

The background of the page features a collage of film strips and a camera lens, rendered in a warm, reddish-brown color palette. The film strips are layered and curved, creating a sense of motion and depth. A large, dark grey film strip frame is superimposed over the background, containing the main title text.

Using Movies to Guide:

Teachers and Counselors Collaborating to Support Gifted Students

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“The silver screen may be the best medium for helping some students to find silver linings in the often cloudy realities of their giftedness”

(Newton, 1995, p. 19).

The field of school counseling is rapidly changing. The counseling framework established in the 1990s focused on programs that were developmental, comprehensive, and collaborative (Paisley & Borders, 1995). At that time, the focus was on defining what school counselors do and should be doing on the job. Although the field of school counseling continues to define appropriate roles in the schools, the focus is shifting from what counselors do to what counselors do *for children*, and specifically, for children’s academic success (Bowers & Hatch, 2002). The shift in the forefront of current trends does not negate past discussions. In fact, the need to clearly define developmental counseling and apply the concept appropriately in schools continues to be an issue with current counseling programs (Paisley & McMahon, 2001). With increased attention to the academic success of students, implementing quality school counseling programs that address the developmental needs of all students is more important than ever.

School counselors are increasingly called to address the needs of all students and face the pressure to “be all things to all people” (Paisley & McMahon, 2001, p. 107), a situation many find impossible to manage on their own. During the course of an academic year, school counselors often face a workload beyond their limitations. Although streamlining services may be a necessary short-term solution, in the long run, leaving students out of counseling services is a disservice to the school and the students’ needs. Effective programmatic planning and implementation can assist counselors to more closely reach their goal of addressing the needs of all students.

In their efforts to reach maximum impact with minimal resources, school counselors often focus their attentions on the students who are floundering academically. Although greatly needed and appropriate, time spent exclusively on such efforts is

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not in alignment with the current standards of the American School Counseling Association (ASCA), nor is it necessarily an efficient way to meet the needs of all students (Martin, 2002; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). It seems that there is an educational trend to define academic success as performing at average or above average levels rather than performing to potential. While attempting to raise the achievement of students who are performing below average, teachers and school counselors may run the risk of ignoring developmental needs of gifted students until they too show declining performance and other problems that need immediate counseling.

Rather than waiting for a few gifted students to develop serious problems, or underachieve to the point where adults notice and become concerned, school counselors can extend counseling programs to all gifted students through appropriate classroom guidance sessions specifically designed for this population of students. Through collaborative planning with gifted education teachers, counselors can tie their developmental program to the specific needs of gifted elementary students, thus pre-

venting potential problems and leading to the long-term success of these students. The focus of this article is to describe how counselors and teachers of gifted students can collaborate in using films to facilitate discussion sessions with gifted students that address social and emotional developmental issues in their lives.

Social and Emotional Developmental Issues Facing Gifted Elementary Students

In order to deliver an appropriate developmental counseling program for all students, teachers and school counselors need to be aware of the significant social and emotional issues gifted children face (Colangelo, 2003). Gifted children experience the same developmental issues that all youngsters experience; however, there are several challenges that high ability students must learn to cope with as a result of their exceptionality. Because of the extra developmental tasks gifted children must address, it is vital for educators to have an understanding of those issues, as well as appropriate approaches for giving students the

tools for addressing them. These extra processes include issues associated with asynchronous development, emotional sensitivity, camouflaging one's intelligence, perfectionism, multipotentiality, and underachievement.

Asynchronous development is one important issue that emerges in the lives of many gifted children (Silverman, 2002). When a child's intellectual abilities are so far advanced and out of sync with their physical and personal development, the child can struggle with being understood by others and feel totally frustrated. Altman (1983) maintains that gifted children may reach stages of emotional and physical development in alternative patterns from their age peers and at varying times chronologically. Such children may progress through the stages more quickly, with brief intervals of relative stability within stages and between periods of change. According to Altman, unusually rapid development becomes a source of emotional stress for gifted youngsters receiving little emotional support from their peers whose physical and emotional development is consistent with each other. In addition, asynchrony is exacerbated by significant discrepancies between a child's strengths and weaknesses and with increased asynchrony comes greater social and emotional adjustment problems (Silverman).

