

# NEWS FROM ACADEMICALLY GIFTED

## The Middle School Edition

Volume 5, Issue 3

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

~ *Nelson Mandela*



IF IT DOESN'T CHALLENGE YOU,  
IT DOESN'T CHANGE YOU

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### Duke TIP: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Talent Search

The 7th Grade Talent Search is the entry point to TIP's support, resources, and community. Students qualify by scoring at or above the 95th percentile on a grade-level standardized test (such as the EOG) or an IQ test. At a crucial time when 7<sup>th</sup> graders are forming their identities and looking ahead to the future, students receive benefits that help them learn about their strengths, discover new interests, find essential advice, and connect with advanced educational programs. Some of the Program's Benefits:

- Access to publications and resources
- Access to Insights, a monthly, online magazine
- Contest, program, and scholarship listings
- College planning advice
- Discount price on independent learning products
- Access to educational programs

There is a fee associated with the program; financial aid is offered to students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. Last year, several GCS middle students participated in the Duke TIP program and were recognized for their performance on either the ACT or SAT. [Click here to learn more about the Duke TIP Program.](#)

## News from Our School:

# The Middle School Years: Identity, Purpose, and Happiness

The middle school years can be difficult. It is a time that is filled with questions, emotions, and decisions. For an AG student, who may be experiencing the world more intensely than his/her peers, the middle school years can bring about intense emotions highlighted by feelings of isolation and difficulty understanding the injustices in the world. Often, as parents, we try to protect our children from experiencing the same level of intensity we felt during the same time in our own lives. However, our children respond to our actions with “You’re not me!” Such response may cause us to pull back; but, our children need explicit support as they discover who they are, what they will do as adults, and what makes them happy.

## Who am I?

Identity development is the process of aligning what feels true inside with what is accepted outside. A high-achieving middle school student may feel pressure to conform or take on certain identities from parents, family/friends, media, culture, and beyond. Such decisions to conform may bring more social isolation or rejection. The goal is to help our middle school students reach self-actualization, the process when one’s “ideal self” (what they would like to be) is congruent with their “actual self” (the things they actually do). To help our high-achieving middle school student reach self-actualization, parents have to be willing to (1) Expect and be open to shifting identifies; (2) Ask open-ended questions; and (3) Advocate for their child.

## What will I do?

During the middle school years, high-achieving students begin to explore their purpose. Asking your child what they want to be when they grow up can feel overwhelming because it may seem like they have to make ONE choice. As parents, we have to acknowledge that the world has change; there is a high possibility that our children will have multiple careers over their lifetime rather than stick with one field until retirement. With that acknowledgement we have encourage our children to explore their multipotentiality – the ability to pursue many things at once or over time. To ensure that you are helping your high-achieving child discover their purpose here are some questions to ask your child:

- What academic areas are you drawn to when you are not doing required work?
- What activities do you enjoy outside of school?
- What career paths interest you that you could find ways to explore?
- How much do you know right now about what it takes to pursue the career paths that interest you?
- When you think about the environment in which you like to do schoolwork now, what characteristics stand out to you?

## What makes me happy?

According to Kathryn Grubbs, “happiness is a state that we aim for, hope for, and pursue, but it is not something we will always feel every moment of the day.” Happiness can also be summarized as feeling connected to others and participating in meaningful work. Simply stated, happiness is the moments when who we are aligns with what we are doing. It can be found in the moments when your high-achieving child is able to say, “I feel good about who I am, what I do, who is in my life, and how I exist in the world”. To help your child pursue happiness:

- Revel in your child’s happiness. When your child feels a burst of glee; enjoy that moment.
  - Encourage your child to explore how they know they’re happy (*From a smile? A feeling? Something else?*)
- Model empathy; but discourage feeling dependent on another’s feelings.
  - Often adolescents start to relate happiness to how others are feeling (*I know I am happy because my parent is happy; my teacher is happy; my friend is happy; etc.*). Instead, as parents, model interest and empathy for – not dependence on – your own child’s experiences.

**Grubbs, K. (2018). Identity, Purpose, and Happiness: Helping High-Achieving Adolescents Find All Three. *Parenting for High Potential*, 7(2), 18-20.**