

Hi Allie,

I am going to attempt to interview you via e-mail, but my it is my "Left hand." I process by talking, so I'll give it a shot. We will need to get this to our editor by Tuesday. Thanks so much in advance. I know it will really help a lot of moms.

First, I want to make sure you know my purpose. I am a leader in our large homeschool support group. I have co-lead Mom's groups - for homeschool support, and have lead a group to help Mom's with special needs kids. I have a son who was tested a Gifted Development. He is twice exceptional, has some coordination issues, some sensory problems, has completed vision, occupational and brain integration therapy, and has ADD and PDD with anxiety. Whew! Makes me want to get on with the interview and see what help you might offer. :) But first, to complete my introduction. I attended Baylor University, and I have a BS in education with a specialization in reading and a minor in special ed. I am intending to write a book from these interviews called "When is Enough Enough?" I have a desire to help parents who are frustrated - thinking their kids are lazy or just not trying. I want to help people see the benefit of testing and getting help where needed. (meaning therapy of all sorts, counselling, or even medication if needed.) I am the queen of frustrated moms. I know what it is like to have a child who can, but can't. Know what I mean? He knew the letter sounds at 18 months, but couldn't remember his math facts at 4th grade, He dropped his pencil so many times in first grade, I thought I'd scream. He asked me if he was real at age 4, but sometimes doesn't notice people are talking to him. OH! May this article help others who think they are dealing with behavioral issues instead of real disabilities. Oh, if we could do it all over knowing what we know now.

Also, this will be proofread thoroughly. Because I am a homeschooler with 4 kids from 1-12, I am going to leave my typos and get on with the duties that beckon me. :) Forgive the informality, please.

So, I would like to ask you some questions that would "plug" the Gifted Center and would help people think through some of this stuff. Feel free to give links or books that would satisfy the more in-depth questions. Also, feel free to pick and chose the questions that you think would be the most befecial. I tried to put a large variety of the hot topics and objections people have. If you want to add any questions that seem obviously important, feel free. (I'm right brained and very flexible :) I just want to help people. (I will put some of my thoughts, private to you, in parenthesis.)

Allie, what is your role at the Gifted Development Center in Denver?

**Actually, I wear many hats! I am the Director of the Visual-Spatial Resource, a sister organization to the Gifted Development Center. I am the Marketing Director for the Gifted Development Center as well as the Homeschooling Consultant, webmistress for both organization's websites, and I am Linda Silverman's executive assistant. Here is my "official" bio and I have attached my vitae:**

Alexandra Allie Golon is Director of the Visual-Spatial Resource, a subsidiary of the Institute for the Study of Advanced Development, in Denver, Colorado. As a founding member of the Visual-Spatial Resource Access Team, a former G/T teacher and homeschooling parent to two exceptionally gifted visual-spatial learners, Allie brings a wealth of experience to her book, *Raising Topsy-Turvy Kids: Successfully Parenting Your Visual-Spatial Child*. Her latest book, *If You Could See the Way I Think*, is aimed at visual-spatial kids, ages 8-12, but has also been used by teachers as a rich source for classroom strategies. Allie has been invited to present on parenting and teaching visual-spatial learners at state, national and international venues. She has counseled dozens of

families regarding various homeschooling issues as well as harmoniously parenting visual-spatial learners and has appeared on talk radio programs and in various print media. Allie can be reached at [alex@visualspatial.org](mailto:alex@visualspatial.org).

What makes your center different than other places? People could have their children tested at many places, what sets you apart?

**I have attached an article I wrote for the Gifted Homeschoolers of California website that addresses this. Also, please see <http://www.gifteddevelopment.com/assessment.html>**

Are there a few tell-tale signs of giftedness? (Feel free to refer people to a link on anything that is reinventing the wheel.)

**Oh, sure! Please see: <http://www.gifteddevelopment.com/Articles/Characteristics.html>**

What are the benefits of testing?

**Please see the attached article, Why Would Assessment be Important if We Plan on Homeschooling.**

Doesn't labeling have a negative effect on kids?

**Do go unidentified would have far more significant and negative impact. To borrow an analogy from author Stephanie Tolan, you can cage a cheetah, but it's still a cheetah. ([http://www.stephanietolan.com/is\\_it\\_a\\_cheetah.htm](http://www.stephanietolan.com/is_it_a_cheetah.htm)) To deny gifted children their basic needs in terms of intellectual stimulation would be as cruel as to deny special needs children on the other end of the spectrum the accommodations they require.**

People always say my child is no Einstein. They say, "Aren't gifted kids the ones who can read at two and are the star students in elementary school?" Can you help me understand why my child cries about being

able to do the hard stuff, but he can't do the easy stuff? (I want people to see that gifted kids are divergent thinkers, asynchronous in their development, or right brained kids some times.)

