

The Allans' younger daughter has a few friends and gravitates toward academic peers rather than friends who are girls. She is fine being friends with both boys and girls, which is somewhat unusual for children her age. The teacher has reported to the Allans that most of the girls stay with other girls and the same is true for boys. The younger Allan daughter does not look at gender, but rather ability level when selecting friends. Her academic peers are her strongest connections at school.

Halsted's Balancing Introversion

Kindred spirits are not so scarce as I used to think. It's splendid to find out there are so many of them in the world.

- Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*

When asked questions about balancing introversion with the social expectations of others (Appendix F and Appendix G), responses were mixed. All teachers reported that their gifted students often prefer to be alone, sometimes going as far as taking books out to recess as their preferred activity. Parents reported a mix of their gifted readers sometimes wanting to be alone, but other times preferring to be around siblings and other children. Parents described their gifted readers are able to note differences between their relationships with other gifted students and relationships with students who are not gifted. There are times they prefer to be with non-gifted peers, and other times they prefer to be with gifted peers. Many of their children are navigating how to exist with both peer groups, often selecting to work with other gifted children in academic realms, while preferring to work with non-gifted peers in other activities. Jane and Josie reported that their gifted readers prefer to be around other children versus time alone, since they are very active and involved in many group activities, like soccer and basketball. Both

families have strong neighborhood ties and their children spend a great deal of time outside being active with their friends.

Rachel reported that books are the place where her daughter can find the escape, the stimulation that she is looking for in the world. She enjoys escaping to the world of her books and prefers to be with books over being with real people. As a very bold and creative child, her love of books has caused her to begin writing plays and drawing pictures about her books, as well as writing fantasy stories. She is starting to be interested in theater, but this is going to be a jump for her, as it will require a lot of time and interactions with others. Rachel's younger daughter struggles daily with peer relationships and makes a lot of social errors, like tattling on friends when they don't want to play with her, which lead to additional isolation and peer rejection. Her sense of social justice outweighs her allegiance to her friends, which has caused some heartache and loss of relationships.

Data Analysis of Research Questions

Anne has as many shades as a rainbow and every shade is the prettiest while it lasts

- Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gable*

The following information relates to the research questions that are the heart of this research study. Affective supports and barriers for gifted readers were examined and parents and teachers were asked how quality literature affects the gifted readers in their lives. In the next sections of this chapter, findings based on the three research questions are presented. In Chapter 5, findings will be further analyzed and themes will be generated and interpreted through the data analysis process.

Question 1: Parent and Teacher Perceptions of Affective Supports

Teachers in this study reported that they are much more in tune with the affective needs of their gifted students than ever before. They were asked specifically to explain how they support the affective development of gifted readers in their classes (see Appendix F). Since the state of Colorado requires affective goals to be written on Advanced Learning Plans (CDE, 2019) for all gifted children, teachers are now able to both program for and service the affective needs of gifted learners. Affective goals must “reflect development of personal, social, communication, leadership, and/or cultural competency” (CDE, 2019). With affective goals being mandated by the state, teachers report they understand that these goals must be a priority for gifted learners. Minnie reported that nearly all of her students struggle with perfectionism and she has started something called “Affective Fridays” where they focus solely on affective aspects of being gifted on these days. Students are required to reflect on their week and share any progress (or lack of progress) toward their ALP affective goals in a google doc where Minnie can comment and provide advice or suggestions to students. A student’s google doc and Minnie’s responses to the student can be seen in Figure 4.3.

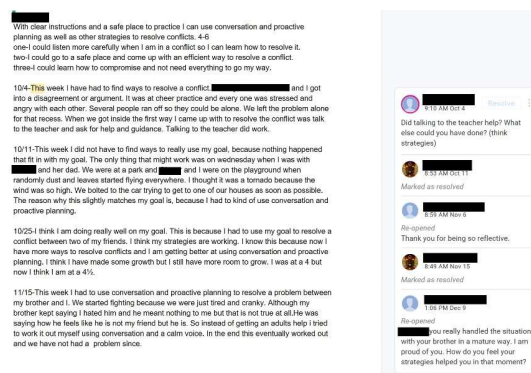


Figure 4.3
Affective Fridays Google Doc

Diana explained how she works with the affective needs of her students. Being at a gifted magnet school, she has large groups of students with similar goals. “I found that it is really effective to be able to connect their affective goals to literature.” She works with her students to understand their goals and how they can begin to see themselves from different angles. They read and discuss different picture books to learn lessons and help each other be more successful. Working in groups seems to help the GT students take ownership of their goals and gently hold each other accountable for growth and making big changes in their affective development.

Muriel reported that she asks gifted students to keep a reading log that they use for reflection purposes. The reflection focuses more on personal growth and what was gained as a result of reading, rather than a traditional reading log that focuses on the number of pages read and asks comprehension questions. In addition, she allows students to abandon any book they choose, but she asks them to explain why they abandoned the book, which teaches them something about the book as well – maybe the book is still too hard, too easy, not an appropriate subject, etc. As she has been working with students to better understand how they feel about books, she has noticed they tend to make better book selections and there are fewer students abandoning books than ever before in her classroom.

To calculate the number of words in your book. Pick a page. Count the number of words in one line and the number of lines - multiply these two numbers. Now multiply your answer with the number of pages in the book. Come see me with the book if you need help.

Book title	# of words

Figure 4.5
Million Dollar Word Club Tracker

Parents were also explicitly asked how they support the affective development of their gifted readers. Rachel reported that she developed a reading log/reading rubric to help her twice-exceptional daughter with the visual disability (see Figure 4.6). She believes this has helped keep her daughter accountable for reading, while also helping her compensate for her disability. She has encouraged her daughter's teachers to use this rubric as well as a way to ensure that her daughter is reading appropriately and not pretending to read, which has been a real problem in the past. She believes this rubric has helped her daughter become more confident as a reader and has given her a tool to remind her of all the strategies she has been given to help her visualize and strengthen her reading comprehension. In addition, she finds this is a good way to keep her daughter accountable to read, knowing she will have to answer questions and have a conversation with her mother about reading. Rachel offered to share this tool with the school, but no one in the school was interested, since school officials did not see this gifted reader as struggling. As a result, it is only used at home to record information at home. Rachel hopes her daughter will eventually be willing to take the log/rubric with her to school and use it in the classroom, but for now it is only used at home.

Name:	Visualizing / Verbalizing / Reading Rubric			Date:
4 - outstanding	3 - Wow	2 - So-So	1 - ops	Comments:
I read or responded to reading 100% of the time	I read or responded to reading about 75% of the time	I read or responded to reading about 50% of the time	I wasted reading and responding time	
I stopped to visualize after every paragraph, using structure words	I stopped to visualize after every page, using structure words	I stopped once or twice to visualize, using structure words	I forgot to stop to visualize, using structure words	
I had a vivid movie playing in my mind, the whole time	I had a pretty clear movie playing in my mind, most of the time	I had a partial movie playing in my mind, for some of the time	There was no movie playing in my mind	
My time reading and responding is increasing a lot	My time reading and responding is increasing a bit	My time reading and responding is staying the same	My time reading and responding is decreasing	

Figure 4.6
Visualizing/Verbalizing/Reading Rubric

Teaching gifted readers to understand and be proud of their giftedness is another way for them to feel that their affective needs are being met. Rachel shared that she has had both of her daughters read and work through the book *The Survival Guide for Gifted Kids* by Judith Galbraith. It has helped them develop a better understanding of what giftedness is and how to be more successful at school and at home as a result. Rachel has seen how helping her girls learn to embrace their giftedness has brought about many positive results. Also, she has taught her daughters to journal in a mindful manner using the book *Mindful Journaling* by Tara Ward as their first foray into keeping a record of their thoughts and emotions. She believes this is a positive outlet for them to use to keep a record of their experiences. Being able to go back and read what you were going through during a difficult or exciting time period can give you courage and strength to face another obstacle you are up against. Seeing how you came through to the other side

can also give you additional strength and inspiration to know that you have done it before and you can do anything you put your mind to again.

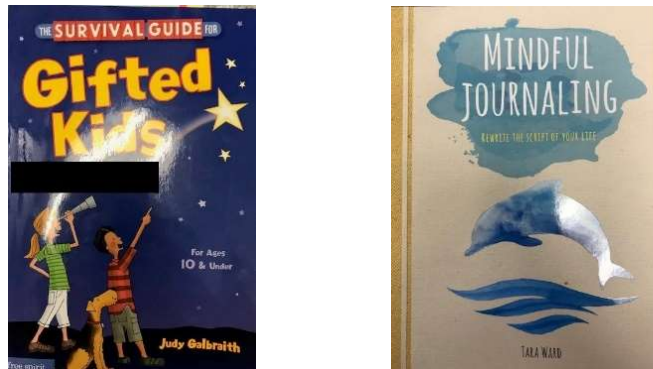


Figure 4.7
Positive Affective Resources

Rachel has found that audio books are a great way to help engage her twice-exceptional reader. She encourages her to listen to audio books and podcasts and then draw pictures to go along with what she is hearing. One of their favorite podcasts is called “Six Minutes”. It tells a very lengthy story in six-minute segments in an audio format. This episodic, full cast podcast is a science fiction novel that is told in a series of audio episodes. Currently, there are almost 200 episodes in the two seasons of this podcast, which is geared toward elementary aged children. Listening to this podcast with her daughter, Rachel helps her daughter visualize what the characters look like and they share their mental images with each other. They have debates about what color hair various characters have and they are able to have fun conversations about the podcast, which Rachel uses as a tool to strengthen her daughter’s visual memory.



Figure 4.8
A Listening Adventure

In addition, interactive books, like Leap Pens, have helped bridge the gap for Rachel's younger child. She also works with both of her daughters to write their own books and then read them repeatedly. Rachel has typed up her daughters' stories and turned them into actual books, with binding, for them to read. She is hoping all of these things will foster a lifetime love of reading in her daughters.

Rachel also shared that helping gifted children better understand their affective needs can lead to better acceptance. The book *Quiet Power: The Secret Strengths of Introverts* by Susan Cain, has definitely changed her daughters' outlook on life. Once they actually named their daughter's anxiety, it was an empowering moment for her. Her daughter said, "Oh, there's nothing wrong with me I have just have this thing called anxiety that I have to learn how harness it for good and look and play on its assets and then learn how to control the negative effects on me." Her younger daughter had an epiphany and finally realized "Oh, wait. I am who I am and that is totally okay." After discovering that introverts have these incredible abilities too and the fact that their relationships are more loyal gave her a boost of confidence. She also learned that they can often stay calmer and they know how to relax better than people who are not introverts. This book has empowered Rachel's daughter and changed her thinking about

herself. Rachel is also helping her daughters looking at weaknesses as “kryptonite” and their strengths are superpowers.

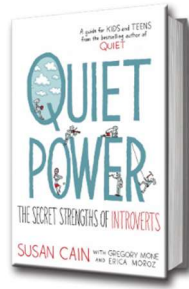


Figure 4.9
A Resource for Introverts

Question 2: Parent and Teacher Perceptions of Affective Barriers

Parents and teachers were asked about the affective barriers that exist for gifted readers (Appendix F and Appendix G). Parents reported that their children often choose to work with struggling readers to help them improve reading ability, while teachers reported that gifted readers often express frustration when asked to work with struggling readers. Teachers mentioned that many gifted readers possess a lack of patience with struggling readers and are not the best role models for these students, since reading comes so much easier to gifted readers. Gifted teachers fear that gifted readers are sometimes forced to become tutors for lower-performing readers, while their own reading instruction is minimal to none. Rachel also expressed a concern that her own children are often left to read on their own without direct instruction from teachers, sometimes for the entire school year. She called this phenomenon “the curse of the kidney table” since gifted readers are never invited to work with the teacher in a small group at the traditional kidney table where direct instruction usually occurs.

Jane and Josie both reported that their gifted readers do not have a strong desire to read. Although they are incredibly capable readers, they select other activities over reading. Both parents reported that they still encourage reading at home, use the library, and purchase books from online retailers, like Amazon, regularly, but their children do not seem to prefer reading, even though it is an academic strength. Josie reported that she is worried her gifted reader might be underachieving and has concerns about that reality. The family is new to the idea of what being gifted means for their child, so they are actively monitoring their daughter and seeking additional information about what underachievement in gifted children looks like and how to help them continue to make adequate growth and maintain a positive attitude about reading.

A large barrier for parents of twice-exceptional children is the lack of understanding or awareness of what a twice-exceptional student needs and how to service these unique learners. When dealing with students who have issues like anxiety or learning disabilities, many gifted and talented teachers are not equipped or trained to accommodate these learners. Many times, their deficit areas are addressed, while ignoring their strengths, or assuming that their strength areas do not need direct instruction or enrichment.

In addition, gifted services for twice-exceptional gifted readers is also a barrier. Rachel has struggled to have both the exceptionalities acknowledged by school officials. Schools can't seem to find creative ways to service both the disability and the giftedness. As a result, Rachel reported that her daughters' strength areas are often ignored so that their deficit areas can be serviced. She believes that servicing both is a right that all 2e kids deserve.

Rachel reported that being an introvert has been a huge affective barrier for her older daughter. She understands that she is an introvert living in an extroverted world. Sometimes, teachers and other adults, not understanding her nature, and with the best of intentions, would try to push her out of her comfort zone. Many adults think they are being supportive to gifted introverts, but their persistence to be around people is draining and counterproductive to what an introvert needs.

Question 3: Children's Literature Promotes the Affective Needs of Gifted Readers

Parents and teachers were both asked about how they see books/quality literature changing or influencing gifted readers (Appendix F and Appendix G). Both reported that they believe there are many more exceptional options for reading now than when they were young. The selection of award-winning books and quality literature is better than ever and much of the young adult literature available today is enjoyable for children and adults. The titles in Figure 4.10 were shared by Rachel as helpful resources that she uses with her daughters in their affective development. These books are also frequently used by her daughters' teachers after she shared them as positive resources.



Figure 4.10
Resources that Promote Affective Growth

In this research study, seven of the eight participants brought up the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling as literature that had changed the lives of children. Teachers reported that this series has affected their students in very powerful ways and students often gravitate toward other students who have a love of this series. Diana has a group of gifted girl readers in second grade who dress as Harry Potter characters regularly. They talk as though they believe they are members of the Ravenclaw house, one of the four schoolhouses in the Harry Potter series. Parents reported that their children were touched by these books as well and their gifted readers connected deeply with the characters in these books. Mrs. Allan says that her daughter used her own money to buy an Amazon Echo Dot in order to listen to audio books at night to lull her to sleep. The Echo Dot is an electronic device that will read purchased audio books aloud. “But these are only books that she has already read, like the Harry Potter series and it’s like a lullaby.” Mrs. Allan also explained that her older daughter made friends in fourth grade because there is a group of Harry Potter fans in her class. “She ended up with a class of girls that like Harry Potter so they bonded over this fact, and she had relationships that she felt comfortable with.”

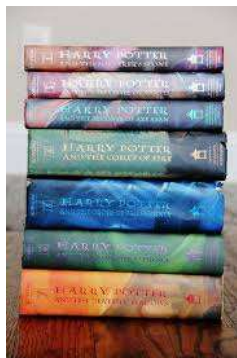


Figure 4.11
The Most Influential Books in this Study

When asked if they believe that literature has the ability to change children (Appendix F), teachers in this study all agreed that the selection of children's literature has greatly improved over the past several years. Now, many more selections of young adult literature that explore relevant themes and important concepts are readily available. The exposure of children to multicultural characters experiencing real world issues allows teachers freedom to make selections they feel are relevant to their students more now than ever before.

In the past, teachers felt pressure to teach "the classics" even though many of these novels are not culturally relevant and/or have outdated language that is inappropriate for children today. Teachers and parents believe that some classic novels could even be considered racist in today's culture. Even with this reality, teachers reported that parents often inquire about why they are not reading more classic literature. Teachers have to explain that today's young adult literature often focuses on powerful themes and ideas that children can make connections to and learn lessons about real life issues. Often, classic literature is no longer appropriate for young gifted readers and more powerful and relevant choices are better selections for these children to enjoy. Getting parents to understand and accept this reality has been challenging.

Teachers recounted that they no longer feel the same pressure to teach older, more classical literature that they once did. Muriel believes that today's literature offers everyone something. Two teachers, Diana and Muriel, reported that parents often ask them why classical literature is no longer taught in classrooms today. These teachers reported that parents are still encouraging their children to read classical novels that they also read as children. Teachers, especially Ruby, sometimes give parents updated book

lists to try to encourage their children to select books from instead of necessarily relying on classical literature to be the only rigorous, appropriate, and quality literature children read. Ruby has several lists going at any given time and is always adding titles to her lists.

Josie shared that their neighborhood school is relatively socio-economically constant and her children are not exposed to different cultures or diversity, or even exposed to the issues that you read about in the literature, like major life struggles. She believes that exposure to quality literature is “a nice way to give them exposure to what life is really like outside suburban Denver, where you just one-click everything and life is super easy.” She believes that literature builds more of a framework for them to understand history, cultures, nuances and relationships with each other.

Theoretical Frameworks Revisited

The theoretical frameworks explored in this research study include the Theory of Positive Disintegration by Kazimierz Dabrowski and the overexcitabilities that he identified as relevant for gifted children and Lev Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory, specifically the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Both theories played a prevalent role in the minds of parents and teachers. Parents were less aware of the names of the specific theories, but their thorough descriptions of both overexcitabilities and the ZPD were accurate and present with their gifted readers. In the next sections of this chapter, findings based on the theoretical frameworks are presented. In Chapter 5, findings will be further analyzed and themes will be generated and interpreted through the data analysis process.

Dabrowski's Overexcitabilities

There are so many Annes in me. I sometimes think that is why I'm such a troublesome person. If I was just the one Anne, I would be ever so much more comfortable, but then it wouldn't be half so interesting.

- Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*

Each interviewee relayed information about overexcitabilities with gifted readers when asked if they noticed whether or not gifted readers exhibited signs of overexcitabilities (Appendix F and Appendix G). Even if two of the parents did not have the accurate or specific vocabulary to identify exactly what the overexcitabilities are, their descriptions of their children being “overly sensitive” or “empaths” helped the researcher identify that they were describing overexcitabilities in their gifted readers. Once the researcher explained to those parents the types of overexcitabilities that exist, they agreed that their children did, in fact, exhibit classic traits of the various overexcitabilities described by Dabrowski.

