

Grandparenting & Intergenerational Connections

There are many ways families are configured in today's world. Whether you're a grandparent, special relative, or family friend, you can help optimize and foster the well-being of the gifted children in your life.

Grandparents and special people can expand the circle of guidance and support for gifted children. They serve as a bridge between the past and the future and provide important perspectives through their lived experiences and connections to the family.

UNDERSTANDING GIFTEDNESS

Recognizing giftedness in grandchildren may depend on the experiences grandparents have had in the past. Dr. Robin Schader suggests four different experiences that may affect how grandparents recognize and perceive characteristics in gifted children. Grandparents may have:

- Had children identified as gifted
- Had children identified as gifted, but their children were unsuccessful in school
- Recognized giftedness in their children, but the schools did not
- Not recognized giftedness despite the presence of giftedness in their own children

A grandparent's experience in raising their own gifted child can influence their grandparenting perspective and experience.

In the *Grandparents' Guide to Gifted Children*, common characteristics that gifted children might exhibit include: strong verbal abilities; longer attention span (in interest areas); unusually good memory; intense curiosity; passionate imagination and creativity; remarkable sense of humor; sensitivity; and intensity.

It's important to remember that every gifted child does not embody all of these characteristics, and each characteristic brings individual needs and challenges. (For example, the child who has strong verbal abilities might require exposure to advanced vocabulary; yet, this may come across to others as annoying incessant chatter or as being a "show off.")

EVERY GIFTED CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT IS UNIQUE

It's essential that grandparents understand how characteristics may unfold with each of their gifted grandchildren in different ways. For example, some gifted children may develop asynchronously, where developmental milestones may be achieved in an uneven manner. (See NAGC's *Asynchronous Development TIP Sheet*).

Temperament may play a role as introverted and extroverted grandkids may respond differently to the same experience. Learning about how specific youngsters re-charge and get their energy—either with others or alone—can help provide insight into the needs of the child. Acceptance by grandparents can provide an additional sense of security and comfort to a child who may be feeling isolated, alienated, or different while navigating the world.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

» Grandparents may assume various roles within their gifted grandchild's life: role model, magician, mentor, historian, listener.

» Read: *Grandparent Wants to Help Gifted Grandchild* by Felice Kaufmann: familyeducation.com

» Gender, culture, proximity, divorce, the age and health of a grandparent, and the grandparent's relationship with their own children can influence a grandparent/grandchild relationship. It's important that gifted children recognize grandparent roles can extend beyond biology to other adults interested in their growth and well-being.

» Explore: *12 Tips—Bring the Generations in Your Family Closer*: legacyproject.org



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR
Gifted Children

www.nagc.org

Grandparenting

WAYS FOR GRANDPARENTS & SPECIAL PEOPLE TO NURTURE GIFTED CHILDREN

Grandparents are poised to provide encouragement, support, and reassurance through multiple means. Some ways grandparents can connect with gifted children:

- **Share specific personal expertise or skills.** Helping grandkids think like an inventor, a mathematician, an author, a scientist, a musician, or an artist can be a lens into a possible future job or career.
- **Share personal talents, especially practical life skills.** Handiwork enhances both creative and critical thinking. Using tools correctly, sewing/knitting/embroidery, cooking, building a kite, making a model, and designing and crafting a fort or treehouse are projects that enhance the whole brain.
- **Widen horizons** with a trip to a local museum, historical spot, or a nature walk.
- **Service projects** demonstrate family compassion and modeling care for others. The Honeycomb Project highlights opportunities for shared experiences that can enrich the lives of all involved.
- **Storytelling.** Sharing stories of failure and perseverance—and how those situations provided personal growth—can provide deep insights. Family lore and historical perspectives make events of the past come alive when told through the eyes of an elder. Record these events through audio or video to ensure a lasting remembrance.

CONNECTING LONG DISTANCE

Most important is the notion of being present. Even those who grandparent from a distance can creatively make connections:

- Be sure to carve out 1:1 time with each grandchild so they are not competing for attention whether online or via phone call.
- Send snail mail anything—kids treasure grandparent letters/cards/notes.
- Read together virtually or record reading books/articles and share.
- Play postcard or online chess, virtual *Battleship*, *Boggle*, *MadLibs*, or other games.
- Be interviewed for family history and share recollections of historical events.
- Be an authentic audience, whether watching a dramatic or musical instrument performance, or listening to a story.
- Watch a selected movie independently and then arrange a time to discuss.
- Take photos of and share your collections—baseball cards, stamps, or magnets.
- Provide listening sessions or opportunities for grandkids to discuss current events, school projects, or social-emotional concerns.

FOSTERING CREATIVITY

- Watch YouTube art videos and make something together, or follow along as your grandchild designs an art project and is the teacher.
- Write a story/poem/article starring grandchildren and send it to them.
- Share family recipes and cook together virtually.
- Share a passion like gardening, caring for pets, or stargazing.
- Provide directions for kitchen chemistry experiments.
- Learn something new and challenging together like a new language, tying flies, tai chi, knitting, or playing the ukulele. Compare notes!

Lastly, during times of remote learning and social distancing, grandparents may be called upon to virtually assist with their grandchildren. Check out the Tech Tips in the "For More Info" section.



FOR MORE INFO

» Discover:

Tips for Intergenerational Bonding:
www.legacyproject.org

Homebound Service Projects:
www.thehoneycombproject.org

» Explore:

Technology for Grandparents: Tips for Living Far Away from Grandchildren:
www.adventuresinnanaland.com

100+ Books on Grandparent Education (U.S. & International):
www.public.asu.edu/~rdstrom/gsnip.html

» Read:

Schader, R. (2009). Grandparenting. In B. Kerr (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of giftedness, creativity, and talent* (pp. 403-404). Sage.

Webb, J. T., Gore, J. L., Karnes, F. A., & McDaniel, A. S. (2004). *A grandparents' guide to gifted children*. Great Potential Press.



1331 H Street, Suite 1001
Washington, DC 20005
202-785-4268
www.nagc.org