Giftedness encompasses an emotional, as well as cognitive component. Greater emotional depth often comes with high cognitive complexity. Hence, gifted children not only think differently from their peers, they also feel differently (Silverman, 1992). With heightened sensitivity, a higher level of empathy for others, and a deep compassion for people less fortunate, some gifted children and adolescents are known to worry about serious societal problems and may

become overwhelmed with complex issues that they feel compelled to address. Others including their families may not always understand such children who feel so deeply about issues. Silverman noted “one of the greatest gifts a counselor can give gifted young people is an appreciation of their sensitivities, intensities, and passions” (p. 17) since their experience of feeling everything more deeply than others may be disconcerting. An empathic adult can dispel children’s fears and help them find ways of coping with their strong emotions.

Because gifted children are, by definition, far from the norm, they may struggle with finding appropriate friends and suffer socialization issues related to being different from the majority. As an extra developmental task, gifted students must learn and choose a combination of strategies in order to enjoy a successful social life. One option some gifted youngsters choose in order to find friends is to camouflage their intelligence in order to gain acceptance from a peer group that may not appreciate them as intellectually oriented students. Because they may struggle to fit in socially with other children their age, they may feel compelled to manage their image by hiding just how smart they really are (Coleman & Sanders, 1993). In this way, gifted students often struggle to find a balance between identity and isolation.

In a similar vein, gifted children often search for peers based on common interests rather than age, finding several “soul mates” of multiple ages rather than many friends of the same age, and finding people with whom they can share their experiences of life with greater intensity (Cross, 2004). Finding true peers or “soul mates” may be a difficult challenge for some.

Studies on friendship have found that being smart made making friends more difficult (Gross, 2002). In addition, this challenge becomes more complex if gifted youngsters are not appreciated for their emotionality, sensitivity, or passions. Loneliness may become a way of life for some of them and helping them find supportive relationships may be a challenge for their families. Helping students understand this aspect of their development may be an important role for both the gifted education teacher and school counselor.

Another important concern in the social and emotional development of gifted children often highlighted by their parents is perfectionism. Perfectionism is the combination of thoughts and behaviors associated with high standards or expectations for one’s own performance (Schuler, 2002). Such high personal standards characterize many gifted students and make them feel vulnerable to perfectionism (Adderholdt-Elliott, 1991). They may set personal standards so high that they are unattainable and this tends to result in self-defeat and discouragement. Such thinking can result in compulsive behavior that, unless dealt with appropriately during childhood, can continue to plague a gifted individual for a lifetime (Clark, 1988). Never feeling satisfied with their best, they suffer feelings of inadequacy and never enjoy the process of improving their last performance and living each and every day to the fullest.

Other gifted children experience stress because of their multipotentiality (Kerr, 1991). Coping with multiple talents and interests can become a problem for some gifted students. With never-ending enthusiasm for everything and a vast supply of

energy, being good at everything they undertake may lead to many adults in their lives making multiple demands on their time, talents, and energies. Expectations for them will remain high, as well as constant, and decisions about which talents on which to focus may be difficult. If students are not guided through owning their multipotentiality, they may flounder when it comes time for career focus and college selection.

