

# **How I Developed My Child's Genius – And How You Can Do It Too**

**By Esther Andrews**  
**[www.all-gifted-children.com](http://www.all-gifted-children.com)**

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## How I Developed my child's Genius, and How Your Can Do it Too

It was my birthday. We were sitting at the dinner table, dining, chatting and having a good time. Both my children had presents for me, which they handed to me with a smile. I opened the first card, from my son Eric, and read: "I love you very, very much, and I appreciate all the wonderful things you do for me, and how you take care of me and look out for me (even if I don't show it enough). Have a wonderful birthday. Love, Eric". At 19, Eric has just completed his first degree in Mathematics at the top of his class, at a top college in our state. He is now choosing a graduate school, for his Ph.D. program. Professors from schools all over the country are calling, to try to recruit him into their program. He is being offered full scholarships, teaching and research positions. Tammy, my daughter, is a wildly successful, renowned child psychologist. She works with autistic children, and is able to create change in their lives. She gets them to do things for themselves, nobody else can.

The conversation is flowing, and I am basking in the atmosphere of love and warmth around me. I am looking at my children, and stop the conversation to say: "I just want you to know, that I am feeling so happy tonight, looking at you, 2 successful, gifted young adults, as human beings, and I am very satisfied and happy with the way you turned out". **This is a high point in my life!** I can't help reflecting on the past...

I was standing in the hospital, looking at the little crib in front of me, and the tiny little baby inside. The baby was crying with a very faint voice, moving her legs and arms, and looking at me, directly into my eyes. What a tiny baby! I picked her up very carefully, looking at my own baby, trying to bond.

Another young mother, who happened to pass by on her way to her baby, stopped, and said: "You are picking her up without holding her head? You

have to hold her head!” I looked at her with surprise, and said, “ But she is holding her head on her own!”.

Yes, I was a fresh mother, and had no idea what to do with my baby. I didn’t even know how to hold her, and needed instruction on how to change her diapers.

In my family, there were no other babies. My twin sister and I were born to my mother when she was 40, and had no little siblings as we grew up. My parents, and their friends and relatives did not have babies either, so I had no idea of how to take care of a baby.

The only thing that I did know was this: **I want to give this child the best chances in life, I want to develop this child into the best she can be.**

When I went home from the hospital with my newborn daughter, a few days later, I started reading all the books about parenting I could get my hands on, and started forming my opinions about parenting and about the issue of the development of a young child.

After I have developed my own way of educating a child, and started applying it to my daughter Tammy, many friends and family members, some of which were experienced parents, criticized me and offered advice, and I listened – and stuck with my own methods. My husband, an angel really, gave me free reign, and let me do whatever I thought was right, but occasionally he looked at me with raised eye brows and asked if I am sure I don’t want to be a “normal” mother.

When Eric was born, 5 years later, I felt like a veteran mother, rich with experience and self confidence. What a wonderful feeling it was! I stuck with my own method, adding and adjusting it as I accumulated experience and knowledge.

A few years later, I opened the School for Gifted Education, which I ran for many years, until my son Eric started his college education.

## **Children are Able to Learn Much More, Much Faster than You Think**

Talk show hosts love bringing children who have special skills and abilities. Very popular shows bring talented children on the show, to sing and perform. In the newspaper you can occasionally read about a child that has some unusual abilities. Children who at age 11 or 12 are already graduating from famous colleges.

I have recently read about a very talented, gifted child and his achievements. The mother told the reporter that very early on she has discovered that her son is gifted, and “unusual”. She is a piano teacher, and her baby used to be around during her music lessons. One day, when the child was only two, she left the room, and when she came back, her son was standing at the piano, playing back the music she has just rehearsed.

Was her son born a musical genius? Was it a coincidence that this child, the musical genius, was born to a mother who is a music teacher?

A little boy, only 5 years old, is playing chess in the national scholastic competition. He wins the competition. His father is telling the reporter, that very early on, he discovered that his son is a genius at Chess. The father is a chess player, and took his baby with him to play chess. The little boy used to watch the chess players, and listen to their comments.

