

ABCs of Being Smart: U is for Understanding

By Dr. Joanne Foster

Here are 10 useful guidelines to help you think intelligently and sensitively about gifted and high-ability learners, and how to support them emotionally, socially, and academically.



- 1 Understanding.** Find out all you can about giftedness—its conceptual base, its implications, its joys, and its complexities.
- 2 Uncover.** Carefully sift through reputable sources of information about gifted learners and approaches to gifted education. Thoughtfully consider the material and the various—and sometimes conflicting—perspectives. Be mindful of what’s best for your own child and family dynamic.
- 3 Uniqueness.** Appreciate that giftedness is an “individual differences” phenomenon.
- 4 Uncertainty.** Realize that there’s a lot we have yet to learn about high-level development. Children, too, experience bouts of uncertainty—about themselves, about their place in the ever-changing world, and about what they can and cannot do.
- 5 Unconditional love.** Know that this is a given—and never compromised.
- 6 Uneven development.** Accept that developmental pathways are diverse, and that developmental asynchrony is not uncommon.
- 7 Unusual circumstances.** Recognize that each set of circumstances, each child’s span of growing up years and opportunities for authentic self-discovery, each learning environment, each social milieu, each transition, and each set of educational decisions has its very own stamp of distinction and has to be reflected upon and addressed accordingly.
- 8 Untrained teachers... Unconscionable!** Advocate for more teacher preparation, training, and professional growth programs that will enable educators to be more competent and targeted in their work with gifted learners.
- 9 Unwavering resolve.** Provide support, encouragement, and guidance on an ongoing basis to help children develop and maintain a strong sense of self and well-being.
- 10 Unequivocal.** Acknowledge and stand up for the irrefutable right for appropriate, meaningful educational experiences for *all* children.