While some gifted children may struggle with juggling multiple talents and abilities, others may underachieve (Reis & McCoach, 2002). Underachievement in gifted students is considered the most serious counseling issue within the gifted education community (Colangelo, 2003). Underachievement is seen as a discrepancy between assessed potential of students and their actual performance. Highly able youngsters have been known to shut down academically for multiple reasons including inappropriate curriculum and lack of challenge in school, a mismatch between their learning style and a teacher’s teaching style, high-risk home and school environments, or family issues that may be reeking havoc in a child’s life (Baum, Renzulli & Hébert, 1995). Colangelo cautioned educators to not view underachievement as a psychometric issue but rather a relationship between the gifted student, teachers, parents, and even peers. He noted, “For some gifted students, underachievement is a way to express either a need for attention or a need to control a situation” (p. 383). If the problem is not addressed early on, gifted youngsters may vacillate academically, lose interest in learning, and never fulfill their true potential.

Like all youngsters, gifted children will struggle with their identity development (Cross, 2004). In order

to help children deal with feelings of being different from their peers and promote healthy development, Coleman and Sanders (1993) maintain that educators must help gifted children define themselves in ways that lead to emotional health. Promoting the development of a strong identity is an important way to support gifted young people. Gifted children know they are different and need to acknowledge this feeling and incorporate it within their identity. Some youngsters become so involved in camouflaging their differentness that it interferes with their development. Educators must recognize this self-rejection as a serious problem that requires attention. To succeed in social interactions, these children must develop an identity as individuals who are gifted and talented and learn to appreciate their gifts and talents.

In addition to all of the issues discussed above, these concerns become even more complex for gifted children living in poverty. Within this special population of gifted children there exists a need to develop resilience to cope with the adversities that may be more of a challenge than most gifted children face. Resilient individuals are those who, despite difficult hardships and the presence of at-risk factors, develop characteristics and coping skills that enable them to succeed in life (McMillan & Reed, 1994). They appear to develop stable, healthy personalities and are able to recover from or adapt to life's adversities (Werner, 1984). To support gifted children from at-risk backgrounds, educators need to help them find ways to develop a positive attitude toward their environment or situation, build a strong sense of purpose, and develop a strong internal locus of control, which enables them to see

life's obstacles as challenges that can be overcome (Hébert, 1996).

Addressing Social and Emotional Development Through Guided Viewing of Film

The focus of this article is to offer gifted education teachers and school counselors a collaborative classroom intervention to support the personal and social development of gifted students in schools. A strategy educators may consider with this population is guided viewing of film, a way to assist gifted children to understand the social and emotional issues in their lives and learn new approaches to address their concerns. Hébert and Speirs Neumeister (2001) proposed guided viewing of film as a strategy through which teachers and counselors may help gifted students develop insights to deal with the problems they face. Parallels drawn from the theoretical literature on bibliotherapy provide support for guided viewing of film. Bibliotherapy has been defined as the use of reading literature to bring about affective change and support personal growth and development (Halsted, 2002; Lenkowsky, 1987). Having children read and react to books about persons and situations similar to themselves is a long recognized helping strategy used by school counselors (Christenbury, Beale, & Patch, 1996; Gladding & Gladding, 1991). This approach of using literature and biography in addressing personal and social development of gifted students has also been advocated by the gifted education community (Halsted; Hébert & Kent, 2000). Teachers in gifted education programs have recognized the therapeutic value of the

approach and often incorporate it as a component of their curriculum.

The process involves several progressive stages, initially defined by Shrodes (1949). The first stage, *identification*, takes place when readers recognize similarities between themselves and book characters. In the next stage, readers experience *catharsis*, an empathic expression of emotions similar to what they think the book's characters may have been feeling. In the third stage, *insight*, readers progress through their identification with the story's characters and their situations. Insight may evolve while reading the book or in guided dialogue with peers. In the final stage, *application*, the readers apply the insights gained from reflection and discussion to similar challenges in their own lives.

Movies may also serve as therapeutic experiences for gifted students. The storyline and characters in books offer great therapeutic potential for gifted children, and this potential can also be delivered through a movie's plot and characters. Berg-Cross, Jennings, and Baruch (1990) maintained that movies provided profound metaphors that were enlightening to young people and enabled them to understand personal problematic issues. A film may help gifted students examine their issues through another perspective, allowing them to better appreciate humorous conditions within a situation and to see alternative solutions for addressing their problem. In addition, a good film can create a supportive understanding among the teacher, school counselor, and students who enjoy the movie together (Hébert & Speirs Neumeister, 2002).