Diana has her students take the Overexcitability Questionnaire Two (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009) at the beginning of the year to discover their overexcitabilities. She then works directly with students and parents to address each of the overexcitabilities. She reports that being able to identify and learn about each one helps her gifted students better understand themselves and accept their overexcitabilities as positive aspects of their personality, rather than deficit areas. Parents are also interested to learn about overexcitabilities and often report that they are able to better understand their children's needs when they learn more about how overexcitabilities impact gifted learners. Since she works at a gifted magnet school, Diana has large groups of students in each grade that

are identified as gifted. She usually has each student pick the two overexcitabilities with the highest score on the OEQ-II to focus on for the year. Many of them are woven into the affective goals she writes on her Advanced Learning Plans for gifted students in the fall. They revisit the overexcitabilities often and are completely familiar with the nuances of each one.

Her groups of gifted learners read picture books that address the overexcitability, complete activities that address issues and concepts in the picture books that relate to the various overexcitabilities, and then discuss ways they can use their overexcitabilities to their advantage, rather than seeing them as a disadvantage. Diana believes that seeing the overexcitabilities as a positive feature of their personality helps gifted children understand and accept themselves in more positive ways. Knowing who they are and how they operate aids them in understanding their place in the world and their relationships with other students. Embracing these aspects of themselves and learning to use them to their advantage allows gifted children to be more accepting of themselves, as well as recognize themselves in other characters in the literature they read. Diana's students are incredibly receptive to this activity and often enjoy trying to guess the overexcitabilities of their classmates. She has a bookshelf of books that relate to overexcitabilities and an ongoing list that she is building. Some of the books she uses for her overexcitabilities lessons, as well as a photograph of her overexcitabilities bookshelf of resources are shown in Figure 4.12.



Figure 4.12
Resources for Teaching Overexcitabilities

Mrs. Allan was the only person in this study who described traits in her daughters that connect with Dabrowski's sensual and psychomotor overexcitabilities. She described her daughter's sensory need to feel the floor beneath her feet and the fact that her daughters needed intense physical activities in order to feel good, which is why they are now competitive gymnasts. The three overexcitabilities that were mentioned across the board by parents and teachers alike for gifted readers were emotional overexcitability, intellectual overexcitability, and imaginal overexcitability. These three overexcitabilities are explored in depth in the next sections.

Dabrowski's Emotional Overexcitability

Dabrowski's emotional overexcitability was the one most often referenced by parents and teachers alike as being present in gifted readers. All participants reported that

gifted readers in their lives struggle emotionally and seem to carry the weight of the world on their shoulders. Many gifted readers in this study are strongly connected to various books, which can both help and hinder gifted readers with their emotional overexcitabilities. Parents and teachers alike reported that books can either help readers process difficult topics and help readers see themselves in what they are reading or add additional stress on readers who might be introduced to new struggles and feel existential angst more deeply than their peers who are reading the same material. Diana reported that a five-year-old gifted reader reading the book *Pinkalicious* by Victoria Kann and Elizabeth Kann had an existential breakdown trying to process the idea that pink was her favorite color and suddenly felt burdened by her own self-awareness. She was crying and questioning why she even liked the color pink and needed validation that it was okay to have other favorite colors as well.

Ruby reported that her own gifted reader brought *Fellowship of the Ring*, the first book in the Lord of the Rings series by J.R.R. Tolkien to her own Homecoming dance as a sort of security blanket. She knew that she could find a quiet corner in the room and read if she was not feeling up to socializing and dancing. Minnie reported that being able to read about somebody his or her own age that has influenced major change, like Malala, the Nobel Peace Prize winner and subject of the autobiography *I am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai, allows gifted readers to see positive influences that demonstrate to them that they have the ability to change the world. She believes that providing role models for gifted readers to emulate allows them to find their own place in the world and begin to set goals for their future. In addition, Minnie shared “I try really hard to make sure that my kids can see themselves in the books, or at least, in some of the choices that I had for

them to read.” Being able to see yourself in a book can help you overcome adversity and not feel so alone in the world. Sharing a book like *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin* by Julia Finley Mosca can make an impact on students who also visualize their thinking and help them not feel so alone in the world.

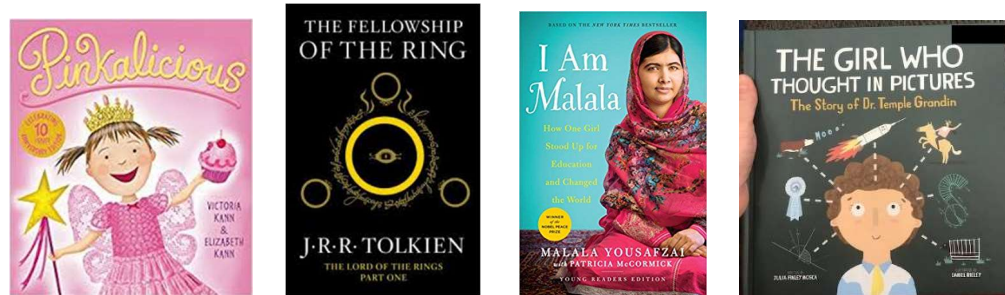


Figure 4.13
Books that Influenced Gifted Readers in this Study

Muriel decided to help her students navigate their sensitivities by deviating from the tradition of leveling her classroom library books according to level and instead labeled them with character-building labels, like “for sensitive souls,” appealing to the emotions of her gifted readers, rather than genre or ability level (see Figure 4.14). She has found that her gifted readers are much more in tune with what they want to read and are able to select books that they are emotionally willing to invest in on any given day since she changed the way she labels and presents books to her students. If her students are not feeling up to reading heavier material, they can select something a little more lighthearted and easier to read emotionally. In the past, students were only interested in books that were appropriate for their reading level.

Muriel is proud that her students are able to help recommend appropriate books to other gifted readers according to these labels as well. She is especially pleased that her

students have stopped selecting books strictly by “ability” level and now look at reading any book as a learning opportunity. The competitive nature of her gifted readers has been replaced by much more thoughtful and meaningful book selections that lead to great conversations and deeper level questioning.



Figure 4.14
A Different Way to Organize Books

Minnie has created a mental health check board for her gifted students to help with their emotional overexcitability. Each day, students place themselves in one of the following categories: I’m great!; I’m good!; Meh, I’m Struggling; and Help! Minnie reports that she has learned more about her gifted students using this check-in method than ever before. One gifted reader was quiet and moody for a few days before the board was implemented. Once she had the opportunity and tool to use to open up to her gifted and talented teacher, this gifted child expressed many things that had been going on in her life, things that her classroom teacher was completely unaware of, including her parents’ divorce and other difficult situations. It was in this moment that Minnie realized the power of this device and committed herself to investing in her students and making sure that they understand she is there for them.

With this tool, Minnie is able and willing to listen to the problems of her students, help them brainstorm solutions, and above all, let them know that she cares about them and what is going on in their lives. Minnie wants them to understand that school is important, but their wellbeing is also acknowledged, respected and nurtured in her classroom. At first, it took the entire class period to work her way through the board and check in with each gifted student in her classroom. Eventually, as her gifted readers have opened up to her more and more, it now takes only fifteen to twenty minutes a day to work her way through the board. Minnie says that she will never stop using this board as a way to connect with her students, as it has had a profound impact on her ability to connect with her gifted learners in an easy way that doesn't take a lot of extra effort.

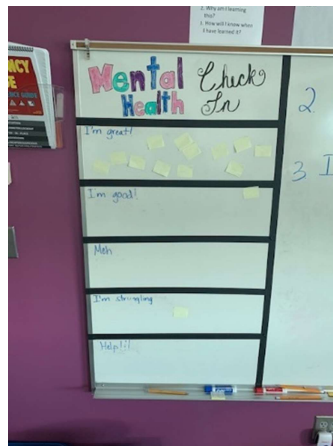


Figure 4.15
Mental Health Check

Jane explained how her son is worried about where his place is in this world. He has cried to his parents often recently, afraid that he will never figure out what he was put on this planet to do. He is struggling to find and develop an identity and feels the weight of the world on his shoulders. At night, he worries about current politics and the immigration issues that are plaguing our country at this time. Recently, he read the book

A Long Walk to Water by Linda Sue Park and decided to host a drive at his school for the lost boys of Sudan by himself. He also worries that he has no “true” friends in life and questions every relationship he has. He is not feeling fulfilled by his relationships and notices that his friends are grappling with the same issues. Being existentially aware of himself and his identity has become a burden that he hates to carry around with him daily. Jane realizes that this is not normal middle school boy behavior, but rather a result of what she deems his “extreme sensitivity”.

Josie told how her older daughter came home from school visibly upset one day. Her class was reading *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* by Kate DiCamillo. In the story, Edward, a porcelain bunny who was once loved and treasured, gets lost and passed from owner to owner over a series of years. At one point, in a fit of anger, his head is broken against a countertop and then repaired, and eventually he goes blind at the end of the story. Although the story has many redeeming themes and positive overall messages, her daughter was processing the various events of the story throughout the weekend and needed opportunities to cry and talk about her feelings. When Josie asked around if any other parents had experienced anything similar, no other parents reported similar behavior of their children as a reaction to this novel, which caused her to feel scared and worried about her own daughter’s unusual reaction to the book. Josie continually pointed out throughout the interview that gifted education was a new concept for her family and she was spending much time researching and reaching out to other parents in an attempt to understand how to navigate not only the overexcitabilities that her daughter was experiencing, but also her twice-exceptionality.



Figure 4.16
Books that have an Impact

Mrs. Allan recounted a story about their younger daughter. When she was in kindergarten, she noticed a little boy across the parking lot who lost the string of a balloon that soared up into the sky and he was crying. The parent, who was busy locating and then loading the car with groceries, had not noticed. She looked down to put her daughter into the car and she was crying and sobbing. The parent, alarmed, quickly asked what was wrong. She reported, “He’s so sad about his balloon” and she just got so emotional over it. Mrs. Allan also reported that this child is the first one to pick up emotional books and cry when reading them. “It’s funny because that’s her strength, but where she also struggles with feeling so much empathy.” This daughter also experienced night terrors during her young years after reading books at bedtime that were emotionally heavy in content.

Mrs. Allan has given her daughters journals for recording quotes and inspirational messages they get from the books they are reading. When they go through tough situations, they often refer back to their quotes for inspiration to get through current obstacles. Since they are both competitive gymnasts, they often refer back to their journals for inspiration when they are feeling nervous or insecure before a gymnastics meet or competition. One of their daughters brings books to her competitive meets and

literally reads to calm her nerves before the competition begins. She also brings her journal of inspirational quotes and repeats them to herself as a mantra. The quotes help her focus and prepare herself mentally for the competition. She usually selects quotes from the autobiographies she reads of athletes, since they can relate to what she is experiencing, and they are able to give her sound and solid advice for competitions. An example of her journal, an inspirational quote, and the book it came from can be seen below in Figure 4.17. Mrs. Allan reported that it is not uncommon to hear her daughters quoting from their journals around the house randomly as they are working on other tasks or getting ready in the mornings. She hopes that that the journals and the inspirational quotes help her daughters overcome obstacles as they experience more and more about what life has to offer them.

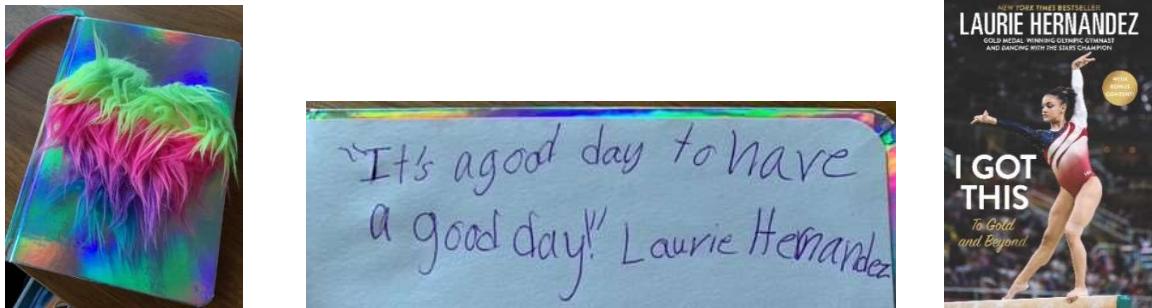


Figure 4.17
Using Book Quotes as Inspiration

Dabrowski's Intellectual Overexcitability

A fundamental benefit of reading is the ability to keep intellectual curiosity alive.

- Judith Halsted, *Some of My Best Friends are Books* (2009)

Most parents in this study reported that gifted readers tend to be voracious readers that utilize their resources effectively. It was reported by teachers and parents that many

gifted readers discussed in this study always have at least a book, if not three or four, going at any given time. Diana reported that one day, as she walked by one of her gifted students in the hallway at the gifted magnet school, he was visibly upset and frowning. When she stopped him to find out what was wrong, he grumbled that the librarian was absent and wanted to know if Diana knew why. She mentioned she heard the librarian was sick. He burst into tears and said, “Now who is going to help me pick out books? My day is ruined!” This pattern repeated the next time the librarian was absent. Diana spoke to this student when he was in a better place mentally and he was able to articulate that he trusts the librarian’s judgement for book selections and she seems to understand his taste in books, unlike anyone else in his life. She also has access to all the “new” books that come into the library and allows him first choice of those titles, which is a thrilling experience for him. Diana’s school library is featured in Figure 4.18.



Figure 4.18
Safe Spaces for Gifted Readers

Diana has a designated reading area in her classroom. A small group of gifted boy readers, when making transitions from one academic class to another, while other children are talking or playing games, seeks out her reading corner as a safe, quiet place where they can spend a few relaxing minutes, sometimes even just five minutes, engaging in their favorite and preferred activity, reading. Sometimes they read independently, but still sit together as a group, other times they ask one particular boy to read aloud to the group. Regardless, they understand that this is a safe place for them to enjoy themselves and participate in a favored activity either together or individually. Diana's classroom reading area is also pictured in Figure 4.18. Diana reports that her gifted students sometimes come to her couch to read wearing house shoes or slippers. She likes that they feel comfortable enough in her space to relax and enjoy their books without worrying about what is happening in the school around them. A photo of a young reader relaxing in slippers is featured in Figure 4.18.

Rachel reported that her older daughter was very excited about her third birthday party several years ago. They planned the party carefully, went shopping for decorations, carefully picked out the perfect cake, and counted down the days until the big day was upon them. During this time, her daughter had started reading a book that had hooked her and she was constantly reading the book during her free time. At one point during the noisy festivities, Rachel looked around and noticed that all the girls were playing, but the birthday girl was nowhere to be found. After a thorough look around the house, they located her in her closet, reading her book. Rachel laughed and said she often wondered how many other children would skip their birthday party to spend time alone in the closet with a riveting book.

Mr. Allan told a story about their younger daughter's intellectual overexcitability. When their daughter was three years old, she was so mad at the father because he kept saying no to something she really wanted to do. The child felt so strongly about participating in this activity, so she kept arguing with her father. Finally, she blurted out in a very loud voice to her father, "I must break you!" They still laugh about this outburst as a family today. They believe it showed the incredibly strong will and sharp intellect of a very young child.

Mr. and Mrs. Allan also reported that their gifted readers are usually reading four to five books at the same time. Their bookshelves are full of books and they have books crammed all over their bedrooms in every nook and cranny they can find. One time Mrs. Allan visited the school as her daughter's class was leaving the library. Her daughter was at the very end of the line multitasking - reading her book while walking back to class. She chuckled while explaining that their daughters always like to have their noses in books. The Allans categorize their lower level or previously read, much loved books as "dessert books", and their "thinker books" are those level-appropriate books they are currently reading for the first time. Mrs. Allan reported that even while reading so many books at the same time, the reading comprehension of their girls is still very appropriate, and they are able to retain everything they read from all of the books they are reading at the same time.

Mrs. Allan says that when other children come to their house and play in their daughter's bedroom, they always say, "My gosh, you have so many books!" She chuckled when she remembered her daughter's response: "There is another bookshelf in

Mom and Dad's room and Mara has two others. I don't have the majority of the books. My room is the smaller one."



Figure 4.19
Overflowing Bookshelves

Dabrowski's Imaginational Overexcitability

Because when you are imagining, you might as well imagine something worthwhile.

- Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*

Teachers and parents also mentioned, when asked about overexcitabilities (Appendix F and Appendix G), that many gifted readers are incredibly imaginative and seek creative outlets for their overexcitability. Many teachers reported that they have designated reading areas where gifted readers can congregate to read and discuss the books they are reading, or to simply relax and enjoy a good book. Ruby describes her reading nook as a safe and comforting place for readers to relax and enjoy their books whenever they have a few extra minutes of class. The twinkle lights add to the ambiance and mood of the reading nook and she posted a few pictures that help children imagine they are on the moon – or at least far enough away from school to feel free to use their imagination to believe that books can take you far away from your life, your problems, and your routine.



Figure 4.20
Reading Nook

Muriel reported that one of her favorite quotes that she shares with her students is “Books are either windows, doors, or mirrors.” They can be windows allowing you to see into a character’s life, doors that can take you into the world of the characters, or books can be mirrors that reflect your own experiences through the lives and lived experiences of the characters in your books. When students understand the power and unique quality of books, they can allow their imaginations to take them anywhere. Minnie recounted that she has students who often tell her “Oh, I don’t want to finish this book because I love living in this world and I’m just not ready for it to end.” Diana shared a similar sentiment when she explained that she sees many gifted students “who read a book and they just want to sit there and hold the book because they are processing the story and they are in that world.”

Rachel explained how her older daughter craves creative outlets and seeks out ways to have this overexcitability met. This daughter spends hours reading, producing plays, creatively writing alternative endings, and various sequels to the books she has read. Her favorite class last semester was creative writing. Since the school was unable to provide additional creative outlets for this gifted reader for next semester, she requested

that she be able to repeat her favorite course, creative writing, as a way to help her feel connected and engaged in her schoolwork. This was the only possible solution that would appease this gifted reader, who, even as a good and successful student academically, often feels alone and misunderstood in the heavily academic-focused school where she attends. According to Rachel,

Her imagination is out of this world, but also to her detriment, so that makes her the most creative writer and playwright you going to meet, but it also penetrates pretty deep when she imagines negative things happening to her family, or she can play that out in the same way.

Rachel's younger daughter is also very imaginative. Her imaginal overexcitability comes out "when she sees people talking, she will make it about her." Rachel reports that her daughter will create a whole story that she thinks the other people are saying about her and explain why they are saying the story – and then she will believe the story. She will treat the people in her story like the event actually happened, which is how her friendships have started to fall apart. Her imagination seems to get the better of her in these situations.