Was this child, by a strange coincidence, born as chess genius, to a chess player?

I think not! I am here to argue, that a child’s learning capacity is far beyond what we can imagine. I am here to say – if you keep your child in the room of a music teacher, your child will develop some musical abilities too! If you take your baby to watch the chess players, your baby, too, will develop an ability to play chess.

**This is my shocking and wild announcement: Give me a baby – any baby! A baby of whatever background, with whatever genes! I can turn that baby into a gifted and talented young adult, by applying the same techniques and activities I have applied to my own children.**

Everybody knows that children learn very fast. Everybody knows that young children learn a language early in life, and they show amazing skill in doing that. But when we watch the children learn, we are always amazed. Why? Because we naturally assume that children are limited in what they can learn and understand. 2 things contribute to this: children, especially when they are very young and can't speak yet, learn very fast, but they can't communicate to us yet what they know and what they understand. Also, we naturally assume that children's ability to learn is similar to what we learned early in life. If we learned to read at the age of 6, we assume that children cannot learn to read before 6.

Here is the shocking truth: children can learn much more than what we have learned in our childhood. For many years, parents were not aware of children's capacity to learn, so they did not provide their children with the opportunity and the materials to learn all that they can. Moreover, parents weren't aware that if you teach your child early enough, and provide for them the opportunity to learn, their brain will develop faster and better.

When my daughter was just a little baby, I started learning about babies' capacity to learn, but I found it hard to believe. I tried to teach her to read, but had no idea if what I am doing is working or not. I was ready to give up, when a friend, Sarah, visited me. We sat in Tammy's room, and she noticed the flash cards and started laughing at me, saying that I must be crazy to attempt to teach my 18 months old baby to read. It can't be done, she said. I guess Tammy didn't like the fact that Sara made fun of me, because she took the flash card that read "mommy", brought it to Sarah, and said: "Mommy!". She then put that card back and brought the card that had her name on it, and said "Tammy". Sarah looked at me, shocked, and said that if she had not seen it with her own eyes, she would never believe it. Honestly, I was surprised too!

Do you know that you can easily train a child to distinguish between a card with 89 dots on it, and one that has 90 dots, just by looking at it? I know that it is hard to believe, because you can't do it, and I can't do it. But a baby can.

The capacity of a child to learn, and the speed by which they can learn is nothing short of amazing. But if you never try to teach them, you will never discover it.

## **The Myth of Stress and Frustration**

People assume that teaching a child early in life, has to cause stress and frustration. Nothing is farther from the truth! People, and even professional child psychologists comment on some parents, who overload their children and put together a schedule that does not provide any resting time for a child. That does not have to happen.

I agree that a child needs resting time. I agree that a child needs some time in the day to calm down, relax and think.

There is no need to overload a child, or to create a schedule that forces you to be on your way non-stop, running from one activity to another, from one teacher to another. You can easily plan some easy, fun and relaxed activities that will provide the opportunity for your child to develop their skills and abilities.

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Don't misunderstand! I think that it's great if you can take your child to swimming classes, to kiddy gymnastics, to violin or piano lessons. I think that it's great to do all the activities that you think your child will be interested in and enjoy. I have taken my children to as many activities as possible! I just don't think that you have to do everything at once! You can definitely plan a schedule that provides enough resting time for you and your child, and enough time for your child to develop their ability to entertain themselves, to think and to engage their imagination and creativity.

As to stress and frustration, this is all completely erroneous! I find that letting a child be bored creates far more frustration, than engaging a child with interesting activities, activities that provide the appropriate learning for your child, that engage his natural curiosity, his interest and ability to learn.

I can tell you from my own experience as a child, of hours and hours of boredom, of suffering in school, since the teaching went on so slowly, that I was bored out of my mind! Mathematics classes, where the teacher is teaching the same concept again and again and again, trying to make it clear to the slowest students in the class, while I am sitting there, feeling that my patience is completely exhausted.

Do you know, that a big percentage of the kids that are diagnosed with ADD are just children that are intelligent and fast learning, children who find it hard to sit still, while they are completely bored? In many of our schools there are funds and resources for the “special education children”, the ones that are slow, but there are not nearly enough resources to take care of the gifted children, the children that need some more stimulation and extra activities to challenge them.