Movies have been found to influence emotional lives of large numbers of individuals (Adams & McGuire,

1987). Researchers and educators from the gifted education community have recognized this and have proposed the use of film with gifted children and adolescents (Hébert & Speirs Neumeister, 2001, 2002; Milne & Reis, 2000; Newton, 1995). Newton (1995) maintained that using films with gifted students appeal to visual learners more than books since movies appealed to multiple senses. Proponents of this approach also have indicated that guided viewing of film is an appropriate match for gifted students since movies are an integral part of contemporary culture of both children and adolescents. Young people also consider watching movies as an enjoyable activity carried out in a relaxed environment. As a result, they may be more receptive to discussing issues in their lives through the safety of a good movie.

With the ever-increasing demand for accountability, both school counselors and teachers of gifted students must be more efficient with students' time than ever before. In both classroom guidance programs and gifted education, it is critical that activities addressing affective concerns are not seen as "fluff" in the academic day, but aligned with the curriculum standards of both the gifted education and counseling programs (Bowers & Hatch, 2002; Martin, 2002; Tomlinson, 1999). High quality movies shared with children reinforce appropriate societal messages embedded within school curriculum; therefore, the use of film provides a stimulating approach for addressing a number of curricular objectives.

For school counselors who want to maintain a strong reputation within the school, positive classroom guidance experiences are essential. Guided viewing of film in a gifted

education classroom is no different; therefore, care should be taken in the selection of a film, group discussion, and follow-up activities, so that class time is not wasted and students benefit from appropriate service from their gifted education class, as well as their counselor's time.

Before conducting a guided viewing session in an elementary classroom, teachers and counselors should understand copyright issues related to viewing movies with students. In a school setting with educational objectives determined by teacher and counselor, guided viewing of film falls within the copyright laws protecting the use of movies with groups. The Copyright Act of 1976 (amended in 1992) permits adults to make fair use of copyrighted material for educational purposes without obtaining permission of the copyright owner. Therefore, as long as movies are used to teach, educators are not violating copyright laws (Elias, 1999).

An Example of Guided Viewing

The following discussion presents an example of how a gifted education teacher and school counselor might facilitate guided viewing sessions with gifted elementary students using the Hallmark movie entitled *Ellen Foster* (1997). The movie is based on the best-selling novel by Kaye Gibbons and features the story of a gifted, resilient young girl who is left alone following the death of her mother. She draws inner strength from loving memories of her mother as she is forced to move from relative to relative in search of a family to replace her deceased mother and abusive father. Her wealthy and bitter grandmother eventually takes her in; however, Ellen's life in her grand-

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mother's household becomes more emotionally desolate than ever before.

Despite the obstacles she faces, Ellen becomes determined to find a new mother. She experiences warm, nurturing families all around her and yearns to be part of one. This intelligent young girl takes her situation into her own hands and designs a plan that will provide her happiness. In the end, Ellen's strong inner strength and determination enables her to free herself of her dysfunctional relatives and the emotionally traumatic events of her childhood. In the process, she discovers that the meaning of family is more than simply being related. To Ellen, it is being loved.

Teachers and school counselors will find that *Ellen Foster* is an appropriate movie to use with gifted students. This film features an emotionally sensitive and intelligent young girl with whom many gifted children can identify. Ellen's giftedness is applied to solve her problem and overcome tremendous personal adversity in her life. The harsh environment in which Ellen lives may be similar to the home situations of many gifted students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Children from all cultural backgrounds will appreciate Ellen's story

and will take away lessons from Ellen that can be applied to their own lives. The film highlights a number of developmental issues facing gifted children and provides educators with material appropriate for classroom discussions that are bound to be rich, as well as enlightening for all those involved.