Rachel also tries to use literature to nurture the imagination of her children. She recommended a few books that she has used with her children. *Byron: The Caterpillar Who Loved to Imagine* by Dianne Maroney is an excellent resource to use with gifted readers who are imaginative. The message of the book teaches kids to believe in themselves, listen to their hearts, and follow their dreams. Another book by the same author that helps children express through writing what they have experienced with hardships in their lives, and then visualize what their future could be in a beautiful and

nonthreatening “Imagine Story” is a book called *The Imagine Project* by Dianne Maroney. *The Imagine Project* is a practical, effective, and profound tool, which empowers kids to rise above the drama, trauma, and stress of their lives. This book is currently being used throughout the Green Gables school district. Many teachers have reported very positive results with all children, not just those who have experienced severe trauma, as students are able to write about their positive and negative experiences in a third-person voice and share with classmates if they so choose. Rachel reported that her daughters are excited to write a new “Imagine Story” each year and share their life struggles, as well as their hopes and dreams for a bright future with others in their classes by sharing their stories.



Figure 4.21
Books that Make a Difference

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

My library isn't very extensive but every book in it is a friend.

- Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne's House of Dreams*

The ZPD is a key factor in the asynchrony of gifted readers (Silverman, 1997, p. 45). Independently, gifted readers in this study were able to access text that exceeded their developmental level by as many as four to five years, as reported by their teachers

and parents. According to Innovative Learning (2011), teachers and parents should provide types of scaffolding support to bridge the gap of the ZPD for gifted readers. "Scaffolding refers to the way the adult guides the child's learning via focused questions and positive interactions" (Innovative Learning, 2011). Being able to match the student's ZPD developmental level with affective supports through scaffolding was one of the primary objectives of this study.

All teachers interviewed were most comfortable deferring to parents in the selection of materials that were well above grade level. They were asked the following questions: How do you help gifted readers navigate their asynchrony in reading between reading level and age level? And what precautions, if any, do you implement to help gifted readers with their book selections? Do you see similar or different habits from parents? (Appendix F). Teachers were not comfortable assigning significantly above grade level materials without the approval of the parents. Teachers in this study believed that they could still provide challenge, even in lower level texts, by increasing the complexity of questions and tasks in grade level reading material to slightly above grade level material. In addition, teachers believed that they are able to challenge students to extend their thinking with picture books, which are traditionally seen as lower-level reading material, but often have much higher reading levels or mature content. Muriel, when discussing how to challenge gifted readers quoted Lucy Calkins, a language arts curriculum writer who said, "Text complexity isn't the questions kids answer – it's the questions kids ask." She went on to explain, "I feel like, rather than saying 'Oh, there is inappropriate material as they go higher' - we should be thinking about what is

appropriate in this book that we're missing? I feel like we're missing so many teachable moments in books, regardless of the level."

Parents in this study were asked the following questions: How do you help your gifted reader(s) navigate their asynchrony in reading between reading level and age level? What precautions, if any, do you implement to help your gifted reader(s) with their book selections? Do you feel supported by the school? (Appendix G). The majority of parents in this study were comfortable with their children reading material that was mature and deemed above their children's age and grade. The common theme among all parents was talking with their children and allowing their children to ask tough and sometimes uncomfortable questions, while reiterating that they would never lie to their children, but sometimes frame a response by asking the child if they felt like they were ready to hear a response. At the same time, there is a limit, as most parents mentioned overly violent or overtly sexual content as mostly off-limits for their children at this point in their young lives. The Allans specifically mentioned that they do not want their daughters "to be scared of the world. If we allowed them to read everything, they would definitely be exposed to things which they are not ready for." Although supportive and encouraging, they do limit the scope of what their daughters can read.

Another way parents in this study approach the ZPD is trying to find graphic novels that cover the same material, since graphic novels often deliver the material in a way that is less threatening or scary. According to Carter (2009), graphic novels can be very successful in assisting gifted and talented children, both highly motivated gifted readers and reluctant gifted readers, by increasing engagement and by examining morality and ethical issues. For the twice-exceptional child of Rachel who struggles with

visualization, graphic novels seem to fill in missing gaps in the stories and help this gifted reader navigate the texts she is reading. For Josie, graphic novels are a way to help her talent pool daughter access more challenging content, while not necessarily reading too difficult texts.

The book *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, by Art Spiegelman, was given as an example. In this story, Maus recounts the horrible experiences of the author's father during the Holocaust. The Jews are drawn as mice, while the Nazis are depicted as frightening cats. Another graphic novel that Josie mentioned, as a great resource to bridge the ZPD for gifted readers, is the adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee. The graphic novel was adapted and illustrated by Fred Fordham. In a slightly different format but still full of pictures and diagrams, Malala Yousafzai has also translated her story into an abridged novel that makes her frightening story somewhat more accessible for younger readers. Josie reported that she feels much more comfortable with her daughters reading the graphic novels first, and then attempting to read the original novels if they so desire, since they already know the basic storyline of each book.

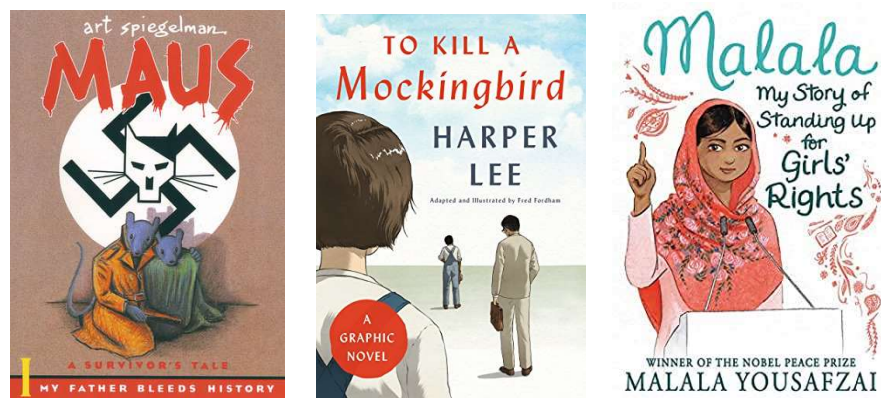


Figure 4.22
Graphic Novels with Heavy Content

Josie reported that her fourth grade daughter is currently reading a few graphic novels in her classroom and is being exposed to content that many people do not deem appropriate until much later. Josie reports that her daughter is talking about issues of social justice and has grown leaps and bounds with the exposure to this graphic novel. The conversations that they are able to share have been deep and meaningful and would not exist without this graphic novel to use as a teaching tool. She is proud of the exposure that her daughter is receiving and feels like her daughter is much more aware of world and social issues than she ever was as a child.

The Allans reported that they find non-fiction material about concepts their daughters are reading about to help build background knowledge and exposure to content in the novels their daughters are reading. As books increase in complexity for the girls, non-fiction books can bridge a gap and give additional context to the stories they are reading. Currently, the older Allan daughter is reading a fiction book about World War II called *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* by Judith Kerr. Over the summer, she also read *The War That Saved My Life* by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley. Her parents have provided many additional non-fiction books, appropriate for children, about what was happening in the world during World War II, which is helping the gifted reader process the events in this historical fiction story with real facts and information. They believe it is helping her better understand the struggles of the main character, while also gently exposing her to truth about a dark and difficult time in world history.

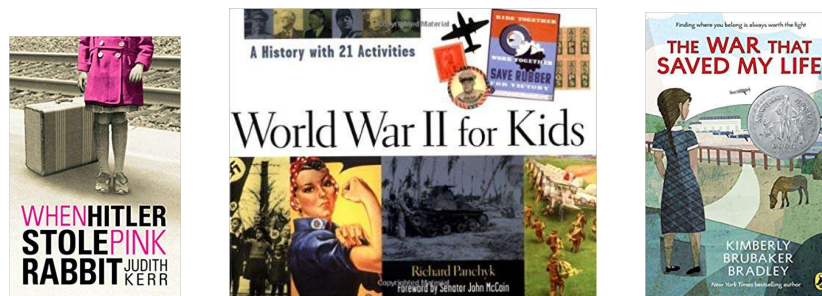


Figure 4.23
Bridging Fiction and Nonfiction

All teachers and parents reported that it is important to read the books alongside the gifted readers so that they can be more in tune with the content that gifted readers are being exposed to, as well as setting an example that they are invested in the affective development of gifted readers. Parents and teachers in this study commented on how children's literature today is much more appealing to both children and adults, which is a change from past decades. Today, young adult literature has improved to the point where it is completely appropriate for children and adults. Teachers would never recommend a book to their gifted readers without reading it first. Parents were open to reading most content, with the exception of books with explicit themes or violence. When they can read together, or at least both read the same text at the same time, parents can be available to answer questions, anticipate any issues that might be confusing or upsetting for the children, and prepare the children for upcoming events that might need debriefing or additional discussion.

Jane is starting to read the book *Disconnected* by Thomas Kersting with her son as a way to bond with him and explore the idea of unplugging from technology, which might be causing him additional stress and angst in his life, contributing to his

overexcitabilities. She believes the shared reading experience will strengthen their relationship and allow him to speak freely and openly with her as he is finding his way in the world. She hopes this book will help them bond over a book, as well as talk through all of his existential angst that he is feeling these days. Connecting over books feels like a safe way to bond with her son and help him see that she cares about his feelings and wants the very best for him.

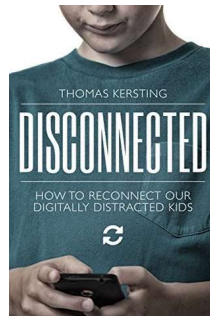


Figure 4.24
A Book for Reading Together and Taking Action

Parents were asked about how they approach their gifted reader(s) who read/want to read challenging material that they may be deemed inappropriate for their age. All parents in this study mentioned that they would always tell their children the truth, sometimes explaining that they are only telling what they think their child is ready to handle, depending on the content and age of the child. They felt it was essential to their relationship with their children to be as brutally honest as they could be, while still attempting to protect, whenever possible, the innocence of their children. Many stressed this was very different from the way they were raised, where no one really talked to their parents about the issues they were grappling with in their own lives. Multiple parents

expressed they seek to talk about more personal issues with their kids and they felt they had a much more open relationship with their own children than they did with their parents.

Summary of Chapter

She seemed to walk in an atmosphere of things about to happen.

- Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of Avonlea*

This chapter explored the research findings discovered in this Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship research study. First, the organization of Setting: Descriptions and Interpretations were presented. Next, the dimensions of Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship, specifically the intentional, pedagogical, and curricular were examined in depth in this chapter and findings from the research were presented. Then, the conceptual framework was evaluated. Each of the four components of affective development of gifted readers that Halsted (2009) believes are most essential for the healthy affective development of gifted readers was explored from both parent and teacher perspectives. Information gained from the research regarding each of the three essential research questions was summarized. After that, Dabrowski's Theory of Disintegration, specifically the information gained from parents and teachers regarding the emotional, intellectual, and imaginative overexcitabilities of gifted readers were evaluated, as well as findings about Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, specifically the Zone of Proximal Development and how parents and teachers seek to bridge the gap that exists for gifted readers. Evaluation, Thematics, and Implications of this research are explained in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Evaluation, Thematics, and Implications

Introduction to Chapter

In this final chapter, the research study will be evaluated, emergent themes will be presented, and implications for the future will be discussed. In Chapter Four, the interview data was briefly explored for themes in a few sections: the intentional dimension, the pedagogical dimension, and the curricular dimension. This organization was chosen based on Eisner's (1998) five dimensions of schooling. The themes discovered in each of these three dimensions will be presented in this chapter. In addition, themes that emerge from the three research questions that were examined in interviews with parents and teachers of gifted readers (see Appendix F and Appendix G) are reported. Next, implications of this research on the field of gifted education are discussed, then limitations of this study are presented. Finally, suggestions for future research are presented.

Evaluation of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the perceptions of parents and teachers of reading supports and barriers on the affective development of gifted readers. As Wood (2008) asks, "For gifted and talented readers, how do we ensure that their potential is achieved, the guarantee of a happily ever after ending?" (p. 17). As a connoisseur, the

researcher sought to shed light on the affective development of gifted readers, which is often ignored in traditional classrooms. “Connoisseurs believe that their interests are worthwhile and shared by others who care about the quality of their engagement with these interests” (Uhrmacher et al. 2017, p. 10). Interviews with parents and teachers of gifted readers yielded many common themes that are presented in the sections below, as well as many powerful implications, which are discussed later in the chapter.

Thematics Related to Research Questions

The research questions for this project were: What do parents and teachers perceive as the most effective reading supports that promote the affective development of young gifted readers? What do parents and teachers perceive as the major barriers that hinder the affective development of elementary gifted readers? How can children’s literature be used to support or hinder the affective development of gifted readers?

Research Question One

The first question that the researcher sought to answer was: What do parents and teachers perceive as the most effective reading supports that promote the affective development of young gifted readers? Parents and teachers must understand that for gifted readers, “reading is not the mere process of translating symbols into meanings but an intense need to explore, investigate, fantasize, and make connections with concepts and ideas” (Wood, 2008, p. 18).

Teamwork. Overall, parents and teachers overwhelmingly reported that supporting the affective needs of gifted readers is a team effort. Teachers must be willing to provide gifted readers with appropriate resources to help them thrive and parents must be supportive to help them navigate their asynchrony by building bridges of

understanding and connecting background knowledge with new knowledge, creating deeper understandings. Without supportive teachers and parents, the participants in this study felt like gifted readers will not thrive and get the most growth out of schooling.

Teachers reported a need to pair with parents when making controversial book selections for gifted readers. Parents appreciated when teachers included them in the process and allowed them to supplement with resources at home. Teachers and parents believed that working together to meet the affective needs of gifted readers was a key component to a successful education. Teachers and parents also felt that gifted readers also needed to be part of a decision-making team when choosing book selections. Muriel, teacher participant, shared, “It is the rare child who is really isolated, what I would call an isolated gifted reader.”

In addition to working together with teachers and parents, the adults in this study believe strongly in the idea of gifted readers having academic peers to be part of their team. Finding other students to connect with is essential for gifted readers to be able to share ideas with, recommend books to each other, and connect and bond with others over the books they are reading. Muriel said, “I think that they recognize that in order to be successful, they have to be able to connect to other people, but they can be introverts.” She went on to say, “They don’t have to have a million, but it could be a small group of friends and they still have to reach out and develop relationships.” Minnie agreed, stating, “I think that a lot of times, my gifted readers find each other.” She went on to say, “My gifted kids tend to kind of stay together, clustered in a classroom. They come to be and kind of find their people with each other.”

Compassionate Allies. Parents and teachers of gifted readers need to understand how to support the gifted readers in their lives. Sometimes, that requires a unique approach. Minnie has a mantra with her gifted readers: “If you work hard, I work hard!” She wants them to understand that she is here for them and wants to cheer them on to success. Muriel works hard to ensure her room is a safe space for all gifted readers, regardless of their comfort level in sharing about their reading. “I feel like if I create a safe environment or safe partnerships, then that is going to make it more comfortable for a gifted introverted child to talk about books.”

Once, Muriel worked with a classroom teacher who had her students fill out reading logs. This teacher was very insistent that the students spend at least twenty minutes a night completing their reading logs, no exceptions. She had a gifted reader with OCD who was struggling to complete his reading log and so she approached Muriel to complain about him. The teacher’s sentiment was that since he was gifted in reading, why was this such a big deal for him to complete the assignment? When Muriel pulled him aside to discuss what was going on, he asked her, “Does it count when I breathe?” She realized he was trying to deduct the time he was breathing from his reading time and was getting overwhelmed and anxious. A twenty-minute reading assignment was turning into a much longer assignment. Muriel said she learned a very valuable lesson that day. “So, I never, never, put minutes to reading or pages to reading.” She is trying to help her readers understand that it should be more about the journey of reading, not a specific destination. She wonders why the teacher didn’t ask him about his struggle herself, rather than just assuming he was trying to get out of an assignment or not complete the work. Gifted readers need compassionate allies on their side.

Josie, parent participant, says that with her children, she just wants them to know she's here for them whenever they need her. She tries to parent differently than the way she was raised. She wants to be an ally to her daughters; a person they know they can always count on. She wants them to be able to ask or tell her anything without fear. "Our younger daughter gets worried about things and we try to tell them that it is a normal part of being a person and everyone has to figure out how to handle their emotions." When asked about how she handles these situations, she explains, "If they feel sad, I let them feel sad and not try to tell them to 'cheer up' or 'just get over it' or 'stop worrying,' because that stuff isn't effective." The bottom line for Josie is, "I just try to listen, without trying to fix things."

Research Question Two

The second question the researcher sought to answer was: What do parents and teachers perceive as the major barriers that hinder the affective development of elementary gifted readers? This question was important because the researcher wanted to know how teachers and parents of gifted readers can learn better meet the affective needs of gifted readers.

Underachievement and Reluctance. Rachel and Josie both described their twice-exceptional daughters, who are both identified as gifted in reading, as underachievers. Both daughters seem to suffer from a lack of ability to visualize in their heads, which impedes comprehension. Rachel's daughter also has extreme anxiety and Josie's daughter has been diagnosed with ADHD. Due to these factors, the practice of reading has become more taxing and cumbersome as they have moved up to higher levels. Their daughters have an adverse reaction to reading and struggle to accept their exceptionality in this

area. Rachel shared that her daughter will hide before bedtime in an effort to avoid the dreaded “read before bed” routine that exists in their household. Josie’s daughter isn’t necessarily reluctant to read, she is just reluctant to read harder books that might challenge her thinking or cause her to slow down. For now, she is content with graphic novels and some picture books, which Josie is okay with for now.

Sometimes, gifted readers are reluctant to take risks. Since they believe very strongly in their identity being that of a reader, they do not want to risk being wrong. Teachers in this study believe that this reality is due to the gifted readers not wanting to appear less than smart in front of their peers. Risking their expertise as a reader is not something many gifted readers are willing to do. In smaller groups, they might be a bit more willing to be vulnerable, but usually with academic peers, they are guarded. This was especially true at Diana’s school, where competition seems to occur naturally and there is a significant number of students who are identified as gifted in reading.

Jane shared regret that she and her husband do not model reading for pleasure as often as they would like. She wonders if this is why her gifted readers do not seem to always have their noses in a book. She laughed and mentioned that hopefully there is still time before they get too much older, but she wants them to love books and be excited about books and use books as a source of entertainment. Since they are still excelling in school, she refuses to push the issue or force her children to read more, but she described her experience with her children as a slight “reluctance” to read, but nothing she is overly concerned with for now.