When my son Eric was in second grade, we were fortunate enough to have a wonderful special program at the public school, named “Discovery Program”. An award winning, gifted teacher, Mr. Stadtler, has initiated this program, combining the “Special Education” kids with some other kids in one classroom, in order to take advantage of the resources used for the Special Education students. He created a “win-win” situation for all the students in the program.

In this program, the teachers assessed each child at the beginning of the year, and created small groups, by ability, and then they devised a personalized plan for each group. My son formed a group with another girl, because both of them tested at a 12<sup>th</sup> grade level in Vocabulary.

The teaching started, but at some point in time, I noticed that Eric did not have a Vocabulary class in about two weeks. So I went to talk to the teacher, and asked about the plans for teaching my child Vocabulary. The teacher told me that they had children who come from poverty stricken homes, where the kids did not even get a breakfast to eat before they came to school. He said some of the kids were hungry, some have experienced abuse, and ended with a question: “Who do you think am I worried about more: a child who has no food at home, and can’t study because he is hungry, a child who doesn’t even know how to pronounce the letters in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, or your child, who gets everything he needs at home, including piano lessons, special enrichment and after school activities, and who tests at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade level in English Vocabulary?”

I definitely understand this argument, I am concerned about the children who are underprivileged, and am interested in them getting all the attention and resources they need, but what about the other “special education” children, the children who need special enrichment, who need to be challenged with accelerated programs? Are they not entitled to get their needs met?

## **The Myth of the Geek**

Many people, when talking about a gifted, talented child, or about a genius, have a very unpleasant picture in their mind. They think of a child who is maladjusted, one who is thin, wearing thick glasses, one who has no social life, no friends, one who sits in his room and arranges his dead butterflies in his collection.

I think that the media has created this image, and it is wide spread today, in kids and adults’ mind today.

Please allow me to destroy this myth. Highly gifted children are usually nice, handsome, well adjusted and happy children, “cool” children who have lots of friends, children who are good in sports, children who are “normal”, friendly, in short – nothing like the geek that is depicted in movies and tv programs.

There is a very simple, logical explanation for it! A person who is highly intelligent, finds it very easy to study, does not have to struggle in school, has a lot of interests, and enjoys learning, will obviously have more fun than a child who has to struggle, a child that has to work hard in order to study. A child that has an easy life, of course, will find it easy to smile, to be friendly, to develop a positive, strong self esteem. Ladies and gentlemen, you are looking at a happy, well adjusted, beautiful genius.

## **You Can't Teach a Baby the Same Way You Teach an Adult**

A friend, Josh, was telling me about his little girl, 24 months old. She was so smart and cute. He was telling me about the funny and cute things she said the day before. I asked him if she reads already, and he looked at me annoyed and said that she is only 2 years old. Yes, I said, why don't you teach her how to read?

- Esther, your son may have been a genius, but my daughter is not interested in learning how to read yet.

- How do you know? - Well, I have already tried to teach her how to read, but she didn't sit quietly and listen, she got up and wandered around the room, playing with her toys.

- Josh, how did you try to teach her how to read? – I sat her down with a book, and tried to show her the words, and how to read them.

Yes, and that method will meet with failure, I can assure you. You can, sometimes, expect a 7 year old child to sit down for a little while and listen to you, but a normal toddler will not sit down and listen to your lecture, I can almost guarantee.

In order to teach a baby, you have to use the methods that work with babies. Using the standard methods that are used in school for older children will not work for your baby.

## **Children Hate to Be Tested**

Most children hate to be tested. If you teach your child, and demand that the child prove that he learned, if you expect your child to answer questions repeatedly, you will lose your child's willingness to learn.

It is hard, because you want to know that what you are doing "works". You want to get some feedback.

You will! Have some patience, and your hard work will pay off. When you least expect it, and when your child is good and ready. Your child will start reading aloud, or follow your reading with a finger, or read to himself when you happen to peek through the door. But your child most likely will not let you test him.