A gifted education teacher and school counselor working together would want to consider the focus of their discussions accompanying the viewing of this movie and determine several important issues they would want to highlight in discussions. Key issues that emerge in *Ellen Foster* are the development of resilience, finding emotional support from people in one's life, applying one's intelligence to solve life's challenges, and having a strong belief in self. Each of these issues might serve as a theme for discussion throughout the entire movie.

Educators using such an approach have found it helpful to break up the movie and incorporate discussions along the way. Depending on the movie, a natural break can be found approximately every 30 minutes. Appropriate questions can be infused according to the content of each section. Spacing the film into segments allows children to reflect on elements that may be lost by the time the movie ends. Segmenting the film and debriefing segments is also helpful in that students with shorter attention spans can remain focused, and such an approach allows the facilitation of the discussion to be broken up into a multiple-day plan, rather than requiring a 2- to 3-hour block of time.

With the key issues for discussion determined and the natural breaks in the movie having been identified, the school counselor and teacher should prepare a menu of discussion questions to pose in facilitating the conversation with chil-

dren. Care should be taken when writing the questions, making sure to include introductory questions that appear nonthreatening to children, followed by more sensitive questions that focus on the problematic situations faced by both the movie characters and the children involved in the discussion. A sensitively crafted menu of questions is needed for a cathartic conversation with gifted children. Several sample discussion questions for use with *Ellen Foster* are provided below:

- What are the challenges Ellen faces in her life? What do you think helps Ellen cope with the difficulties she faces?
- Ellen enjoys her friendship with Starletta Douglas. How do Starletta and her parents support Ellen? Why was their friendship important to Ellen? Who are your important friends? How do they support you?
- During difficult times, Ellen enjoyed cutting out pictures of people from catalogues and creating paper doll families. Why do you think she did this? How might this have helped her? When you are having a difficult time, how do you entertain yourself? How does this help you?
- Although Ellen's grandmother does not treat her nicely, Ellen continues to treat her grandmother with respect and kindness. What does this say about Ellen? Why do you think she treated her grandmother this way? How might that have helped Ellen?
- Ellen was a very smart young girl. How do we know this? How did Ellen use her intelligence to solve her problems? How do you use

your talents to address the challenges in your life?

- Ellen was a very strong girl. Some people would refer to her strength as "resilience." What did you see in the movie that indicated that Ellen was resilient? What lessons about resilience have you learned from Ellen? How might you apply this to your life?

Another technique that counselors and teachers should consider is to use direct quotes from the movie that will serve as meaningful prompts for discussion. Several examples of quotes from *Ellen Foster* accompanied by discussion questions are provided below.

In an early scene in the movie, Ellen's mother, knowing that she will not live much longer, wraps her arms around Ellen and shares her feelings with her daughter, as she is attempting to prepare Ellen for life after she is gone. She reminds her daughter of her special qualities that will enable her to survive life's harshness as she says:

You are my favorite person in the whole world. You're smart and you're strong and you can get along, no matter what happens. I absolutely know that. You'll remember I told you that, won't you?

Discussion questions that cofacilitators might want to pose would be:

- Why do you think Ellen's mother delivered this message to her? How was she trying to help Ellen?
- Do you think her mother's message helped Ellen? How?
- Has there been a time in your life when someone you love gave you

similar advice? Why? How did you respond? How did that make you feel?

In a poignant scene in which Ellen visits her mother's grave on the anniversary of her death, she talks with her mother about her supportive art teacher who has taken her into her home. She also spends some time chatting about how she is coping with being forced to live with her bitter grandmother. She attempts to assure her mother that she will survive. She says:

I think the two of you would have gotten along real good. Maybe you're looking down on me and feeling thoroughly okay about me being her friend, but she ain't nothing like you. She can never be a momma like you, but she'd be my first or second choice, if you know what I mean. But don't you worry about me being with your momma. I'm gonna manage it one way or another. Like you used to say, "Nothing is forever, though it don't seem like it sometimes." I'm doing okay in school. Don't worry, okay.