Unusual Reactions. Often, gifted readers have physical reactions to what they are reading. Their heightened emotions and ability to infer deeper than other students put

them at a higher risk for reading material that might upset them. Parents and teachers need to understand how to help gifted readers when they experience reactions to the texts they are reading. Even when gifted readers prove that they can read a text, it does not mean that they do not need support to work through its content and might have questions about what they are reading. Many parents and teachers alike mentioned being more aware of how gifted readers are handling the reading content they are consuming. As Ruby shared, “Sometimes gifted kids get scared with the subject they are reading. I had a gifted reader who was obsessed with weather. Eventually he started having nightmares about weather and became very scared whenever we had inclement weather.” It takes a compassionate, tuned in teacher to help a student in this predicament, rather than just assuming he is being too sensitive or maybe he will outgrow the fear.

Jane talked a lot about the struggles her gifted reader son is experiencing. As he has been reading books about situations happening around the world and learning more about American politics, he has been struggling to find his place in the world. “He’s asking us, he’s cried, wondering what his purpose is, and all of these kinds of mature ideas, I guess, that I have to believe that other sixth grade boys aren’t wondering what their purpose is.” Jane and her husband have vowed to help him work through the angst he is experiencing as he is trying to figure out what life holds for him. “They [gifted readers] are grappling with some of these very mature, philosophical, moral issues.” She wonders if he could connect to other gifted readers at school who might be experiencing similar reactions to books.

Perfectionism. The concept of perfectionism came up often in the interviews for this study. Many gifted readers feel as though they have to be perfect, or strive to be

perfect in many, if not all, aspects of their lives. Minnie shared that many of her gifted readers struggle with perfectionism daily. In addition, “Most of them also have anxiety because of the perfectionism, which is my affective goal for every single one of my kids. They really struggle with that.” She goes on to explain, “I would say, for some of my perfectionists, Imposter Syndrome (see Definition of Terms) is real. They’re not sure how they got into ‘Gifted’ and they are really afraid that someone is going to figure out they shouldn’t be there.” Diana also shared a similar sentiment when talking about gifted readers at her school. “They think everything they have to do has to be perfect.” Ruby also sees this as an issue with students in her groups. “Others will call them out if they make a mistake and gifted readers report to me that they feel the need to always be perfect.” She goes on to say, “No one is perfect and everyone has struggles. Learn from others that it is okay to struggle and not get it the first time.”

Research Question Three

The final research question in this study was: How can children’s literature be used to support or hinder the affective development of gifted readers? This question sought to gain the perceptions of teachers and parents about whether or not literature makes an impact on young gifted readers.

Powerful Literature Changes Lives. Parents and teachers believe that good books have the ability to change the lives of their readers. As Josie explained, literature “sort of builds more of a framework for them [children] to understand history, cultures, nuances and relationships with each other.” When children have the opportunity to connect with literature and really delve deep into its meaning, they can be transported to different worlds, meet very unique individuals, and learn very valuable life lessons. Muriel

explains, “We can really just love books for what they are, and just finding joy and pleasure. But also thinking - how this book is impacting me – how is it affecting me – how has it changed my life? What is the big idea here?”

The Allans have conversations with their daughters all the time about how they get so wrapped up in the books that they are reading. Mr. Allan shared, “They love books. They love to read and they love to learn from them.” Mrs. Allan shared that their daughter often says, “It’s so good, Mom, I can’t put it down.” And laughing she responds, “Dude! It’s midnight! You have to get up in 6-1/2 hours!”

Minnie also believes that she has seen the impact of literature on her gifted readers. “I have seen kids where they really do get so invested in the book and the characters and their lives.” She believes it is a beautiful thing to watch a child connect to a book in a powerful way. She explains, “I have had kids say to me ‘Oh, I don’t want to finish this book because I love living in this world and I’m just not ready for it to end.’” It warms her heart because she also understands what it is like. “But they do really get wrapped up in it, and I understand that, because I feel the same way.”

Emergent Themes Within the Intentional Dimension

In the intentional dimension of Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship, the critic is interested in the aims or goals of the participants. “The term intentions designate aims or goals that are explicitly advocated and publicly announced as well as those that are actually employed in the classroom” (Eisner, 2017, p. 73). Eisner (1998) explains “the real test of successful schooling is not what students do at school, but what they do outside of it.” (p. 170). Parents and teachers of gifted readers shared the following themes

of intention in their interviews. The researcher sought to answer Eisner's (1998) question about intentions, "What really counts in schools?" (p. 169).

Books Open Doors

Gifted teachers and parents agreed that gifted readers are able to develop a strong sense of the world and are able to learn about anything they want with the amount of quality literature that is available today. Josie explained how gifted readers have so many more options for reading. "It's not just monochromatic anymore." She goes on to say, "I'm sure [books] will be more prescriptive as they get older...right now, though, they really do encourage the kids to read what speaks to them and I think that's really nice." She thinks it is important to encourage her daughters to select their own books and choose to read about their own interests, rather than making her own agenda. "I let them figure out and wonder what they're [books] about. Otherwise what is the point of education?"

As gifted readers learn about other cultures and people who have struggled through books, they become more compassionate and have a more realistic worldview. As Ruby said, "Books make the world a smaller place for gifted readers." Sometimes, Muriel has used books that might have sensitive or controversial topics, especially involving race. She explained that she feels like valuable lessons can be learned from exposure to books that confront racial issues or provide a historical context of race in our country. In the book *Finding Langston*, the word "negro" is used. In an effort to be culturally sensitive to the students in her class, Muriel took some time to reflect. "At first I thought 'Oh, should I not put it on my shelf?' But then, it was the author's own voice, and it was written by a black author, so I've started putting a hashtag - #ownvoice." She

believes that books like this can give students valuable lessons about life and the racist history of our country, lessons they might not learn anywhere else. “For that author, it is their culture, they have permission to say that. You might not have permission to say that word, but they can. I’ve started flagging certain things in that way - hashtag #ownvoice.”

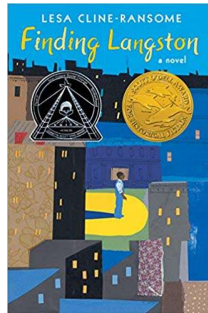


Figure 5.1
#Ownvoice

Mr. Allan and his father take their gifted readers to garage sales. According to Mrs. Allan, “He loves garage sales and he has fostered that in the girls. They love to go garage sale-ing with Dad and Granddad. The girls will read people’s books.” There, they are exposed to interesting literature they might not otherwise encounter. She laughed recalling the number of interesting and strange books her family has brought home over the years from various garage sale visits.

Minnie works hard with her gifted students to help them understand that they, even at a young age, can affect change in the world. Books about such people help her give them examples of people changing their world. She explained that “being able to read about somebody their own age that has influenced major change lets them see that they have a fair ability to change the world.”

As a third grader, the older Allan daughter was reading about Madame C.J. Walker. She began to ask very reflective questions in an attempt to understand what she was reading. Mrs. Allan said, “She was very confused and asked, ‘Why couldn’t she go out and sell her cosmetics everywhere and anywhere?’ She was crushed. We talked about white supremacy and we talked about the injustices of segregation laws and such.” Their daughter went on to find other books first about C.J. Walker, but then about other experiences of African Americans and tried to learn all she could about segregation, a heavy topic for a young child. The Allans believe this reading experience about injustice in the world will stay with their daughter forever and it opened her up to understanding more about the past of our country and how to be an advocate for others that might be mistreated in her world.

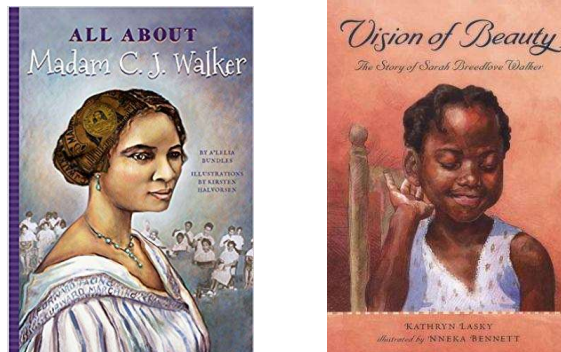


Figure 5.2
Books Open Doors

Censorship

Parents in this study did not believe in excessive censorship of books for their children. Parents spoke of being open and honest with their children, allowing them to read almost anything they wanted, within reason. Aside from extreme violence or explicit sexual content, parents were supportive of their children’s book selections. Mrs. Allan

said, “We tell the girls that we will never lie to you. If you ask a question, we will tell the truth and that sometimes you are too young for the whole truth so we will give you a partial truth and that’s the same thing with the books.” Sometimes, parents prep their children by asking if they want to be exposed to certain situations or share that some of the content could frighten the child, but they overwhelmingly shared that they would let their children be the ones who decided if they wanted to read the book. As Josie explained, “I generally don’t put any sort of limit on what their exposed to, within reason, like nothing like strict adult content or anything like that.” She understands that her girls will be exposed to things that might be above their maturity level. She wants to be aware and involved when this happens, even if they learn it from books. Then, she can debrief with them and be aware of what they are processing. “Might as well hear it from me and then we talk about it together.”

Generally, with books that could be considered sensitive to younger readers, parents wanted to read the book alongside the child so that they could be available to answer any questions or provide guidance around issues that might arise for their children. The Allans had no problem allowing their third grader to do a report on the Salem Witch Trials, since she had seen a documentary on the subject and wanted to do some additional reading. Mrs. Allan explained, “We look at it from a historical perspective” and that allows their girls to want to learn more about the world. Since the teacher knew that her parents would provide emotional support and make sure she was finding appropriate resources, the Allans’ daughter’s teacher was happy to allow her to choose such an unconventional subject for third graders for her book report.

All teachers in this study were a bit more conservative, deferring to judgement of parents for the final say on books that have mature themes. When parents gave their approval, teachers were completely on board and willing to support the gifted readers at school with whatever they were reading. If any of the teachers had questions about the books they were offering gifted readers, a quick phone call home would reassure them that parents were supportive and looking forward to supporting their children at home.

Teachers in this study take great care to create classroom libraries that are appropriate for gifted readers. Muriel explained, “It’s not like I ban books, but I feel that before I can put a book on my shelf I need to have read it.” She goes on to say, “I don’t want them to come across something that a family might be uncomfortable with or if they are uncomfortable, how can I know how to address it with the family if I haven’t read it myself?” Muriel went on to explain, “I’ve also started writing notes on a sticky note in the front of a book, things like ‘This book has mature content. You might want to think about that before choosing this book.’” She believes in letting children decide for themselves whether or not they can handle certain subjects.

“If I have a note in that saying ‘there are sensitive topics in here – be aware before you read’. I think a child would know if they should or shouldn’t read that book.”

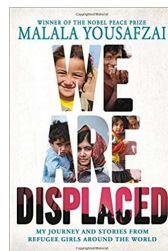


Figure 5.3
Muriel's First 'Sensitive Souls' Book

Many parents also reported that they couldn't wait for their gifted readers to bring home new books so that they could also enjoy reading the new books and supporting their gifted readers as they read them. Parents reported they also had learned a lot of valuable information from the books their children bring home from school.

Emergent Themes Within the Curricular Dimension

"If, as we must assume, a reading program for gifted and talented readers should emphasize reading to learn rather than learning to read, then program goals should be differentiated from those of beginning or struggling readers" (Wood, 2008, p. 20). As Eisner (2002) shared, "What we can expect from ideas about curriculum planning is not that these ideas provide formulas, but that they sophisticate our deliberations in planning programs and hence, contribute to educationally richer programs than might otherwise be provided" (p. 125). The following themes about the affective development of gifted readers were garnered from the interviews with teachers and parents of gifted readers.

Perseverance and Grit

In this study, parents and teachers of gifted readers believe that gifted readers must learn to persevere through challenges. Learning to do so produces grit and an attitude of determination. Parents especially were willing to introduce gifted readers to more challenging material if it meant broadening their horizons and making them aware of the outside world that surrounds them. Helping gifted readers overcome challenges is something parents are determined to do. Josie recalls a time when her younger daughter was struggling to feel smart. "Our younger daughter would say that all the other kids are smarter than or I'm stupid because she can't finish her math homework like they can." Josie decided to try to help. She says, "I found a book about the kid who was the smartest

kid in the class, but it took him a long time to do math. And then I slipped it into her backpack to suggest to her to read it.” Josie wanted her daughter to understand that hard work does not come easy and you do not always have to be the first kid finished in order to be smart. Josie believes that this is a lesson that she could potentially carry with her for the rest of her life. It will be applicable in many situations she experiences in life and will be a valuable tool for her to remember when she is feeling overwhelmed or wanting to quit.

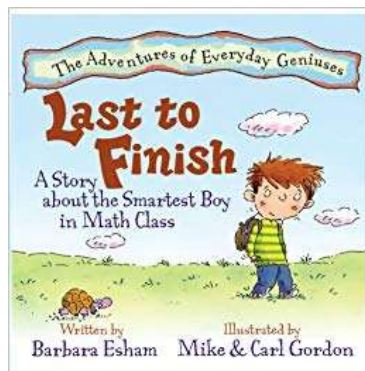


Figure 5.4
Perseverance

By showing them how to harness their gifts and overexcitabilities, gifted readers can excel. When describing her older daughter, Rachel says, “Her imagination is out of this world, but also to her detriment.” She explains that her daughter’s imagination “makes her the most creative writer and playwright you are ever going to meet, but it also penetrates pretty deep when she imagines negative things happening to her family, or she can play that out in the same way.” Giving gifted readers tools and strategies to overcome challenges helps them become stronger and aids them in learning to deal with the challenges they face because of their giftedness. Ruby said, “Often things come very easy

for gifted readers and it's important for them to see that it's okay to struggle and not succeed the first time you do something."

Questioning

Parents and teachers also believe that gifted students deserve curriculum and instruction that is rigorous and intense. They believe that gifted readers deserve exposure to challenging material. Teachers believed that even less challenging reading material could be made more rigorous by the types of questions that are being asked of gifted readers.

Muriel works hard to make sure all of her students reflect on their reading material and start thinking more deeply and broadly about the messages the books convey. Questioning is a way to get them to think more deeply about the literature and what it is trying to convey to students. "I guess, to me, I think a book can tell a story and so where do I see myself in that story? Or what can I learn from that person's story?" She goes on to explain, "So I think it's more the questions you ask connecting to it and that they learn to ask themselves." She also adds, "I think what needs to happen is we need to go deeper into the book. I feel it is my responsibility to teach that. You know, where is the thinking in this book?" She believes that all books can always reflect you, and if a book does not make that reflection for you, you need to ask yourself how can you be more sensitive to that character?

Broaden Your Worldview

"Books make the world a smaller place for gifted readers" is a sentiment that Muriel believes with her whole heart. Books and reading curriculum should teach students about people from all over the world. Ruby believes that gifted students can

learn valuable information about the world from their book selections. She shared, “Books make the world a smaller place for gifted readers.” Muriel echoed that sentiment when she shared, “We always had [book] choices that were from different cultures and different backgrounds and I also used that time to teach kids so the kids could see different cultures and different backgrounds.”

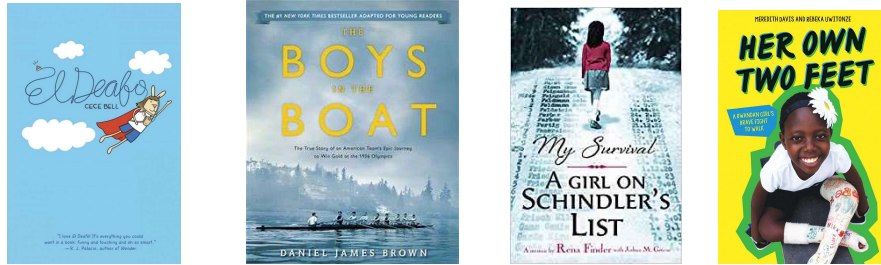


Figure 5.5
Books to Broaden Your Perspective

The Allans believe there is value in all educational topics for their girls, even as young children in elementary school. According to Mrs. Allan, every book can become “A learning experience. Other people’s religions - we would be open to it. Times in history – we are open to it.” She goes on to explain, “You have to figure out the world and if you start processing it at eight, then by the time you’re thirty you are going to be pretty informed.” They want their children to soak in everything the world has to offer them, and books are a great way to help them do just that.

The Unusual Tools

Parents and teachers mentioned using higher-level resources that are outside of traditional thinking. Picture books and graphic novels are two kinds of resources that might be considered unusual for gifted readers to embrace, as they are traditionally seen as being used with younger readers, struggling readers, or reluctant readers. Teachers

mentioned using picture books, which are traditionally only used for primary students, with all ages and grades, even with high school students, as a way to push and extend student thinking in thematic areas like mindset or overexcitabilities. When using these books as teaching resources, teachers believed it is more about the content than the level of the text. At the same time, picture books and graphic novels can be complex literature at much higher levels than some adults realize. A trained teacher can ask higher level questions about any book and elicit in-depth responses and conversations that take a simple book to a much higher level than expected. Kaplan's Depth and Complexity icons can help teachers add the necessary depth that gifted readers often crave.

Muriel admits, "I kind of had a bias against graphic novels. It has been a good eye-opener for me and allowed me to use [*White Bird*] as a teaching tool." She goes on to say that there is a learning curve with these books as well. "How do you really read a graphic novel? And how do you infer between this frame and that frame? But also, just enjoying the book is key." She has now seen the influence that quality graphic novels have as a powerful resource for gifted readers. The graphic novel *Smile* is the first in a series that was one of the first graphic novel series that was written to appeal to girls. Josie brought up this series as one that really hooked her older daughter into reading graphic novels.

In addition, Muriel has seen the power in picture books. She points to the picture book *Saving Winslow* as a resource that changes perspective and allows for deep and meaningful conversations with gifted readers. "Picture books are perfect for that modeling," she recalls. There are so many more options today in terms of types of books that are used for teaching lessons and read for enjoyment for gifted readers and their

teachers. Halsted (2009) shared, “Furthermore, even picture books can be intellectually challenging, demanding that readers use higher-level thinking skills” (p. 189).