Then what can I do? – you ask! I thought you'd never ask! Work with your child, without testing. Believe that what you are doing works, have faith. Trust me, you will not be disappointed.

Let's consider the possibilities. Let's assume that you are teaching your child some facts. Your child did not learn a certain fact. What happened? Did your child suffer harm by any way? No. He doesn't know this specific fact. If you did not teach him that fact, he still wouldn't know the same fact, am I right? So no harm done!

Let's consider the other possibility. You never taught your child this series of facts. Or even worse, you taught your child, and then insisted that your child repeat the facts, and tested him this way. Now your child is losing interest in learning. Learning is not considered fun any more. Now, in my opinion, real harm was caused to him, because he either did not get any information at all, or he lost his interest in learning, both of which will affect his future learning.

Avoid testing your child, and wait until your child is ready to demonstrate his skills.

## **Avoid Boring Your Child**

Keep in mind that your child learns much faster than you think. Keep in mind that your child is very young, and his attention span is still short. When you teach a young child, you have to move fast! Avoid repetition, and don't be slow. If you are too slow, your child will lose interest.

Work (or play, I should say) just for a few minutes at a time. Even if your child seems to be cooperating, always leave him wanting more. This way, you keep your child interested. Think of a soap opera. When does it end? When it is most interesting, so that the viewers tune in the next week to watch, right? The same way, you want to stop teaching your child at the peak of his interest.

## **Learning is Fun**

You want your child to be a life-long learner, don't you? So teach him that learning is fun! If your child views learning and studying as "work" or as an unpleasant activity, one that bores him and that causes him to be tested and compared to others all the time, (and nobody likes that!) he will avoid studying, and prefer to do other activities. Make sure you convey to your child the idea that learning is fun and enjoyable.

Have you ever watched a child who is excellent at a game? I have noticed that some kids can be brilliant playing a game, but will not excel in the classroom. That's unbelievable. If a child is brilliant at a game, I guarantee that this child can be brilliant in academics. The only reason he excels at the game, and not in his academics, is because he views the game as "fun", and studying as "work".

My son Eric, in our conversation today, told me how easy studying is. He told me that he thought it was very funny that a friend's daughter told him how "hard" she is studying in her school. He said – studying is so easy. "You play all the time". And then he stopped, thought a little bit, and said: "Well, some of that play might be Math, but it is still just playing and having fun".

No, I don't want to brag. I just want to demonstrate the fact, that what seems to be very hard to one student, seems to be "a child's play" to another, only because the latter views Math as "fun" and "games".

Take things lightly, enjoy the learning yourself, your child will follow.

Celebrate achievement! Make sure that you take time to celebrate every little achievement. Celebrate learning. Give your child a hefty amount of praise and show your appreciation and joy every time your child achieves success, or masters a piece of information or a new skill.

Don't ever criticize, let your child know that he is wonderful, that he is learning, and developing his skills and himself. Learning and getting education is investing in oneself. Make sure your child knows that!

I must admit, that I was a spoiled child. I was born into a wealthy family, and had never experienced lack. One day, I met the daughter of a lady who was employed in my mother's business. The girl, who was a high school student, did not go to public high school, and enrolled in a private school. She had to work in order to pay for her own tuition. I was so surprised to hear how hard this girl studied, in order to complete her high school education! This girl really understood the concept of "investing in herself". She has worked hard to earn the money to pay her tuition! She really understood the value of her high school education.

## **It is OK to make mistakes**

Mistakes are an integral part of learning! Make sure your child is not afraid of making mistakes. Many of the most successful people alive today, have gotten there by trial and error, making lots of mistakes, in order to find the one opportunity that made them successful. Teach your child that mistakes are simply opportunities for learning. They are just feedback we can use to our advantage. We all know that most people are hard on themselves, criticizing themselves harshly when they make a mistake. Teach your child to accept a mistake as a learning opportunity without criticizing himself. Teach your child to pay attention to his “self talk”, and never beat himself up.