Discussion questions that could follow this prompt might be:

- Why do you think Ellen thought her mother would have enjoyed knowing her art teacher? Do you agree?
- What does Ellen think her mother might be worrying about for her? How does she try to reassure her mother? Why do you think she does this?
- Have you ever had an important relationship with another adult outside your family? How did this person help you? How did

your family feel about this person? How did that make you feel?

- Ellen reminds her mother of having said, "Nothing is forever, though it don't seem like it sometimes." Why does she reflect back on her mother saying this? How do you think this helps Ellen? Do you think this message from Ellen's mother is one you could apply to your life? How?

Later in the movie, Ellen has discovered a woman in her community who operates a foster home. She begins to plan a way to become part of the foster family, and thinking that the woman's name is Foster, she begins signing her school papers with her new name "Ellen Foster." When the school psychologist questions her about this she explains:

It may not be the name God or my momma gave me, but that's my name now. My old family kinda' wore out the other one, and I figured I can start practicing my new name, of my new family, for when they are my family. Foster, it's a clean, fresh name.

In facilitating the discussion, a counselor or teacher might ask:

- Why do you think Ellen changed her name? How do you think she was feeling?
- Has there ever been a time in your life when you also wanted a "clean, fresh" change? What did you do? Why? How did that make you feel?

The movie concludes with the following poignant quote:

Every day I try to feel a little bit better about all that went on when I was little. It'll eventually get straightened out in my head. I came a long way to get here. That will always amaze me.

Appropriate questions for concluding the discussion might be similar to the following:

- What does Ellen mean when she says, "I came a long way to get here. That will always amaze me?" Do you think Ellen was amazing? Why?
- Where do you think Ellen found her strength to cope with the difficulties she faced?
- What lessons have you learned from Ellen that you might apply to your life?

Teachers and school counselors facilitating guided viewing sessions with poignant movies such as *Ellen Foster* should realize that the discussion of sensitive issues revolving around a film may elicit emotional responses within the participants. Therefore, it is important that the facilitators of guided viewing sessions design follow-up activities that allow the children the opportunity to process through their feelings. These activities should be enjoyable for students and may include artistic expressions, writing activities, role-playing, and music. Students may also appreciate the chance to select their own follow-up activity to pursue individually. Hébert and Speirs Neumeister (2002) highlighted two reasons these activities are critical to the success of a guided viewing lesson. First, such activities are designed to afford important time for introspection for gifted children. Secondly, these activities provide children the opportunity

to continue discussion of the issues explored in the film and offer each other emotional support and empathy that may be appreciated by all participants involved in the session. The following is a suggested menu of follow-up activities to be used with *Ellen Foster*.

- Pretend that you are Ellen Foster. Write a poem about overcoming difficult obstacles in life.
- The movie *Ellen Foster* has become a Broadway musical. Write the lyrics to a song to be performed in this new theatrical production.
- Pretend that Ellen Foster is being interviewed on a talk show. Design and role play the interview.
- Write a short sequel to *Ellen Foster*. How will the next chapter of her life read?
- Design and illustrate a road map of Ellen Foster's journey.
- Create a collage of photographs that represent the important lessons learned through *Ellen Foster*.
- Select a scene from *Ellen Foster* and adapt it to become a children's picture book.
- Ellen Foster writes a letter to Dear Abby asking for advice. How does her letter read? What advice does Abby provide Ellen? Write both letters.
- Reflect on the following prompt in your journal: What lesson stood out to you in the movie *Ellen Foster*? How does this apply to your own life?
- Ellen Foster has become an inspirational speaker to young people throughout the country. Write a speech that Ellen will present to your elementary school.