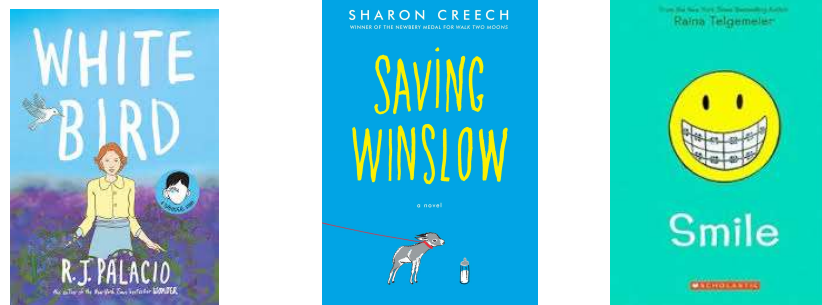


Figure 5.6
A Shift in Traditional Thinking

The mindset around graphic novels is continuing to shift and become more mainstream. In 2020, for the first time in history, a graphic novel won the John Newbery Medal for the most outstanding contribution in children’s literature. The book *New Kid*, by Jerry Craft is a graphic novel about a young boy who dreams of going to art school, but his parents instead enroll him in a private school where he is one of the few students of color. This book “marks a shift from Craft’s previously self-published work and reflects changing attitudes about the literary merits of graphic novels” (de Leon, 2020). In addition, a book entitled *The Undefeated*, by Kwame Alexander, won the Randolph Caldecott Medal for the most distinguished American picture book for children. It is written in prose and shares a powerful message, referencing slavery, the civil rights movement, and black heroes (de Leon, 2020). Both books received Coretta Scott King awards, which recognize African-American authors and illustrators. *The Undefeated* was also named a Newbery Honor Book. These awards are some of the top prizes in young adult literature and have “great influence over book sales and teacher and librarian

recommendations” (de Leon, 2020). “Children’s books over the past several years have been at the forefront of shifting conversations around diversity and inclusion in literature and publishing” (de Leon, 2020).



Figure 5.7
Changing Attitudes

Emergent Themes Within the Pedagogical Dimension

The pedagogical dimension of schooling is important because “what students learn in the classroom is never limited to what teachers intend to teach or to curriculum content” (Eisner, 2017, p. 77). Eisner (1998) also reminds us, “No curriculum teaches itself and how it is mediated is crucial” (p. 172). “One must have a great deal of experience with classroom practice to be able to distinguish what is significant about one set of practices or another” (Eisner, 2002, p. 216). In this section, the researcher identified themes that were common to parents and teachers about pedagogical practices that exist for gifted readers in the Green Gables School District.

Bibliotherapy

Gifted readers often naturally pick up on issues in books that are issues that real children experience. Mrs. Allan was surprised when her daughter said, “Mom, why can’t

the heroes or the heroines ever have two parents?” Mrs. Allan thought for a minute and said, “Oh, you’re right.” Her daughter went on to say, “Like Harry Potter and the Baudelaires. If kids had two attentive parents they wouldn’t be able to go on these adventures that allow for their storylines!” She thought about it for a few minutes and then began to talk about how it must be refreshing for kids without two parents to see how characters in literature struggle with the same issues. In addition, to see these characters succeed in spite of their troubles is another benefit.

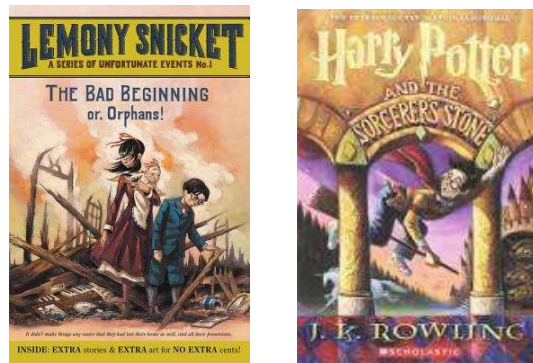


Figure 5.8
Overcoming Adversity

All teachers and a few parents had heard the term “bibliotherapy” before. A few were hesitant to use the technique because of the part of the word that reads “therapy.” Not being a therapist gave them pause. At the same time, many of the things they described in their answers, like finding books with similar characters, using books to teach kids about other people, using books to overcome adversity, are all concepts that relate to bibliotherapy. Parents were less familiar with the word “bibliotherapy,” but they also described wanting to use books to teach their children valuable life lessons or described times when their children read books that helped them through tough

situations. Bibliotherapy is a concept that deserves a lot more attention in the realm of gifted readers.

Sanctuary

For some gifted readers, books are a sanctuary away from all the challenges that life sometimes brings. Muriel described some gifted readers as using books “almost like a shield.” Ruby also agreed and described some gifted readers as using books as “security blankets.” Gifted readers often feel as though books offer a fierce protection from the real world, which can be cold and cruel. Diana sees this with the gifted readers at her school who become engrossed in their books. “When they are quiet and reflective, I think they’re in that world and they might be trying to bring that world out into the real world.”

Another sanctuary for gifted readers is the library. Teachers and parents reported that many gifted readers feel as though the library is their second home, a place where they feel understood and connected to something bigger than themselves. Diana described gifted readers at her school as being “very passionate about the library.” Minnie reported that her gifted readers feel completely comfortable in the library and they become “junior librarians” for the other students in their classes, since they can navigate the library effectively and have great book recommendations for their peers. Minnie loves that gifted readers thrive in the library and that her school library is a place where they can be their true selves. Mrs. Allan explains the family’s only rule at the library: “If we can’t carry it out, we can’t get it!”

Ruby encourages parents of gifted readers to use the library often and check out tons of books. She explained that many libraries have done away with late fees and even if they do get a few fees, exposure to the sheer number of books that a library can provide

is something many gifted readers, especially ones in rural areas, will never have on their own. She shared about a young gifted reader in her rural town who would bike to the public library at least once a week in order to keep up with her voracious reading habit. Ruby was thankful that the library exists for this young gifted child, who depends on that resource to feed her great love of reading, since reading in the home was not necessarily nurtured. Ruby also pointed out that while some older elementary students might outgrow school libraries, they will never outgrow the public library because they service all ages of readers. She believes the public library is an excellent resource because gifted readers have many more options than they do at school libraries.

Seeing Oneself in Literature Selections

All gifted readers benefit from recognizing themselves in characters of the books they read. Teachers and parents should be making conscious efforts to include characters that offer multiple perspectives and allow all readers to see themselves and their classmates reflected in books they read. Classroom and school librarians should work hard to ensure that all the students in their population can easily find books that mirror their experiences, their families, their cultures, and their religions. As the quality of children's literature has improved, this reality has become more evident. It is much easier these days to find books written from multiple perspectives, characters from diverse backgrounds, and stories tell the narratives of marginalized groups. Because of this reality, it is imperative for schools and classrooms around the country to provide these valuable resources for students to read.

Minnie shared using books that students can relate to is key because "kids can see themselves in other characters and sometimes it's easier to talk about things that they are

struggling with if they can see it in a book character, a movie, or TV show character.” She explains that being able to talk about an issue in third person sometimes allows our gifted readers to talk out issues or even seek advice from others without exposing too much of themselves to others.

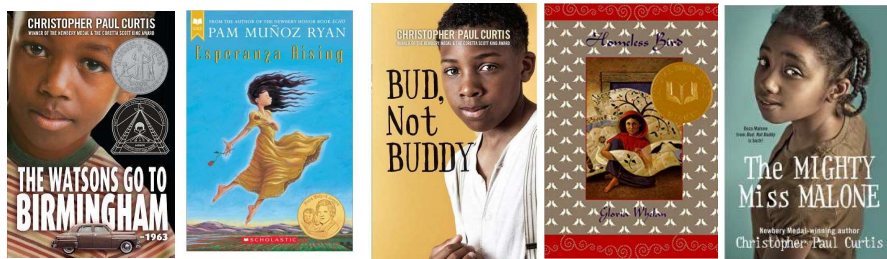


Figure 5.9
Opportunity to see Oneself in Literature

Differentiation is Key

Parents and teachers alike agreed that gifted readers need differentiation. This is a fundamental pedagogical practice. Even if many teachers say they understand how to differentiate for gifted students, this researcher believes they need a lot more practice and exposure to effective differentiation. As Ruby explained, “teachers need to try to put themselves in the shoes of gifted readers and figure out what they would want if they were in a situation where they already knew the answers or had already read a book.”

Ruby shared that often times, her gifted readers get stuck reading a class novel that they might have read two years before. Her classroom teachers report that it is not a big deal if they reread a book in class, it will be good for them to slow down and have discussions about the book. She believes that classroom teachers must be more sympathetic toward gifted readers, who would benefit from reading new and exciting texts. Her analogy that she gives to teachers is asking them how they would feel if they

had to sit through the same meeting repeatedly. Is that fair to them? That is how gifted readers often feel in their reading classrooms.

On the other hand, one issue that was identified by the other GT teachers in this study as a missed opportunity for differentiation is the need to retrain primary teachers. They believe that primary teachers must learn to use higher-level questions and to teach young primary gifted students about symbols and themes and other reading techniques as a way provide a deep and rich reading experience with a lower level text. Instead, many primary teachers communicate a child's decoding ability with parents as the best way to select appropriate books with them. As a result, parents want their gifted readers to go to higher and higher reading levels, but at a very surface level. Muriel describes how she tries to slow her gifted readers down to pay careful attention to the pace in which they are reading. "I don't talk to them about speed or rate, but rather what is the appropriate pace that a reader needs to be moving through a book in order to get the most out of that book?" She goes on to explain that good readers must alter their pace, depending on each book selection, to get the most out of a book. In addition, she shares, "A lot of the time the kids don't always recognize the complexities of the structures of different books and how authors develop those characters." Having kids dig deeper with texts and modeling how to think about the author's craft is essential. "Once they figure that [character development] out, it kind of unlocks that for them."

Muriel, Minnie, and Diana all shared that primary teachers in their elementary school buildings sometimes inadvertently give parents a false understanding of what a gifted reader's true reading ability is. They believe that just because a gifted reader can decode and comprehend at higher levels, it does not mean that they can't learn something

from a lower-level text or use it as a complex learning experience. They believe gifted readers should be taught to analyze literature at higher levels as well. In their schools, parents then want their children to be “pushed” and read higher and higher levels of books.

These GT teachers believe that practice creates a missed opportunity for gifted readers. Minnie explains, “I also push my kids, even if the book is a little bit below their reading level, to look for symbols and themes. They can make it a more in-depth reading experience. I can make a picture book be challenging if I ask the right questions.” Simply offering multimodal pathways with reading experiences (like exploring songbooks or self-created poetry) will allow accelerated readers to self-differentiate (Caruana, 2020).

Minnie goes on to say, “I feel like when they are not pushed to do that they will very much be content to stay on the surface level.” She also shared that education for gifted readers must move away from current philosophy, “which is so much more about levels and rote knowledge and we’re not asking kids to really get deep into their reading anymore.” She goes on to explain, “I use all kinds of books. Sometimes I just use a small part of a chapter book or a picture book and sometimes I just use pictures from books. I’ve used short stories or poems.” Halsted (2009) says, “Books should be the first choice of enrichment for bright youngsters” (p. 7). However, she cautions that, “Merely providing books is not enough... knowledge of gifted children, discussion techniques, and children’s literature will maximize the benefits that books offer” (Halsted, 2009, p. 7).

Emergent Themes Within the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study centered around affective elements identified by Halsted (2009) as being most challenging for gifted readers. These elements include forming an identity developing relationships, perfectionism, and balancing introversion with the social expectations of others. After analyzing all responses from parents and teachers, the researcher identified emergent themes for gifted readers.

Reading Identity

A gifted reader's identity forms at a very young age. Parents reported their children were like sponges in their earlier years, taking to flashcards, foam letters, or anything else that could be considered a reading tool. Parents reported that they put very little to no pressure on their toddlers, who picked up reading skills very naturally. They did admit to creating a reading environment in their homes, regularly reading to their small children and making books readily available. The library was also an important part of their children's lives when they were younger. The Allans and Rachel still make library visits a constant priority, but Josie and Jane don't seem to spend as much time at the library anymore as their kids get older, although they both still go with their children from time to time.

As gifted readers begin to school, it can be a struggle. Rachel reports that her older daughter, who couldn't wait to start school, was frustrated quite early on. "She was a little disenchanted with school because they were doing 'A says Aaahh' and she is over in the corner reading every single book that they had." Rachel explained that she had low engagement the first few years of school. In addition, "other kids didn't know how to relate to her because she was already a reader and her vocabulary was unusual as well,

because she read so much and she talked so early.” Rachel thought that the other children had a hard time relating to her because she would use her large vocabulary to say things to the other students like “I’m not interested in what you’re doing” or “I would like to play independently right now.”

Josie and the Allans both reported that their children are supportive of lower ability readers in their classrooms and will often volunteer to work with them to help them improve their skills. Their children enjoy being role models to other students and want other students to enjoy reading as much as they do. They understand, humbly, that they are strong readers, but want to help others in their classes succeed.

Gifted readers escape through books. For many gifted readers in this study, books became almost friends. Many parents and teachers described the gifted readers in their lives as students who always have a book nearby. They sometimes take six or seven books on a family vacation because they don’t want to be caught without something to read. Books are truly part of these children’s identity.

Authenticity

Relationships for gifted readers in this study are based on authenticity. Some gifted readers prefer adults to their peers, but some gifted readers are just as comfortable with their peers as they are with adults. The key to relationships with gifted readers in this study is authenticity. Gifted readers seek out authentic people with whom they can truly be themselves. Introverted gifted readers who trust others will spend time with them, might bond over common interests in reading selections.

Minnie reported that she makes a point to read popular books so that she can have conversations with her gifted readers so that they can see books are important to her too.

She wants to be able to connect with these children on deeper levels. She wants them to realize that she is reading what they are reading in an attempt to be real with them – to show she cares enough about them that she’s willing to read what they read. Jane said the following about her hopes for her children to know that there are adults to help them through the tough times: “Developing generations of kids more openly, and just with how horrible the news is, and just trying to be authentic, I think, without gloom and doom on everything, and keeping that in check. Just being authentic with them.”

Because gifted readers often have overexcitabilities, they understand feelings and emotions in different ways than other children. They seem to be able to pick up on nuances and attitudes of their peers and adults to determine who is being authentic and who is not. If gifted readers see another as authentic, they are more likely to take advice from them, to trust them, and to believe in them.

Emergent Themes Within the Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks for this study centered around Dabrowski’s overexcitabilities (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009) and the Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). After analyzing all responses from parents and teachers, the researcher identified emergent themes for gifted readers from these frameworks.

Dabrowski’s Overexcitabilities

Parents and teachers agreed that gifted readers experience overexcitabilities. The three that came up the most were emotional, intellectual, and imaginal (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009). Both groups felt it was important to understand the nature of overexcitabilities, as well as help their children understand them as well. Otherwise, parents and teachers feared that the overexcitabilities in gifted readers would be seen as

pathology by others, especially classroom teachers, and the gifted readers would need to be “fixed”.

Connections with Books. Teachers overwhelmingly agreed that connecting students with books, often picture books, is a great way to teach them about overexcitabilities. Muriel explained that she reads and categorizes books in her own library while thinking about characteristics of her students. “So, when I think about heightened sensitivities or overexcitabilities, I think that there can be a good match with books. And I think it allows them to maybe see that they are not alone.” She goes on to explain, “I think that finding that mentor in a book addresses their overexcitabilities and heightened sensitivities.” She believes that allowing them to see their mentor overcome challenges or effectively deal with their emotions can be inspirational for gifted readers.

Diana echoed this sentiment by sharing that when she introduces her first lessons on ‘What is Giftedness?’ she reads picture books to students, and they talk about how various characters show unique examples of being gifted. Then, students can start thinking about how they themselves are gifted. “When we talk about the overexcitabilities they can look at books and think about how this character showing an overexcitability, or the illustrations or the themes.”

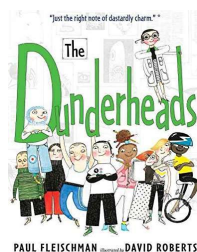


Figure 5.10
Everyone is Special in Their Own Way

The Allans discussed how their daughters connect with the books they read in different ways. According to Mrs. Allan, their older daughter “is completely open to crying through a book or a movie and she will just say ‘It’s very sad that that happened’ and will move on with her day.” Their younger daughter will finish a book that has touched her emotionally in a different way. She will close the book, put it away, and pick it up again later. “That’s often why she will read the same book two or three times because she has to emotionally work through it at a slower pace because she has such an empathic personality,” explains Mr. Allan.

Moral Compass. Parents and teachers agreed that the moral compass of many gifted readers faces due north. Gifted readers are more aware of moral issues and often struggle with their feelings about issues that other students might not even give a second thought. Minnie explained that her avid readers, the kids who love to read and who love to read across genres, are definitely more aware of moral issues. She explains that these students are the ones “who keep up with current events and watch the news or see the news online. They usually have more empathy for what is going on [in the world] and want to find ways to help.” Muriel said, “For moral issues I think it is interesting right now, because the books on the shelves right now for kids are kind of edgy,” which allows them to explore these issues in more depth than ever before. Rachel described her daughter as “morally aware.” When she saw injustices happening at her school, she became student council president in order to “right the wrongs” in her school.

Diana reports that many of her students are acutely aware of world issues. A group of gifted fourth graders was reading about the ban on plastic drinking straws in California and how many companies are moving toward paper straws. The idea of

banning plastic pollution and helping save waste from going into the ocean was discussed. The number of sea creatures affected by the amount of plastic waste going into the ocean was quite concerning to them. They read about how a turtle was found with a drinking straw stuck up its nose. The students began to cry and had a very difficult time moving past this visual. Diana mentioned that for the past few months, anytime anything about turtles comes up, several students cry and become very upset. “Any hint of a straw sends them into spirals,” she explained.

The Invisible Struggle. Parents of gifted readers often feel alone and isolated. Each parent expressed a fear of sharing their experiences with their child’s overexcitabilities with other parents, but especially parents of struggling readers. They expressed feelings of guilt because their children never struggled to learn to read and felt great compassion for parents who do experience this struggle. At the same time, they felt like parents of struggling readers have the freedom to talk about their struggles openly, while gifted parents cannot talk about their struggles because they aren’t well received, and parents are labeled as “boasting” or “bragging” about the ability level of their children. They also feared others would see them as elitist and condescending if they truly explained their children’s capabilities. Jane shared, “I would just say that our personal experience is one of just angst. How do we nurture the full academic potential of these kids we have, while still keeping them well rounded and not social/emotional wrecks?” She has great empathy for other families dealing with children who struggle to read or who don’t excel academically but she doesn’t really have a support system for the kinds of issues she worries about with her own children. “It’s just that we are constantly

beating ourselves up, wondering if we're doing right by our kids and by their potential. That is what we go through, pretty much all the time."

The Allans discussed how they often downplay their daughters' reading abilities to other curious parents who notice them reading at the gym a lot. When asked, they just smile, shrug and tell others that their girls just really love to read. As the girls have gotten older, it's been easier to mask their ability, since it looks normal for older elementary children to be reading chapter books. As Mrs. Allan explains that when she talks to parents of struggling readers, they talk about their children having emotional breakdowns at night. She wants so badly to say, "Well perfectionism is an emotional breakdown too, but you can't tell your friend who has a struggling learner that this is almost as difficult. 'Cuz they're like, 'Whatever, school is easy for your kids.'"