## **When to Avoid Doing Any Planed Educational Activities**

Avoid doing any planed education activities, when your child is sick, or not feeling well. When your child is not feeling well or cranky, do anything needed to sooth him. If you do an activity with your child while he is not feeling well, he may associate that activity with feeling sick. Always make sure that you do educational activities when your child feels well, is happy and refreshed.

## **Follow Your Child's Lead**

Expose your child to many activities, and many topics. Watch your child, to see what he is most interested in. If your child shows interest in a certain topic or activity, follow his lead. Provide everything needed in order to study that particular topic, or doing that particular activity. This is definitely the path of least resistance! Your child will enjoy himself, and you will enjoy yourself too.

Children are interested in different topic in different time periods. For example, children at a certain phase in their development, start “dancing” when they hear music. That is the period of time when they are developing their sense of rhythm. At that period of time, children are interested in listening to music, watching a band play, looking at the musical instruments. This is an excellent time to take your child to open concerts, or to music lessons. Take him (or her, of course) to dance lessons, or kiddy gymnastics. Any activity that is related to music, will be very enjoyable at this period of time.

If your child is interested in a certain topic, you can combine with it learning about associated topics. If we look at our previous example, when your child is interested in musical instruments, you can teach him to read the names of those instruments. This way, you are teaching your child to read, taking advantage of his interest in musical instruments. You can talk about the geographical area these instruments came from, teaching Geography, or history. You can combine many disciplines with the topic that is your child's obvious interest at the time.

## **Make Sure Your Child's Teacher is Trained in Teaching His Specific Age Group**

If your child is very young, and you take him to a teacher, make sure the teacher knows how to work with very young children! When Eric was 18 months, I took him to piano lessons. I have always wanted to learn to play the piano, and never have had the opportunity to do so. So I have selected a "Suzuki" teacher, and have agreed with her, that we come for an hour. Eric gets to be the first, but when his attention span ends, I get the rest of the hour.

Eric enjoyed learning to play the piano, and soon we had a group recital. Eric was the youngest in the group. We sat and waited our turn to play. For some reason, the teacher started with the older children, and the younger ones sat and waited. Eric, being under the age of 2 at the time, was wandering around, checking out some seats and looking at the other children, while watching the older children play. He did not make any noise, nor did he create a distraction, when the teacher's assistant approached us and told us that if Eric cannot sit down in a chair, he will be asked to leave. When we asked how long we will have to wait, she said that his turn to play his piece will come in an hour.

The next day we have received a letter from the teacher, calling our attention to the Eric's "undisciplined" behavior during the piano recital, since he did not sit quietly on his seat for the duration of the recital.

I am here to tell you, that it is unreasonable to expect a 2 year old child to sit down for an hour and listen to other children play the piano. It is natural and normal for a child to wander around, as they are learning about their environment. A child at this age is curious about many things, and wants to research and learn by touching and observing.

The teacher I am talking about, had no children of her own, and did not have the experience and training necessary in order to work with such children. She might have had the musical knowledge, but this is not enough in order to work with young children, keep their interest and make learning a fun and positive experience. Please, don't let anybody spoil the fun of learning for your child, be on the lookout, and protect your child from any negative experience associated with learning.

## **Conclusion: Being “Gifted” is a Child’s Natural State**

If you provide your child with plenty of learning opportunities, at an early age! If you use the right techniques and methods for teaching your child at his particular age! If you make it a fun and joyful activity to learn! If you remember that children hate to be tested. If you protect your child from any harmful influence from people who turn learning into “work”. If you enjoy learning yourself. If you celebrate learning, and celebrate your child’s achievements. If you do not overload yourself and your child, if you create a schedule that allows you and your child to relax and enjoy: If you do all these, you will discover that your child learns easily and quickly. You will be amazed at your child’s ability to learn. You will be delighted to see that your child is developing into a gifted and talented child. You will discover that being “gifted” or a “genius” is your child absolutely natural state.

To find out more information about activities, new research, new techniques and resources for the development of children’s genius, please visit our web site often. We continually update and add resources and articles. [www.all-gifted-children.com](http://www.all-gifted-children.com)

I wish you the best of luck and success with the important task of developing your child’s genius. Let’s grow a generation of geniuses!

Esther Andrews