When two professionals concerned about gifted children combine

their personal creativity in curriculum planning with the generation of appropriate group discussion questions, along with their enjoyment of good movies, a rewarding partnership will evolve as they work together to provide an effective educational program for gifted children. To assist teachers and counselors interested in pursuing such a plan, a collection of suggested films to be used in guided viewing sessions is provided at the end of this article.

The Benefits of a Collaborative Approach in Guided Viewing

The collaborative approach of the gifted education teacher and school counselor may change over time. While guided viewing of film may be helpful for gifted students, many teachers may be hesitant to independently address the individual social and emotional issues that affect gifted children. However, since gifted education teachers often teach the same students for several consecutive years, they are in a position to know all of their students better than the school counselor. Through a collaborative effort, more children can be reached. Working as cofacilitators in guided viewing sessions with students helps provide for more effective classroom guidance. Over time, it becomes possible for the counselors to step back from the process and into the role of consultant as the gifted education teacher becomes more comfortable with the process, enabling the school counselor to expand the counseling program in other directions.

As teachers become more aware of the needs of their gifted students, and more competent in meeting those needs, they are more likely to work

within the realm of competence appropriately to help students face developmental issues. Moreover, as teachers' levels of competence increase, they are more likely to recognize behaviors indicative of a greater need. This awareness, combined with greater comfort with the counselor, should increase the likelihood that a teacher will consult with the school counselor, as well as refer students appropriately. Through such collaboration, teachers should become more aware of their limitations and levels of competence, and collaboration with another professional will help teachers recognize their boundaries and work more effectively within them.

Incorporating Guided Viewing of Film in Parental Outreach

As school counselors consider their expanding roles in schools, as well as the various ways their counseling will affect a child, one area many counselors may want to examine is parental outreach. Guided viewing of film is an ideal way to invite parents into the school for a comfortable meeting and explore issues with them and their children. With the selection of the right movie, discussion questions, and follow-up activities, a movie night with parents and students could be a positive experience in several ways. Among them, such an evening could help parents who are uncomfortable in the school come in for a positive experience. In a relaxed atmosphere, parents could interact with school counselors, teachers, each other, and their children in a way that helps them understand their children's cognitive, social, and emotional developmental needs.

Once parents are in the school and more relaxed, they may be more

receptive of information regarding their children's needs. Time scheduled before the movie to address programmatic, development, and academic expectations could serve as both an introduction to the night and an opportunity for parental education. Just as with other populations of students, educating parents of gifted students about their children's specific needs can have long-reaching implications for the success of their children. Knowledge of the school population and parental needs within a given community is essential. The needs to be addressed should be evaluated when choosing which movie to view, and what topics to discuss. Whatever the topics of choice, an open discourse between children, parents, teachers, and the counselor should have multiple long-range implications for the success of the students, school, and community.

Summary

Gifted elementary students can profit from their teachers collaborating with school counselors through guided viewing of film. Sensitively designed discussion sessions led by two supportive adults will result in healthy therapeutic responses for children. Since movies are a significant component of today's culture for children, gifted elementary students will respond favorably to this counseling approach; therefore, gifted education teachers and school counselors may wish to incorporate guided viewing of film in their professional repertoires. By doing so, many gifted children will benefit.

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Suggested Films for Guided Viewing

Counselors and teachers should understand the community setting and values of which the school is a part, and show sensitivity when selecting movies to be used within the school. Since the intended audience of this intervention is elementary school students, the following movies are rated G [General Audience] or PG [Parental Guidance]. The authors also encourage educators to view the entire movie as part of their selection and preparation process.