Parents in this study felt their only allies are either teachers of gifted readers or other parents of gifted readers, usually other family members. They expressed feelings of deep loneliness and a desire to be heard and understood the same way other parents are heard and understood.

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

Within Vygotsky's ZPD (1978), gifted readers can benefit from scaffolds that bridge the gaps of their asynchrony. Parents and teachers must know how to nurture the potential of gifted readers and create respectful partnerships to ensure gifted readers are getting what they need at both home and school.

Nurture Potential. Parents and teachers alike in this study believed that if gifted readers are satisfied with their reading selections and are feeling challenged at school and at home, they are happy. The amount of quality literature available these days has really

helped increase the interest of students. Gifted readers are never short of book recommendations and always have options to read. Getting them to move outside of their comfort zone and try different genres or authors is sometimes a hard task to accomplish with gifted readers, but this was a goal expressed by both parents and teachers as having valuable benefits.

As parents of young gifted readers, the parents in this study sometimes struggled to understand what exactly their children's potential was. Rachel, when dealing with a preschool aged daughter, says, "I just knew that her development was asynchronous enough that we were going to see that she was painfully shy and lacked communication skills with people she didn't know intimately." The fact that her daughter was already reading wasn't something that she knew was unusual at that time.

At the same time, teachers of gifted readers need to understand that gifted readers must be supported in order for their potential to be reached. They deserve the same quality instruction that is often given to struggling and grade level readers. Often, they are left to their own devices, since they are often compliant and want to be left alone to read. Gifted readers can decode and move through literature quickly. Muriel wonders if gifted readers are challenged in the necessary way by their teachers and parents. "So a gifted child can look like they are reading all the time, but are they really thinking all the time? There's a difference." It is the job of the adults in their lives to nurture the potential of gifted readers. They must keep gifted readers on track and growing at the rates that they deserve to be growing.

Respectful Partnerships. Parents and teachers in this survey shared a strong mutual trust in each other. All teachers in this study deferred to parental judgement to

whether or not higher-level books were appropriate for the gifted readers in their classes. At the same time, all parents appreciated the suggestions from teachers, the exposure to great literature that their children receive at school, which sparks conversations with their content and even educates parents, and expressed a great deal of trust in both the classroom and school libraries that their children visit on a regular basis. Josie explained, “In the classroom, they have a set library so there is nothing in there that would give me any pause and I feel totally comfortable with the library and the book fair.” She goes on to say, “There is nothing in there [the school] that I would say to stay away from.” The Allans wholeheartedly agreed. Mr. Allan explained, “I think we’ve got a great support system for our kids!” Mrs. Allan chimed in, “Kudos to that, because the teachers do know, coming in, that their potential is there, and they need to be pushed.”

Diana had a third grader who wanted to do a report on the Holocaust. He wanted to read *The Diary of Anne Frank*. At first, this idea caused her to pause, even though she knew he was more than capable of reading the text. She originally thought, “These themes are too much for these kids, in my opinion.” However, rather than telling him no right away, she reached out to his parents. “We had a conversation and I learned they even had some historical documents from his grandfather, who was in the war.” The more they talked, she decided it would be the perfect assignment for him and a way for him to connect to a grandfather he never knew. At the same time, the school-home partnership was key, since they knew he would be exposed to concepts that might be troubling or disturbing for him. Checking in with him frequently from both ends to answer his questions or support his understandings was a key component of a successful lesson for this gifted reader.

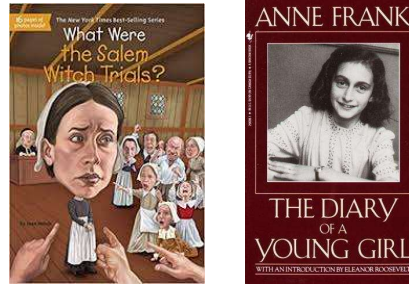


Figure 5.11
Supportive Partnerships Open Doors

Josie also shared that her children are learning valuable life lessons from the school. “I like how they get exposed to more advanced concepts in school like morality and discrimination” and she trusts the school to handle these appropriately with her children. She explained, “When we were young we were told those things were in the past, like ‘remember when people were racist?’ I want my kids to understand society...and not get watered down versions of things.” She also appreciates that school literature has exposed her daughters to concepts that allow for conversations about world issues, like poverty and class warfare, which is a totally different academic experience that she had.

Implications

Additional information about these issues for gifted readers would help strengthen the body of evidence that exists about the affective development of gifted readers. Themes “articulate the patterns, big ideas, and anticipatory frameworks for other educational situations” (Uhrmacher et al. 2017, p. 54). Learning more about how gifted readers process information and how literature affects them is essential. The themes in this study supported the information that exists in current literature and beg for additional research to help young gifted readers succeed and thrive in our schools today.

The fact that three overexcitabilities (emotional, intellectual, and imaginal) emerged from this study is a significant finding. “Dabrowski’s TPD requires that all five OE’s be present, with three occurring in high levels, for advanced human development to take place” (Mendaglio, 2002, p. 17). The three overexcitabilities that Mendaglio (2002) refers to are emotional, intellectual, and imaginal (p. 17). They are referred to as “the richer form” (Dabrowski as cited in Mendaglio, 2002, p. 17). When these three overexcitabilities occur together, they “give rich possibilities of development and creativity” (Dabrowski as cited in Mendaglio, 2002, p. 17).

The overwhelming idea in this study that came up over and over with both parents and teachers was the intense emotional overexcitabilities that exist for many gifted readers. Words like “sensitive” or “empath” or “emotional” were words used by parents unfamiliar with the term overexcitabilities. Parents and teachers of both passionate, voracious gifted readers and parents and teachers of gifted readers who were not passionate readers both described that the gifted readers in their lives experience emotional overexcitabilities. This researcher believes that teachers, both classroom and gifted specialists, are woefully unprepared to meet the needs of gifted readers. They would benefit from extensive training on dealing with emotional overexcitabilities in their gifted students. Parents could use support when dealing with the emotional overexcitabilities of their gifted reader children, as many feel isolated and alone when dealing with these issues.

Many gifted readers see the school library as a safe haven, a place where their needs are met, and a place where they can go to find resources that they crave. Unfortunately, many school libraries in the Green Gables school district are being

downsized, if not gutted completely, and turned into Makerspaces or Innovative Learning Labs. This researcher believes this reality sends a negative message to gifted readers in these buildings that books and reading are no longer a priority at their school. This is an unintended consequence of the push for more science and technology integration in schools today. However, it threatens the very core and heartbeat of many schools, the school library. Muriel, whose school library was recently transformed into a STEM lab and thousands of books were removed, explains, “Sometimes the messaging that we send kids as adults is something we really need to think about.”

The invisible struggle of parents was also a theme the researcher in this study was not expecting to hear. When parents described their feelings of loneliness and feeling unable to share with others the true ability of their children in reading, the researcher was both surprised and saddened. Shifts in thinking around giftedness must happen. Parents of gifted children need to feel supported. Organizations like NAGC, CAGT, and SENG should be offered regularly by schools as effective resources for parents. Many parents in this study were unfamiliar with available resources for parents of gifted readers. More must be done to support these parents and their quest to support their own gifted readers. Through affiliation with groups like Green Gables GT and their local, state and national partnerships, parents can be better equipped to support their gifted children and feel empowered to interact with parents of similar children and get appropriate resources.

Bibliotherapy is a technique that is gaining popularity in the realm of gifted education. This is a valuable technique that should be used by teachers and parents alike to help meet the affective needs of gifted readers. There seems to be a caution to this word, with many practitioners wanting to avoid the concept due to the “therapy” part of

the word. Since teachers and parents are generally not trained therapy professionals, they might be hesitant to take on the concept. However, with some gentle tips from Halsted (2009), the need for a teacher or parent to be a therapist can be avoided. Halsted (2009) cautions that developmental bibliotherapy is meant to help prevent problems, “not to cure them” (p. 115). Halsted (2009) goes on to explain, “Anyone who encourages children to discuss their feelings should know when to refer a child to a mental health professional” (p. 116). As Wood (2008) clarifies, “the crux of bibliotherapy is to move the questions beyond the story, encouraging students to make personal insights and use the story as a catharsis for their feelings” (p. 23). As more information emerges and teachers and parents begin to realize that “therapy” is not something that should hinder their use of the technique, more and more parents and teachers will use this idea to help support the affective development of gifted readers. Professional development around bibliotherapy for both teachers and parents could prove to be very beneficial for gifted readers. Learning when to call in a therapist to meet more severe needs or topics with which teachers and parents are untrained will also help ease fears that they are operating as untrained professionals. Bibliotherapy is a technique that can be used with readers of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. Everyone can learn a lesson from a good book.

Mental health for gifted children is a real concern in today’s society. The affective needs of gifted learners are diverse and can be intense. Parents and teachers in this study all mentioned how challenging meeting the affective needs of gifted readers is. In addition, learning more about how overexcitabilities play into the affective needs of gifted readers could greatly improve the quality of their educational experience. It would

also help parents and teachers learn to distinguish between concerns around pathology and overexcitabilities.

A very important implication from this study is the realization that quality literature is much more prevalent now than any time in history. Students from diverse backgrounds are beginning to have many options of books with characters from similar backgrounds. Children with disabilities can see themselves in the heroes and heroines of books today. “Classic” literature is becoming more modern and in tune with what children in the twenty first century are like. As Muriel noted, “I think that there are a lot of moral issues or even societal issues that are coming up in books right now.” It is an exciting time for authors of children’s literature, who have much more freedom in the topics and subjects they explore in books. Teachers have more freedom to make book selections that mirror the experiences of their students. Rather than reading a novel because it is a “classic,” teachers are making book selections based on the quality of the material, rather than historical popularity.

In addition to the popularity of books, many movies and motion pictures have been made from popular and classic children’s literature. An implication from this research is the idea of using movies to promote reading for students who struggle. This might be especially important for twice-exceptional readers, like the two in this study who struggled with visualization processing. Being able to read a novel and watch the movie version simultaneously might help strengthen comprehension and motivate reluctant readers to pick up books.

Another implication that goes along with the idea of using movies to deal with life issues is the concept of cinematherapy. Sharp et al. (2002) define cinematherapy as:

A therapeutic technique that involves careful selection and assignment of movies for clients to watch with follow-up processing of their experiences during therapy sessions. It can be used as a stimulus for discussion in therapy or as a metaphorical intervention. Cinematherapy is an outgrowth of bibliotherapy. (p. 270)

The authors of this study go on to explain that this type of therapy can be used as a stand-alone intervention, “regardless of the therapist’s theoretical orientation, and allows for a number of potential uses in the therapeutic process” (Sharp et al., 2002, p. 270). They explain:

Movies can provide a vehicle for self-exploration through client identification with characters and ensuing analysis of character behaviours and motives. But movies can potentially go beyond raising the level of a client’s insight into their issues and may assist in the resolution of difficulties faced by a client. (p. 270-271)

Still another implication from this research is that more appropriate books for gifted readers should be created. High interest, high ability books for elementary gifted readers are in great demand. Book publishers should be persuaded to create a market for gifted readers, especially young gifted readers. Creating books that have high vocabulary, advanced content, and interesting tropes, but still remain appropriate for young gifted children is something that could have a real impact in the field of gifted education. Books that are acutely aware of the affective needs of gifted readers could also serve an important role in the education of gifted readers. Additional books that deal with overexcitabilities that gifted children often experience could also be used to help gifted readers realize that others struggle with similar issues and can learn to be successful. In addition, books about gifted people, children and adults, could be inspirational resources for the gifted.

Finally, gaining more information about gifted adult readers could help prepare young gifted readers for the future. Learning about how gifted adults manage their overexcitabilities and what being passionate about reading looks like as an adult could really benefit young gifted readers, their teachers, and their parents and provide inspiration and motivation to these students. Learning more about gifted adults who underachieved as children, as well as gifted adults who remain passionate about reading into adulthood could help gifted readers understand the potential and power of quality literature, what reading looks like over the lifespan, and how reading can open doors and opportunities for gifted readers.

Limitations

In order to bring greater diversity to this study, the inclusion criteria could be amended to cast a wider net of potential participants or the random sampling method could be changed to be more specific and inclusive of a more diverse group of participants. Since three of the four parent participants had two daughters each, not a lot of information was learned about gifted boy readers from the parent perspective. This was an interesting occurrence, since, according to the Green Gables Office of Assessment and Performance Analytics (2020), of the approximately 56,288 students in the Green Gables School District, 7.8% of female students are identified as gifted (any program), while 8.9% of male students are identified as gifted (any program). About 2.5% of the entire population is identified as gifted in reading, but the district has no way to disaggregate the data by gender at this time (Green Gables School District, Office of Assessment and Performance Analytics, 2020).

In addition, more elementary teachers are women which was reflected in this study. All four teacher participants were women. This study used a random sampling method. In the future, the perspective of male gifted elementary specialists might give different information about their unique perspective. The result of all female teachers in this study was in line with the random sampling procedure used, since it was more likely to recruit women due to the imbalance of men in the elementary teaching profession.

In this study, the recruitment process was random. As a result, all parent participants were highly educated parents. Educated parents often have more investment in the education of their children. All parents participating in this study were working parents as well. As a result, additional information is necessary to determine if the same patterns and themes exist for stay-at-home parents or parents who are less educated than the participants of this study. The result of mostly mothers participating in this study was in line with the random sampling procedure used, since it seems as though moms are more involved with the day to day activities of elementary students than are fathers. Valuable information could be gained from parents of gifted readers who are not as formally educated as the ones in this study, specifically how these parents promote reading in their homes and how they support the affective needs of their own gifted readers.

Further Research

Topics for further research should center around meeting the affective needs of gifted readers. One topic that could be very beneficial for gifted readers could be an analysis of various reading curricula for gifted readers and how effective different curricula are in meeting the social-emotional needs of gifted readers.

As well, bibliotherapy is an evolving concept and teachers and parents alike should be aware. Additional studies could broaden popular understanding of this technique and provide valuable resources for both parents and teachers. Updated book lists reflecting current book selections would be a tool that could be used in libraries and bookstores to help with book selections for all readers, not just gifted readers.

Another topic for further research could focus on the affective development of middle and high school gifted readers. Several teachers and parents mentioned the fact that rigorous academic course loads increase as gifted readers get older, limiting their availability to read for pleasure. Afterschool commitments, like employment and athletics, as well as the sheer amount of homework that is assigned to them on a nightly basis keep them from reading outside of school as well. Several interviewees expressed concern about how gifted readers at the middle and high school levels have very little, if any, time to cultivate their love of reading. Parents and teachers worry that gifted readers will not nurture their love of reading and their love of reading will dissipate. Additional research could shine light on the academic and affective experiences of gifted readers in middle and high school.

Supports for parents of gifted readers (and gifted students in general) is another important subject for future research. Finding ways to support their intense need to belong and/or their desire to feel validated by other parents is a topic that could help parents of gifted readers better understand. Josie was brand new to being a parent of a gifted reader and was doing everything she could to better understand what that means. She was willing to do or read anything that might help her better support her daughter. She loves coming to the Green Gables GT meetings because she has finally found people

that understand her and she can truly be herself around them. It doesn't feel like bragging to say that her daughter is reading above grade level or she had to punish her daughter for staying up late to read something she couldn't put down. Many gifted parents would greatly benefit from support systems and non-judgmental places they can share about the complexities of their gifted children.

As we learn more about twice-exceptional gifted students, it becomes clear that there is so much more to be learned. Preparing teachers, administrators, and counselors to teach twice-exceptional learners is necessary. Providing classroom and gifted education teachers with educational information about how to meet the diverse learning needs of these students is essential. Rachel explained how she has had to provide educational resources to both her daughters' schools, as well as special education district personnel about twice-exceptionality and how to better service the unique and varied needs of these learners. With a sigh, she explained, "So we're getting there, but I am telling you - every day it's like cement feet." Making sure her daughters are receiving a fair education is something she works tirelessly to accomplish. Other twice-exceptional students do not have the same luxury of having such informed and involved parents.

Finding parents and teachers to interview from varying demographics, regions of the country, and differing educational backgrounds would be an important study to conduct in the future. Parents and teachers from this study were highly educated and came from one suburban school district. Although there was some variance in demographics and educational experiences of participants and schools represented, finding a more diverse group of participants could provide rich information about the affective struggles of gifted readers from different demographics.

Learning more about the following areas would benefit gifted readers, their parents and their teachers to inform instruction and provide support for their affective needs: Creative reading, critical reading, inquiry reading, and flexible grouping. These strategies should be explicitly used for gifted learners to excel (Caruana, 2020). Wood (2008) proposed the following as key components of a quality reading program for gifted readers: Assessment, acceleration, enrichment, opportunities for discussion. Curriculum writers should begin to consider gifted readers when they develop curriculum that appeals to elementary school students. In addition to teaching students to read and providing strictly remedial and grade level instruction opportunities, curriculum should also focus on students who are reading significantly above grade level, as well as providing the affective needs of this unique and diverse population of students.

Summary of Chapter

In this chapter, emergent themes were presented by the researcher. First, the researcher explained themes that related to the research questions. Next, themes relating to Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship were presented, specifically the intentional, curricular, and pedagogical dimensions. After that, themes relating to the conceptual and theoretic frameworks were presented. Implications of this research were presented next, along with the limitations of this study, as well as several ideas for future research. This researcher believes that exciting and valuable lessons can be learned from this research study and others like it, as much more work needs to be done for teachers and parents to truly understand and meet the diverse needs of gifted readers. This vulnerable group of exceptional learners deserves to be understood and supported by parents and teachers alike. As Eisner (1998) reminds us,

What is optimistic is the ability to face up to this complexity and begin to work together to address the challenging future before us. To do this will require us to give up old habits and traditional expectations, but in the end, it might open up new vistas before us. It might give us some new seas on which to sail. Isn't that what education is about, not arriving at a destination, but traveling with a new view? (p. 217)

Epilogue

In March of 2020, the world as I knew it stopped. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) took hold of the world and changed my daily life, my routines, and most importantly, my career. Words like social distancing, pandemic, hoarding (mostly toilet paper), and exponential multiplication and have become part of daily dialogue and news reports. With less than a few hours' notice, schools in the Green Gables School District were given extended spring breaks and teachers scrambled to grab resources before leaving school buildings, hearing rumors about something called "remote learning" that might take place later. A few days later, the governor of our state mandated shelter-in-place orders and social distancing, forcing citizens into their homes to try to flatten the spread and curve of this deadly disease, closing restaurants, ending professional and college sports, and closing non-essential businesses in an unprecedented move.

