

The social-emotional well-being of the gifted primary school child and perceptions of parent and teacher social support.

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Social-emotional well-being (SEWB) is a basic building block for the healthy development of all children. Children with high levels of social-emotional well-being display greater confidence and self-worth, have better relationships and possess the tools necessary to persist and overcome challenges to succeed in life (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2012).

Gifted children may feel different from their peers and experience difficulties in their ongoing efforts to control their behaviour in an environment which does not fit well with their learning needs.

Academic programming plays a pivotal role in the SEWB of gifted children. Square pegs cannot and will not fit into round holes, without splintering the pegs in the process. Therefore, parents and teachers need to support the child from a holistic perspective.

Emotional support from parents is associated with personal well-being (Malecki & Demaray, 2003), global attitudes towards achievement and the effectiveness of socialisation practices (Wentzel, 2016).

High levels of emotional support from one's teacher leads to student connectedness, a positive attitude towards school (Johnson, 2009), increased attentiveness and engagement (Pianta, 2009).

The gifted child's SEWB

Internationally it is debated whether giftedness results in a child being more resilient or more vulnerable; ultimately their experiences may be unique. Australian empirical research has focused predominantly on the cognitive needs of gifted children, therefore research is needed to explore social-emotional needs.

In many ways, the results of this study reflected the international literature. However, 'worry', was also added as a concern. It was indicated that gifted children were perceived most positively by their teachers, while parents believed they experienced more difficulties. Overall, gifted children can be described as resilient in many regards, however, areas that stood out as being the most difficult for the majority of children included; difficult peer relationships, a need to control emotions and being different from peers at school. These factors impacts on SEWB and may also influence the development of gifts towards talents as noted by Gagné's Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent, a widely used framework within Australia.

Social support of the gifted child

Gifted children perceived the social support their parents and teachers provided in relation to the importance they placed on that support to be similar, placing a premium on emotional support; the provision of love, empathy, and trust. This does not imply that teachers and parents are providing support at the same level, but rather that they are meeting the child's expectations of support to a similar extent.

Parents' and children's perspectives of parent-teacher relationship seemed pessimistic, whilst the vast majority of teachers reported good working relationships with parents. Interestingly, parents believed the child's difficulties were a result of events at school; whereas teachers related difficulties to parental pressure or the child's traits.

Children want their teachers to improved classroom behaviour management and creation of a fun and engaging learning environment. Children wanted parents to focus their time and efforts appropriately, on activities and interactions which are pleasurable to the child, to make good use of the time spent together offering undivided attention and a listening ear. Lastly, children indicated the need to feel understood and acknowledged for who they are by both parents and teachers.