I'll Remember April (1999)

I'll Remember April follows the lives of four 10-year-old boys growing up on the coast of California during the second World War. One of the boys is a Japanese-American whose family is being set to an internment camp. After hearing of Japanese submarines off the Pacific coast, the boys fantasize about being Marines in search of the enemy. While patrolling the beach, they discover a Japanese

sailor who is stranded and wounded. Determined to become heroes, they take him prisoner and keep him secret from their parents. When the sailor rescues one of the boys from drowning, the boys befriend their prisoner and struggle with a pact that could betray their country. *I'll Remember April* offers discussion material centering on issues such as sensitivity and moral dilemmas within boys, prejudice, the importance of loyalty to one's friends, and being true to self.

Matilda (1996)

Matilda is a larger-than-life comedy about a gifted young girl whose intelligence is not appreciated by her anti-intellectual family. When Matilda begins school, she is delighted to socialize with other children and to be involved in learning; however, she is frightened by the tyrannical school principal, Ms. Trunchbull. Fortunately, her classroom teacher, Miss Honey, appreciates Matilda's giftedness and nurtures her intellect. Matilda continues to experience frustration with parents and a principal who stifle her creativity. Eventually Matilda discovers that she has telekinetic powers and applies them to help rescue Miss Honey and her students from the tyranny of the principal. Through outrageous content, the movie delivers clear messages about the importance of appreciating and nurturing the abilities of young children and the need for gifted students to find friends who appreciate their intellect.

My Girl (1991)

My Girl provides rich material for discussions focused on appreciating intelligence in young girls, using one's

imagination and creativity, finding soul mates in friends, and dealing with the loss of loved ones. The film presents the story of one summer's experiences in the life of Vada Sultenfuss, an 11-year-old girl growing up in the 1970s. Vada lives with her widowed father and elderly grandmother in their home, which is attached to her father's funeral home. Vada, a creative writer, is thrilled when she learns her heartthrob, a fourth-grade teacher, is offering a summer poetry class. She enrolls in the adult class and spends her summer struggling with a schoolgirl crush on her teacher. She enjoys her summer days with her best friend, Thomas J. Sennett, but her days become more complex when her father announces his engagement. Vada struggles with accepting a replacement for her mother. Moreover, Vada faces the tragic loss of Thomas J. when he dies from an allergic response to being stung by a hive of bees. With emotional support from family and friends, Vada ends her summer by writing a memorial poem in honor of her beloved friend, enabling her to apply her creativity in dealing with her grief.

The Red Sneakers (2002)

Through *The Red Sneakers*, counselors, teachers, and students can address issues of anti-intellectualism, peer group pressure, gifted males listening to societal messages concerning athletics, and talent development in urban youth. In this movie, Reggie Reynolds is the dedicated manager of his urban high school basketball team. His problem is that he wants to be a basketball superstar, but his dreams of becoming a college player seem impossible, because Reggie is intellectually gifted, but not athleti-

cally talented. When the neighborhood junkman sells him a magical pair of red sneakers, he becomes an overnight sensation who leads his team to the New York City high school finals. As Reggie enjoys his instant success, he struggles with the jealousy of his teammates, his mother's changing views of his intellectual abilities, the high scholarly expectations of his math teacher, and a new set of adoring female admirers. In addition, sports scouts descend upon Reggie to offer him the golden future he has dreamed of. In the end, Reggie acknowledges his true gifts and remains true to himself and those he loves.

Wide Awake (1997)

Wide Awake is the story of a highly sensitive, intelligent fifth grader named Joshua Beals. Joshua attends an all-boys Catholic school, has a reputation for asking countless questions, and delights his teachers. The movie begins following the death of Joshua's grandfather who was his best friend and role model. With his grandfather's passing, Joshua feels lost despite the fact that his family and friends offer emotional support. This poignant coming-of-age film examines the young boy's struggle to understand mortality, and his preoccupation with knowing whether or not his grandfather is in heaven. Throughout the movie, Joshua faces typical adolescent issues such as coping with a schoolyard bully, discovering girls, and developing empathy for boys who are not appreciated by their peer group. Through these experiences, Joshua confronts his issues, reaches self-understanding, and realizes that he is "wide awake" with a new awareness of life. **GCT**