Schools were closed without warning -- first for the day before our natural spring break, with a weeklong extension as the district tried to figure out what was happening. Students went home that day expecting to come back for one more day before the break. Students left their learning supplies and all of their belongings at school, not anticipating school being closed so abruptly. I am sure that the idea of an extended spring break thrilled most of them, as it did me. Being able to have an extra week of freedom felt like

a breath of fresh air. That fresh air soon became stale and heavy as the Coronavirus took hold of the word.

During spring break, it was determined that schools would be closed for a few additional weeks to begin remote learning as the shelter-in-place orders were announced. It was recently announced that schools would be closed for the rest of the year and students would continue with remote learning until the end of the year. Remote learning suddenly became the platform on which teachers were required to teach. I was suddenly thrust into a new reality that I could never have imagined would happen, even in my wildest dreams. The thought of never seeing my students in person for the rest of the year, some forever, was a reality I am still trying to come to terms with.

As I am beginning to communicate with my own gifted learners and their parents, the overwhelming message I hear is that gifted readers are struggling. They are struggling with not being able to go to school, with not seeing their friends, with losing out on end-of-year celebrations and their formal graduation to middle school, field trips, sports, and losing the comfort of their daily routines. There is some talk about academics and how to maintain grades, but the majority of my emails with parents are around the social-emotional development of these gifted children. The relevancy of this dissertation and how it connects to the affective development of gifted readers has never felt so applicable as it does now. According to NAGC (2020),

During this world pandemic, gifted children may experience intense emotions or anxiety, especially if they react intensely or are considered twice-exceptional under normal circumstances. Most families are at home—perhaps huddled around their TVs or smartphones—so there is little escape for those with a predisposition for asynchrony, emotional intensity, or anxiety. (p. 1)

NAGC (2020) goes on to state, “However, families with gifted children and teens can manage intensities and anxieties in a healthy way, and channel energies to support positivity in themselves and in the community” (p. 1).

I believe that helping gifted readers find appropriate non-fiction, vetted resources that they can read will help them with their fears of this deadly virus. Finding fiction resources with strong characters who overcame adversity, moved away from friends and family, and/or dealt with crises in their lives can help gifted readers feel more connected to others, more understanding of the world around them, and potentially help them not feel so alone. Implementing components of bibliotherapy will have lasting effects on gifted readers who are struggling to feel “normal” again after such a harsh, abrupt change to their school and routines.

As I prepare to defend this dissertation via the video platform Zoom, I am beginning to embrace this new reality and am spending hours virtually peering into the living rooms of my boss, my colleagues, cohort members, and students. Processing the reality that my defense committee will be conducted through a Zoom meeting is feeling more and more normal as I continue to practice this new platform. As NAGC (2020) so hopefully shares, “Eventually, we will all find some equilibrium...and things will return to some sense of normal” (p. 1). Now more than ever, the social-emotional health of gifted readers is dependent on capable, caring adults who will help them navigate this new reality. My hope is that the implications of this dissertation might serve as a guide to help gifted readers in this uncertain time who greatly need a helping hand, a friendly smile, and maybe just a little bit of courage, like so many of the fictional characters that

they consider their heroes. After all, if Harry Potter taught us anything, it would be that courage comes from within.

"It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities."

- Albus Dumbledore, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*

Anne's horizons had closed in since the night she had sat there after coming home from Queen's; but if the path set before her feet was to be narrow she knew that the flowers of quiet happiness would bloom along it. The joys of sincere work and worthy aspiration and congenial friendship were to be hers; nothing could rob her of her birthright of fancy or her ideal world of dreams. And there was always the bend in the road!

- Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*

References

- Beers, K. & Probst, R. (2017). *Disrupting thinking: Why what we read matters*. Scholastic, Inc.
- Best, J. W., Kahn, J. V., & Jha, A. K. (2017). *Research in education* (10th ed.). Pearson Education, Inc.
- Bilyeu, W.C. (2012). *Examining the issue of 2e students with EBD: A conversation with an educator*. 2e Newsletter. https://www.2enewsletter.com/article_2012-07_EBD-QA.html
- Burruss, J.D. & Kaenzig, L. (1999). Introversion: The often forgotten factor impacting the gifted. *Virginia Association for the Gifted Newsletter*, 21(1).
https://www.thinkingahead.com.au/wpcontent/uploads/2013/03/BurrussKaenzig_IntroversionTheOftenForgottenFactorImpactingGifted99.pdf
- Buss, R. & Zambo, D. (2014). *A practical guide for students and faculty in CPED-Influenced programs working on an action research dissertation in practice*.
<https://www.cpedinitiative.org/page/Actionresource>
- Carter, J. B. (2009). Going graphic. *Educational Leadership*, 68-72.
- Caruana, V. (2020). *Literacy strategies for gifted and accelerated readers*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
- Cherry, K. (2018). *What is sociocultural theory?*
<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-sociocultural-theory-2795088>
- Cherry, K. (2019). *Child development theories and examples*.
<https://www.verywellmind.com/child-development-theories-2795068>
- Clements, A. (2009). *No talking*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

- Colorado Department of Education. (2015). *Gifted identification handbook: Chapter 3 revised*. https://www.edcsd.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_139520/File/Gifted%20Education/Who%20We%20Serve/IDChapter_8.20.15.pdf
- Colorado Department of Education (2017). Academic aptitude pathways. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/academicpath>
- Colorado Department of Education. (2018). *Gifted identification*. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/identification>
- Colorado Department of Education. (2019). *Advanced learning plan (ALP)*. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/alp-0>
- Colorado Department of Education. (2020). *Special education rules and regulations*. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/spedlaw/rules>
- Corkindale, G. (2008). *Overcoming imposter syndrome*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2008/05/overcoming-imposter-syndrome>
- Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among the five approaches*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Cross, J.R. (2016). Gifted children and peer relationships. In Neihart, M., Pfeiffer, S. I., & Cross, T. L. *The social and emotional development of gifted children: What do we know?* (pp. 41 – 53). Prufrock Press Inc.
- Cross, T. L. (2018). *On the social and emotional lives of gifted children: Understanding and guiding their development*. Prufrock Press Inc.
- Dabrowski, K. (1964). *Positive Disintegration* (J. Aronson, Ed.) Little Brown.

- Daniels, S., & Piechowski, M. M. (2009). *Living with intensity: Understanding the sensitivity, excitability, and emotional development of gifted children, adolescents, and adults*. Great Potential Press.
- de Leon, C. (2020). Graphic novel wins Newbery Medal for the first time. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/27/books/newbery-new-kid-jerry-craft-caldecott-undefeated-kwame-alexander.html>
- Doyle, B. & Bramwell, W. (2006). Promoting emergent literacy and social–emotional learning through dialogic reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 59(6), 554–564.
[https://doi: 10.1598/RT.59.6.5](https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.59.6.5)
- Duke University Talent Identification Program. (2019). *Asynchrony: A new definition of giftedness*. <https://blogs.tip.duke.edu/giftedtoday/2007/01/23/asynchrony-a-new-definition-of-giftedness/>
- Eisner, E.W. (1998). *The kind of schools we need: Personal essays*. Heinemann.
- Eisner, E. W. (2002). *The educational imagination: On the design and evaluation of school programs*. (3rd ed.). Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Eisner, E. W. (2003). Educational connoisseurship and educational criticism: An arts-based approach to educational evaluation. *International Handbook of Educational Evaluation*, 153-166. [https://doi:10.1007/978-94-010-0309-4_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-0309-4_11)
- Eisner, E.W. (2011). The roots of connoisseurship and criticism: A personal journey. In Alkin, M. (Ed). *Evaluation Roots*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Eisner, E. W. (2017). *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. Teachers College Press.

- Fisher, T. (2010). Unwrapping the gifted: Multipotentiality. *Education Week*.
https://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/unwrapping_the_gifted/2010/08/multipotentiality.html
- Foley-Nicpon, M., Allmon, A., Sieck, B., & Stinson, R. D. (2011). Empirical investigation of twice-exceptionality: Where have we been and where are we going? *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 55(1), 3–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0016986210382575>
- Ford, D., Tyson, C., Howard, T., & Harris, J. (2000). Multicultural literature and gifted black students: Promoting self-understanding, awareness, and pride. *Roeper Review*, 22(4), 235-240. [https://doi: 10.1080/02783190009554045](https://doi.org/10.1080/02783190009554045)
- Ford, D. & Grantham, T. (2012). Using the NAGC gifted programming standards to create programs and services for culturally and linguistically different gifted students. In Johnsen, S. *NAGC pre-K-grade 12 gifted education programming standards: A guide to planning and implementing high-quality services*. Prufrock Press Inc.
- Freeman, J. & Garces-Bascal, R.M. (2016). Gender differences in gifted children. In Neihart, M., Pfeiffer, S. I., & Cross, T. L. *The social and emotional development of gifted children: What do we know?* (pp. 17 – 28). Prufrock Press Inc.
- Gander Publishing. (n.d.). Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes.
<https://lindamoodbell.com/>
- Gatto-Walden, P.K. (2013). The heart of the matter: Complexities of the highly gifted self. In Neville, C.S., Piechowski, M.M., & Tolan, S.S. (Eds.), *Off the charts: asynchrony and the gifted child* (pp. 193–222). Royal Fireworks Press.

- Grant, C., & Osanloo, A. (2014). Understanding, selecting and integrating a theoretical framework in dissertation research: creating the blueprint for your “house”. *Administrative Issues Journal*, 4(2).
- Greene, R. (2017). *Gifted Culturally Linguistically Diverse Learners: A School-Based Exploration* (Doctoral research project).
https://digitalcommons.du.edu/tls_doctoral/12/
- Gross, M. U. (1999). Small poppies: highly gifted children in the early years. *Roeper Review*, 21(3), 207-214.
- Halsted, J.W. (1990). *Guiding the gifted reader*. The ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education (ERIC EC). ERIC EC Digest #E481
- Halsted, J.W. (2009). *Some of my best friends are books: Guiding gifted readers from preschool to high school*. Great Potential Press.
- Hebert, T. P., & Furner, J. M. (1997). Helping high ability students overcome math anxiety through bibliotherapy. *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 8(4), 164–178.
- Hebert, T. P. (1991). Meeting the affective needs of bright boys through bibliotherapy. *Roeper Review*, 13(4), 207-212. [https://doi: 10.1080/02783199109553360](https://doi:10.1080/02783199109553360)
- Hebert, T. P., & Kent, R. (2000). Nurturing social and emotional development in gifted teenagers through young adult literature. *Roeper Review*, 22(3), 167 -171.
<https://doi:10.1080/02783190009554027>
- Howell, H. (1987). Language, literature and vocabulary development for gifted students. *The Reading Teacher*, 40, 500-504.

Innovative Learning. (2011). *Zone of proximal development*.

https://www.innovativelearning.com/educational_psychology/development/zone-of-proximal-development.html

Jack, S. & Ronan, K. (2008). Bibliotherapy: Practice and research. *School Psychology International* 29(2), 161-182.

Jaramillo, J. (1996). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and contributions to the development of constructivist curricula. *Education*, 117(1), 133 – 140.

Kane, M. (2013). Parent lore: Collected stories of asynchronous development. In Neville, C.S., Piechowski, M.M., & Tolan, S.S. (Eds.), *Off the charts: asynchrony and the gifted child* (pp. 275–314). Royal Fireworks Press.

Kearney, K. (2013). Life in the asynchronous family. In Neville, C.S., Piechowski, M.M., & Tolan, S.S. (Eds.), *Off the charts: asynchrony and the gifted child* (pp. 257–274). Royal Fireworks Press.

Kingore, B. (2001). Gifted kids, gifted characters, and great books. *Gifted Child Today*, 24(1), 30-32.

Lamb, P., & Feldhusen, J. F. (1992). Recognizing and adapting instruction for early readers. *Roeper Review*, 15(2), 108-109. <https://doi:10.1080/02783199209553478>

Lee, L. (1999). Teachers' conceptions of gifted and talented young children. *High Ability Studies*, 10(2), 183-196.

Lynch, J. (2002). Parents' self-efficacy beliefs, parents' gender, children's reader self-perceptions reading achievement and gender. *Journal of Reading Research*, 25, 54-67.

- Marrs, R. (1995). A meta-analysis of bibliotherapy studies. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 23(6), 843-870.
- Meckstroth, E. (2013). The asynchrony of overexcitabilities: Advice for parents and teachers. In Neville, C.S., Piechowski, M.M., & Tolan, S.S. (Eds.), *Off the charts: asynchrony and the gifted child* (pp. 315 - 342). Royal Fireworks Press.
- Mendaglio, S. (2002). Dabrowski's *Theory of Positive Disintegration: Some implications for teachers of gifted students*. <https://www.sengifted.org/post/medaglio-dabrowski>
- Montgomery, L.M. (1998). *Anne of green gables*. Nimbus Publishing.
- Moore, M. (2005). Meeting the educational needs of young gifted children in the regular classroom. *Gifted Child Today*, 28(4), 40-47, 65.
- Morelock, M. J., & Morrison, K. (1999). Differentiating 'developmentally appropriate': The multidimensional curriculum model for young gifted children. *Roeper Review*, 21(3), 195-200. <https://doi:10.1080/02783199909553961>
- Moy, J. (2017). Reading and writing one's way to wellness: The history of bibliotherapy and scriptotherapy. *New Directions in Literature and Medicine Studies*, 15-30. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi:10.1057/978-1-137-51988-7_2
- Munson, G. (1944). Adjusting the reading program to the gifted child. *Journal of Exceptional Children*, 11(2), 45-48. <https://doi:10.1177/001440294401100204>
- National Association for Gifted Children. (n.d.-a). *A brief history of gifted and talented education*. <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/gifted-education-us/brief-history-gifted-and-talented-education>

National Association for Gifted Children. (n.d.-b). *Glossary of terms*.

<https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/glossary-terms>

National Association for Gifted Children. (2010). *NAGC pre-K-grade 12 gifted programming standards: A blueprint for quality gifted education programs*.

<https://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/standards/K-12%20programming%20standards.pdf>

National Association for Gifted Children. (2016). *What is giftedness?*

<https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/definitions-giftedness>

National Association for Gifted Children. (2018). *Asynchronous development*.

<https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/social-emotional-issues/asynchronous-development>

National Association for Gifted Children. (2020). *Supporting gifted child during COVID-*

19. https://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/Publication%20PHP/NAGC_TIP-Sheet_COVID19_With%20Strategies%20by%20Development%20Level_April%202020.pdf

Neihart, K. (2016). Perfectionism in gifted students. In Neihart, M., Pfeiffer, S. I., &

Cross, T. L. *The social and emotional development of gifted children: What do we know?* (pp. 28 – 38). Prufrock Press.

Neihart, M., Pfeiffer, S. I., & Cross, T. L. (2016). *The social and emotional development of gifted children: What do we know?* Prufrock Press.

Neumeister, K. S., Yssel, N., & Burney, V. H. (2013). The influence of primary

caregivers in fostering success in twice-exceptional children. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 57(4), 263–274. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0016986213500068>

- Neville, C. S., Piechowski, M. M., & Tolan, S. S. (2013). *Off the charts: Asynchrony and the gifted child*. Royal Fireworks Press.
- Noddings, N. (2013). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. Teachers College Press.
- Piechowski, M. (1979). Developmental potential. In N. Colangelo & R.T. Zaffrann (Eds.). *New Voices in Counseling the Gifted* (25-57). Kendall Hunt.
- Piechowski, M. (2013). "A bird who can soar": Overexcitabilities in the gifted. In Neville, C.S., Piechowski, M.M., & Tolan, S.S. (Eds.), *Off the charts: asynchrony and the gifted child* (pp. 122–149). Royal Fireworks Press.
- Reis, S., Gubbins, E, Briggs, C., Schreiber, F., Richards, S., Jacobs, J.,...Renzulli, J. (2004). Reading instruction for talented readers: Case studies documenting few opportunities for continuous progress. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 48(4), 315-338.
<https://doi:10.1177/001698620404800406>
- Robinson, N. (2013). Parents and the development and education of gifted students. In Callahan, C. & Hertberg-Davis, H. (Eds.), *Fundamentals of gifted education: Considering multiple perspectives*. (pp. 236 – 247). Routledge.
- Schlichter, C. L., & Burke, M. (1994). Using books to nurture the social and emotional development of gifted students. *Roeper Review*, 16(4), 280-283.
<https://doi:10.1080/02783199409553598>
- Shechtman, Z. (1999). Bibliotherapy: An indirect approach to treatment of childhood aggression. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development*, 30(1), 39-53
- Silverman, L.K. (1997). The construct of asynchronous development. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 72(3 & 4), 36-58.

- Silverman, L.K. (2013). Asynchronous development: theoretical bases and current applications. In C. S. Neville, M. M. Piechowski, & S. S. Tolan (Eds.), *Off the charts: asynchrony and the gifted child* (pp. 18–47). Royal Fireworks Press.
- Sharp, C., Smith, J., & Cole, A. (2002). Cinematherapy: Metaphorically promoting therapeutic change. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 15(3), 269–276.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09515070210140221>
- Sousa, D. A. (2009). *How the gifted brain learns*. Corwin.
- Sullivan, A. K., & Strang, H. R. (2002). Bibliotherapy in the classroom: Using literature to promote the development of emotional intelligence. *Childhood Education*, 79(2), 74-80. <https://doi:10.1080/00094056.2003.10522773>
- Tucker, B., & Hafenstein, N. L. (1997). Psychological intensities in young gifted children. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 41(3), 66-75.
- Uhrmacher, P. B., Moroye, C. M., & Flinders, D. J. (2017). *Using educational criticism and connoisseurship for qualitative research*. Routledge.
- United States Department of Education. (2002). *No Child Left Behind Act* (No. Pub. L. No. 107 - 110 (Title IX, Part A, Definition 22)).
<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg107.html#sec9101>
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind and society: the development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Webb, J.T. (2000). *Mis-diagnosis and dual diagnosis of gifted children: Gifted and LD, ADM, OCD, Oppositional Defiant Disorder*. Gifted Psychology Press, Inc.
- Weber, C., & Hedrick, W. (2010). Let's not leave gifted readers behind. *National Council of Teachers of English: Voices from the Middle*, 17(4), 56-58.

