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Dona J. Matthews and Joanne F. Foster (2005). *Being Smart about Gifted Children: A Guidebook for Parents and Educators* ISBN: 0-910707-66-9
Scottsdale, Arizona: Great Potential Press.

In the preface of *Being Smart about Gifted Children*, Dona Matthews and Joanne Foster establish their purpose, “This book is about understanding and supporting optimal development in all children” (xiii). They note that “there is no one gifted experience,” and “There is no single formula for living or working with gifted children” (xiii).

This text is a detailed guide for parents and educators who work with gifted children. The project was conceptualized by notable educators, Dona Matthews and Joanne Foster. Both authors have teaching experience, were coordinators of programs for gifted children, and have written and spoken throughout the United States. Their main goal is to provide a clear and concise guide about how to work effectively with gifted students, and how to optimize their talents in the home and school environments. Matthews and Foster integrate an understanding of best research practices with anecdotes representing real life experiences of gifted individuals, creating a book that is filled with references to empirical studies while at the same time appealing to a broad audience.

This book is organized in sixteen chapters, with a supporting appendix. The book begins with section I, “Being Smart about Giftedness,” and with a defining line, “There is no such thing as a ‘typical gifted child.’” Anticipating questions that parents and teachers have, Matthews and Foster integrate these concerns at the front of the chapter. The first chapter provide perspectives and paradigms shifts in giftedness, which continues into a section about creativity and giftedness that includes the subheading, “Creative Parenting and Teaching.”

Section II provides insights to testing, identification, and labeling. Matthews and Foster anticipate parents’ and educators’ questions with the subheadings, “Who Needs Testing?” and “What Purpose Does Testing Serve?” Matthews and Foster creatively integrate teaching and parenting perspectives, and in doing so provide helpful insights for both sets of stakeholders. In the following chapters, they analyze assessments and tests, including critical elements like teacher classroom assessment, high-ceiling and above-level testing, and career interest inventories. From testing, Matthews and Foster transition naturally into identification and labeling issues, such as processes, policies, problems, recommendations, and labeling.

Section III is titled, “Being Smart about Meeting Gifted Learning Needs,” and Matthews and Foster provide guidelines for adaptations in the classroom, and alternative educational options (such as whole-grade acceleration and home schooling). Their wonderful understanding of gifted students coupled with their experiences as educators makes this part of the book particularly strong. The next section, “Stretching the boundaries,” provides wonderful ways that parents and educators can provide opportunities beyond traditional classrooms – through extracurricular enrichment, mentorships, career exploration, books, and travel. In case some parents and educators

do not have the financial resources for travel, the authors provide insights into traveling through online sources.

In Section IV, “Being Smart about Gifted Kids,” the authors examine motivational factors such as curiosity, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, and achievement. They take a close look at the emotional, social, and behavioral concerns of gifted educators and parents including gifted labeling, emotional intelligence, social concerns, and even bullying. The authors later examine gifted development, including developmental pathways and the importance of play and humor. They look at how giftedness manifests at different points in time – from early childhood to adolescence. In the next chapter, the authors study the different ways of being gifted – including gender differences, cultural differences, learning problems, and extreme giftedness.

Section V, “Being Smart about Families, Advocates, and Educators,” provides wonderful insights for parents and educators who work with gifted children on a daily basis. The issue of a gifted child’s position within the family is studied, with the dynamics of sibling relationships and supportive parenting elaborated upon. Matthews and Foster provide advice about how parents can better advocate for their children’s needs in educational settings. Matthews and Foster approach educators with the same level of sensitivity, dealing with the ongoing issues of administrative support, teacher development, and crafting “A Dynamic Scaffolding Model (DSM) for Teacher Development.”

The next chapter is suitably titled, “Optimal Learning for All Children,” and includes international perspectives on gifted education. Matthews and Foster look at gifted education across a broad spectrum, including trends and directions in Canada and international perspectives. They provide information about university-based resource centers which serve a wide shareholder base, including graduate students, parents, and children who attend the sponsored programs.

The text is an enjoyable read: gifted educators and teachers will find this book a valuable addition to their personal libraries. On a daily basis, this book will serve as a guide for parents and educators whose work is challenging, exhilarating, and rewarding. With their astute understanding of research, Matthews and Foster craft a book that is accessible to a mainstream audience. With their deep understanding of human nature and psychology, they weave personal histories within this narrative that will help parents and educators understand the overlap between research and practice.

Advance comments herald this book as a “welcome reference” and a study that “addresses the unique challenges of raising gifted children, while reminding the reader of the special joys that they bring.” A third reviewer describes this book as “the best and most down-to-earth discussion of what defines and nurtures giftedness that I have read.” You will agree after reading this book.

Reviewed by Suzanna E. Henshon, Ph.D., who graduated from The College of William & Mary in 2005 and teaches writing at Florida Gulf Coast University and is the author of a novel for gifted readers, Mildew on the Wall.