- Weinfeld, R., Barnes-Robinson, L., Jeweler, S., & Roffman Shevitz, B. (2013). *Smart kids with learning difficulties: Overcoming obstacles and realizing potential* (L. Compton, Ed.; 2nd ed.). Prufrock Press, Inc.
- White, E.B. (2006). *Charlotte's web*. HarperCollins Publishers.
- Wiley, K. (2016). Theories of social and emotional development in gifted children. In Neihart, M., Pfeiffer, S. & Cross, T. L. (Eds.), *The Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Children: What Do We Know?* (pp. 3 - 15). Prufrock Press.
- Winebrenner, S. (2001). *Teaching gifted kids in the regular classroom: Strategies and techniques every teacher can use to meet the academic needs of the gifted and talented*. Free Spirit Publishing.
- Wong, A. (2019). The U.S. teaching population is getting bigger, and more female. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2019/02/the-explosion-of-women-teachers/582622/>
- Wood, P. F. (2008). Reading instruction with gifted and talented readers: A series of unfortunate events or a sequence of auspicious results? *Gifted Child Today*, 31(3), 16 – 25.
- Wormald, C., Rogers, K. B., & Vialle, W. (2015). A case study of giftedness and specific learning disabilities: Bridging the two exceptionalities. *Roeper Review*, 37(3), 124–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02783193.2015.1047547>

Definition of Terms

Affective – the socioemotional development of a person. This includes person/social awareness and adjustment, as well as values, attitudes, and self. It is sometimes referred to as social-emotional (NAGC, n.d.-b).

Asynchrony - the term used to describe the mismatch between cognitive, emotional, and physical development of gifted individuals (NAGC, 2018).

Bibliotherapy - a form of guided reading that helps children cope with and solve problems, understand themselves and their environment, build self-esteem, and meet the developmental challenges of adolescence (Winebrenner, 2001, p. 113).

Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Integration - Kazimierz Dabrowski developed his Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD) on the foundation of two concepts: developmental potential and multilevelness (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009). This theory suggests that going through difficult and unsettling periods in life (disintegration) can be positive experiences that prepare the person for further growth and development (Halsted, 2009, p. 17).

Consensual Validation – agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, evaluation and thematic of an educational situation are right (Eisner, 2017, p. 112). In order to research consensual validation, or the state of shared belief, an

educational critic must demonstrate structural corroboration and referential adequacy (Uhrmacher et al. 2017, p. 59).

Differentiation – The practice of moving students beyond grade-level standards or connecting what is taught to their personal interests through learning strategies, products, and varied learning environments that provide depth and complexity appropriate for the students' abilities (Sousa, 2000, p. 45-46).

Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship - Educational connoisseurship and educational criticism are efforts to use and extend aims and methods employed to heighten awareness of works of art to educational practice (Eisner, 1998, p. 67). Connoisseurship is the art of appreciation while criticism is the art of disclosure (Eisner, 1998; 2017; Uhrmacher et al. 2017).

Gifted or Giftedness - Gifted individuals are those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in the top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains. Domains include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system (e.g., mathematics, music, language) and/or set of sensorimotor skills (e.g., painting, dance, sports) (NAGC, 2016).

Imposter Syndrome - Imposter Syndrome can be defined as “a collection of feelings of inadequacy that persist despite evident success. ‘Imposters’ suffer from chronic self-

doubt and a sense of intellectual fraudulence that override any feelings of success or external proof of their competence” (Corkindale, 2008).

Multilevelness - where human development can vary according to level and type of development (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009, p. 7).

Multipotentiality – “Multipotentiality is the state of having many *exceptional* talents, any one or more of which could make for a great career for that person. Gifted children often (though of course not always) have multipotentiality. Their advanced intellectual abilities and their intense curiosity make them prime candidates for excelling in multiple areas” (Fisher, 2010).

Perfectionism – A belief that one’s worth as a human being depends on being perfect. Perfectionists may set impossible goals for themselves, suffer from Imposter Syndrome, and/or fear they will lose the regard of others if they can’t continue to demonstrate exceptionality (Winebrenner, 2001).

Overexcitabilities - a direct translation from the Polish word that means “superstimulability” or an unusually strong neurological reaction to stimuli (Halsted, 2009, p.18). The five overexcitabilities in Dabrowski’s theory are psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imaginational, and emotional (Piechowski, 1979; Daniels & Piechowski, 2009; Halsted 2009).

Referential Adequacy – is “achieved through member checking, interview questions dealing with the significance of the topic, and attending to contemporary and historical trends in education” (Uhrmacher et al. 2017, p. 60). Referential adequacy answers the following questions: *Is the criticism useful? Does the critic’s work allow for the audience to see education in a new way and for purposes deemed important?* (Uhrmacher et al. 2017, p. 60).

Structural Corroboration - the presence of a coherent, persuasive whole picture (Uhrmacher et al. 2017, p. 59). Structural corroboration, “like the process of triangulation, is a means through which multiple types of data are related to each other to support or contradict the interpretation and evaluation of a state of affairs” (Eisner, 2017, p. 110).

Twice-Exceptional – Twice-exceptional is a term used to describe a student who is both gifted and disabled. These students may also be referred to as having dual exceptionalities or as being gifted with learning disabilities (GT/LD). This also applies to students who are gifted with ADHD or gifted with autism (NAGC, n.d.-b). It can also be referred to as “2e”.

Underachievement – The discrepancy between expected and actual academic performance that is not the result of a learning disability. A combination of factors from both school and home can cause underachievement, including academic self-concept,

attitudes toward school, attitudes toward teachers and classes, motivation and self-regulation, and goal valuation (Sousa, 2000, p. 87-88).

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory – Vygotsky believed that the social experience shapes the ways of thinking and interpreting the world (Jaramillo, 1996, p. 135). In the classroom setting, students learn and make sense of the world through interacting with their peers, teacher, manipulatives, learning experiences, and their contextual setting (Jaramillo, 1996). According to Cherry (2019), Vygotsky believed it is with the help of more knowledgeable others that people are able to progressively learn and increase their skills and scope of understanding (Vygotsky, 1978).

Zone of Proximal Development - "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Cherry, 2018; Morelock & Morrison, 1999; Silverman, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978).

Appendix A

Research Timeline

The timeline for this Doctoral Research Project is as follows:

May 2019: Doctoral Research Project Submission

July 2019: Doctoral Research Project Proposal Hearing

August 2019: IRB Approval, Green Gables School District Research Approval

September – December 2019: Data Collection and Analysis, Writing of Chapters

January – April 2020: Final Analysis and Writing

May 2020: Defense of Doctoral Research Project

June 2020: Graduation

Appendix B

Community Partner Agreement

April 10, 2019

Community Partner Agreement

Beginning in the fall of 2019, CCGT ([REDACTED] parent affiliate group) agrees to be Kim Freed's community partner for a research and dissertation project for the Doctorate of Education in Gifted Education at the University of Denver, under the supervision of Dr. Norma Lu Hafenstein. A key component of the requirements for the doctorate is to obtain a community partner. Researchers must disseminate their work to interested community members as defined by the nature of the research. At the end of the project, research will be shared with any interested parties. Anyone who voluntarily chooses to participate will remain completely anonymous and measures will be taken to maintain confidentiality.

Dr. Louis [REDACTED] Ph.D., a member of the founding steering committee for CCGT, and Ms. Freed will meet (in person or over the telephone) at least twice: once in the fall of 2019 and once in the spring of 2020, to discuss the research project and dissertation. In addition, Ms. Freed would like to attend a few CCGT meetings and conduct interviews with eligible parents who are interested in participating. The project is focused on learning more about how to affectively support gifted readers, given the nature of their asynchronous development. The rationale for the choice in research is learning more about how gifted readers balance the asynchrony they experience in their reading level and ability. The following affective areas for gifted readers will be considered:

- establishing an identity
- balancing introversion with the social expectations of others
- maintaining relationships
- perfectionism

The core of this Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism research project is to analyze the perceptions of parents and teachers of various reading supports and barriers on the affective development of gifted readers. The goal is to provide direction for teachers and parents to support elementary gifted readers in coping with the social and emotional challenges associated with their asynchronous reading development.

The central research questions for this Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship research study are: What do parents and teachers perceive as effective reading supports that promote the affective development of young gifted readers? What do parents and teachers perceive as major barriers that hinder the affective development of elementary gifted readers?

The sub-question that supports the research question is: how can literature be used to support or hinder the affective development of gifted readers?



Dr. Louis



Kim Freed

Appendix C

Potential Participant Letter

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Kim Freed and I am a graduate student from the Morgridge College of Education at the University of Denver. I am writing to invite you to participate in my doctoral research project, "Supporting the Affective Needs of Gifted Readers." This is a qualitative Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship study about parent and teacher perceptions on the reading supports and barriers on the affective development of gifted readers. You are eligible to be in this study because you have a child who is a gifted reader or you are a teacher of gifted readers. Your insights about the affective development of your child(ren) or students and their experiences with reading will be incredibly beneficial to this research.

If you decide to participate in this study, I will come to a place of your choosing to interview you or we can set a time to interview through an online method at a date and time that is convenient for you. I will ask you approximately 20 questions about your overall experiences with your gifted reader(s). Interviews will take place over two one-hour sessions. Questions will include how you support their unique needs, what your experiences have been with these readers, and how reading impacts their affective development in the areas of establishing an identity, introversion vs social expectations, relationships with others, and perfectionism. I will also ask what their library and reading habits are like. Next, I will ask about how you approach their need for reading material that might be deemed inappropriate for their age. Finally, I will ask you to share stories or insights into the life of your gifted reader(s) and anything else you would like to share with me about your experience as a teacher/parent of gifted reader(s).

I expect to conduct one or two interviews, which will last one hour in length. You will be audio and/or video recorded for transcription purposes only. The recordings will be destroyed once transcription is complete. All of your information will be kept confidential and an alternative name will be used in the study. I will provide you with a copy of the completed transcription and any connections that I make to the existing literature on the asynchronous development gifted readers. You will have the ability to check the validity of my findings and approve the final transcription details.

This is a voluntary research project. If you would like to participate or have any questions about the study, please contact me at 303-748-3458 or email me at kfreed6393@gmail.com. You may also contact the faculty sponsor, Dr. Norma Hafenstein, with any questions. She can be reached at 303-871-2527 or by email at nhafenst@du.edu.

Thank you very much!
Sincerely,

Kim Freed
kfreed6393@gmail.com
(303) 748-3458

Appendix D

Informed Consent for Participation in a Study

Title of this Project: Supporting the Affective Needs of Gifted Readers

Investigator(s): Kim Freed, University of Denver, Morgridge College of Education
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Norma Hafenstein, Clinical Professor, Morgridge College of Education

IRBNet Protocol #: 1452892

Study Site: Neutral location of participant's choosing

Purpose

You are being asked to participate in a study. The purpose of this study is to collect information about teacher/parent perceptions of the affective supports/barriers for gifted readers. You are being asked to participate in a research study. Your participation in this research study is voluntary and you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. This document contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate. Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate.

Procedures

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in one to two interviews that will not exceed one hour in length each and will be audio and/or video recorded with your permission for transcription purposes only. You will be assigned a pseudonym, known only to the investigator, and all information will be stored on a password-protected computer.

Once the transcription process is complete all recordings will be destroyed.

Voluntary Participation

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to continue with the interviews, not answer a question, or not be recorded for any reason without penalty.

Risks or Discomforts

There are no perceived or potential risks for parents/teachers of gifted readers to participate in this study. There is little to no risk associated with this study because the data collection will be kept confidential and the topic is not highly sensitive or controversial in nature. It is based solely on parent/teacher perceptions of the gifted readers in their lives.

You will be able to take a break at any time that you feel uncomfortable or overwhelmed or you may terminate the interview at any time. Likewise, if the researcher observes that the interview appears to be troublesome they will suggest that the interview be paused or terminated. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may, at any time, decline to answer any question without having to qualify a reason for doing so. You may withdraw from the investigation with full confidence that any information that you have shared will not be included in the study.

Benefits

If you agree to take part in this study, there will be no direct benefit to you, except the ability to share your voice about being a parent/teacher of gifted readers. However, information gathered in this study may provide insight into the challenges and triumphs of gifted readers. Information about how to better support their affective needs as they navigate challenging reading material that may be appropriate for their reading level, but deemed inappropriate for their age, may come from this project.

Incentives to participate

You will not receive any payment for being in the study.

Confidentiality

To keep information safe, the investigator will ensure that the information shared will remain confidential. In addition, the participation will not be shared with others by ensuring names will not be attached to any data, but an alternative name will be used instead. The interview will be audio and video recorded with your permission for transcription purposes only. If you do not want to be audio/video recorded, only handwritten notes will be taken during the interview.

The data will be kept on a password protected computer. The interviewer will retain the data including recordings for the duration of the study, then the data will be destroyed.

Data Sharing

De-identified data from this study may be shared with the research community at large to advance science and health. I will remove or code any personal information that could identify you before files are shared with other researchers to ensure that, by current scientific standards and known methods, no one will be able to identify you from the information I share. Despite these measures, I cannot guarantee anonymity of your personal data.

Questions

The student carrying out this study is Kim Freed. You may contact her with any questions or concerns at 303-748-3458 or email her at kfreed6393@gmail.com. You may also contact the faculty sponsor, Dr. Norma Hafenstein, for this project with any questions. She can be reached at 303-871-2527 or by email at nhafenst@du.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about your research participation or rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Denver's Human Research Protections

Program (HRPP) by emailing IRBAdmin@du.edu or calling (303) 871-2121 to speak to someone other than the researchers.

The University of Denver Institutional Review Board has determined that this study is minimal risk and is exempt from full IRB oversight.

Options for Recording

Please initial your choice for the options below:

_____ The interviewer may audio/video record or photograph me during this study.

_____ The interviewer may NOT audio/video record or photograph me during this study.
Only handwritten notes will be taken during the duration of the interview(s).

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this study.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign below. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Participant Signature

Date

Appendix E

Demographic Face Sheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

Your gender: M _____ F _____ Primary Language Spoken: _____

Current Occupation: _____

Highest level of education attained:

For Parents:

How many children do you have? _____

How many are identified as gifted in reading? _____

At what age(s) was your child identified? _____

Were you familiar with “giftedness” before your child was identified?

For Teachers:

In what role do you service gifted readers?

How long have you serviced gifted readers?

What age(s) of gifted readers have you serviced?

Were you familiar with “giftedness” before you became a teacher?

Pseudonym _____ (INTERVIEWER ONLY)

Appendix F

Interview Protocol for Teachers

1. Tell me about your experiences with gifted readers at your school.
2. What success do you have with gifted readers? What about culturally diverse students?
3. How do you nurture their love of reading in your classroom?
4. What challenges do you experience with gifted readers?
5. What general or specific characteristics do you notice about gifted readers in the following areas:
 - a. Identity
 - i. How do gifted readers see themselves?
 - ii. Do you see any evidence of overexcitabilities in gifted readers?
 - iii. Do they seem to be more/less aware of moral issues?
 - b. Introversion vs Social Expectations
 - i. How much time do they spend reading vs spending time with others?
 - ii. Do you see any evidence of arrogance among gifted readers?
 - iii. How are the social skills of gifted readers in your experience?
 - c. Relationships with others
 - i. How do gifted readers find peers?
 - ii. Do the relationships of your gifted readers revolve around books/characters?
 - iii. How are their relationships with peers/adults?
 - d. Perfectionism
 - i. Do gifted readers feel a need to be perfect all the time?
 - ii. Do you see them reluctant to take risks or lacking motivation?
 - iii. Does multipotentiality keep them from making reading choices?
6. How do you go about making decisions about reading selections/choices for

gifted readers? How do these vary from grade-level or below-grade-level readers?

Home? Do you consider students from diverse populations in your selections?

7. What are your experiences with the library habits of gifted readers?
8. Do you notice differences between boy and girl gifted readers?
9. What is the experience of gifted readers from diverse populations in your classroom?
10. What are your experiences with the affective needs of gifted readers in your classroom?
11. How do you help gifted readers navigate their asynchrony in reading between reading level and age level?
12. What precautions, if any, do you implement to help gifted readers with their book selections? Do you see similar or different habits from parents?
13. What have you noticed about how your gifted readers debrief about books/literature?
14. How do you support the affective development of your gifted readers? What about students from diverse populations?
15. What kinds of affective barriers exist for gifted readers at your school?
16. How do you approach gifted readers who read/want to read challenging material that you may deem inappropriate for their age? Is this an issue for parents of gifted readers?
17. Do you have any experience with bibliotherapy for gifted readers?
18. How do you see books/quality literature influencing/changing gifted readers?

19. What other stories do you have about gifted readers in your classroom or school clubs? Do you have any artifacts you could share from your gifted readers?
20. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with gifted readers in your classroom or school or what you hear from home?

Appendix G

Interview Protocol for Parents

1. Tell me about your early experiences with you gifted reader(s).
2. What does a day in the life of your gifted reader(s) look like?
3. How do you nurture their love of reading in your home?
4. What challenges do you experience with your gifted readers at home? Do you hear about the same issues happening at school?
5. What general or specific characteristics do you notice about your gifted reader(s) in the following areas:
 - a. Identity
 - i. How do gifted readers see themselves?
 - ii. Do you see any evidence of overexcitabilities in gifted readers?
 - iii. Do they seem to be more/less aware of moral issues?
 - b. Introversion vs Social Expectations
 - i. How much time do they spend reading vs spending time with others?
 - ii. Do you see any evidence of arrogance among gifted readers?
 - iii. How are the social skills of gifted readers in your experience?
 - c. Relationships with others
 - i. How do gifted readers find peers?
 - ii. Do the relationships of your gifted readers revolve around books/characters?
 - iii. How are their relationships with peers/adults?
 - d. Perfectionism
 - i. Do gifted readers feel a need to be perfect all the time?
 - ii. Do you see them reluctant to take risks or lacking motivation?
 - iii. Does multipotentiality keep them from making reading choices?

6. How do you make decisions about reading selections for your gifted reader(s)?
Does your experience mirror or differ from the school? Do you consider books with different perspectives?
7. What are your experiences with the library habits of your gifted reader(s)?
8. If applicable, do you notice differences between boy and girl gifted readers?
9. How do you help your gifted reader(s) navigate their asynchrony in reading between reading level and age level?
10. What precautions, if any, do you implement to help your gifted reader(s) with their book selections? Do you feel supported by the school?
11. What have you noticed about how your gifted reader(s) debriefs about books/literature?
12. How do you support the affective development of your gifted reader(s)?
13. What kinds of affective barriers exist for your gifted reader(s)?
14. How do you approach your gifted reader(s) who read/want to read challenging material that you may be deemed inappropriate for their age?
15. How are your experiences as a parent of a gifted reader the same or different from friends/family?
16. Do you have any experience with bibliotherapy for gifted readers?
17. How do you see books/quality literature influencing/changing your gifted readers?
18. What kinds of clubs or other activities are your gifted reader(s) involved in?
19. What other stories do you have about your gifted reader(s)? Do you have any artifacts you could share from your gifted reader(s)?

20. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences as a parent of gifted reader(s)? Or anything you hear from the school about your gifted reader(s) that you'd like to share?