**This could take days to answer because the reasons for "underachieving" gifted are so varied. For some it is that they are visual-spatial learners, able to grasp the more complicated subjects that require engagement of the right hemisphere - their strong suit. (Please see [www.visualspatial.org](http://www.visualspatial.org) for LOTS more on this!) For others, especially girls, they learn very early how to fit in socially and they go "underground" and hide their gifts.**

Do parents often miss this diagnosis, or minimize the effect it has on their child's education?

**What "diagnosis" are you referring to? Giftedness? Visual-spatial abilities? Twice exceptional issues?**

Do you think homeschooling is a good option, if a child is accelerated in an area?

**I think homeschooling is an excellent option for any number of reasons, including the need to accelerate a student. I homeschooled my sons for five years because they are profoundly gifted. Even the private school for the gifted we were attending could not meet their demanding need for acceleration. Today's schools seem stuck on the notion that a student must master lower level material (say, times tables) before being allowed to pursue more interesting and engaging material (say, Geometry). This is absurd for a gifted child or visual-spatial child because higher level subject matter engages the right hemisphere. Also, any "gap" that may exist as a result of acceleration will be quickly closed as a function of the student's intellect.**

**Homeschooling is the only method of instruction of which I'm aware in which the curricula can be 100% tailored to meet a student's unique needs and abilities.**

What are some ways that I could provide enrichment myself. (thinking of dual enrollment, enrichment programs, you could put links, or websites, or anything you think would help. For my son, we go OFTEN to the library and sign up for every activity around town to keep him interested.) (Also, I may put a comparison chart that I co-wrote about the teaching models - like ALM)

**Enrichment for homeschoolers was made infinitely more accessible with the widespread use of the internet. From distance learning courses, to websites of resources on virtually any topic, in-depth, higher level learning is available through a home pc. Homeschoolers also have the distinct advantage of being able to create such flexibility in their schedule that they can visit museums, talk to professionals in a particular area, travel extensively, etc.**

What are our thoughts on homeschoolers allowing their kids to skip sections or whole grade in a subject?

**Go for it! Particularly for gifted children. Learning should be fun, not drudgery. So much of a typical curricula is drill and repetition. Gifted children and visual-spatial children do not require drill or repetition! Homeschooling does not have to confine itself to a Sept - June, 8:30 - 3:00 timeframe. Learning can be in the exploration of so much more than can be represented in a classroom.**

**Homeschool "curricula" should be uniquely tailored to the student, even if that means skipping grade levels. (See my note on "gaps" above.)**

It was always helpful with my son to use curriculums that allowed for less repetition and skipping ahead, like Spelling Power and Moving with Math. Also, he needed to be free to go deep when he got interested in something, so Sonlight was always a winner. Do you recommend any particular curriculum that works well?

**I have yet to meet a gifted child that was at one grade level for all subjects. Many excel in mathematics, others in reading and writing, still others in Science. Because I have never found a curriculum that allowed for such flexibility (you typically must select a single grade for all subjects), I have always recommended that homeschooling parents create their own eclectic mix. I usually recommend selecting materials for social studies (history, geography, etc.) based on the child's reading grade level. Math should be at whatever level it becomes exciting and engaging, regardless of mastery of times tables. For my own children, because they were each so far ahead of "grade level" in the three R's, we studied Latin, World History, Biology and Algebra when they were just 5 and 7 years old.**

What about when a child isn't strong in every area. (funny) For example, what if my child can't read, spell or write very well, but has an amazing ability with legos and math? (wanting to address the individual strengths kids show)

**This is very common among visual-spatial learners. Because this type of learner thinks in pictures, he or she needs to be taught in pictures. We typically don't teach reading, spelling or math with visuals. When we do, however (using a whole word reading approach, teaching spelling as visualization of images, and teaching math facts using rhyming, patterns, music and other methods that activate the right hemisphere), we see dramatic results.**

**These types of strategies are outlined in my books, Raising Topsy-Turvy Kids: Successfully Parenting Visual-Spatial Learners and, the recently released, If You Could See the Way I Think: A Handbook for Visual-Spatial Kids.**

Do you have any good websites to recommend? (I'm thinking of yours - you have awesome articles that have helped me so much)

**Gifted Development Center ([www.gifteddevelopment.com](http://www.gifteddevelopment.com))**

**Visual-Spatial Resource ([www.visualspatial.org](http://www.visualspatial.org))**

**Hoagies Gifted Ed <http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/>**

**Gifted Homeschoolers' Forum** <http://giftedhomeschoolers.org>

Can a child be both gifted and learning disabled? (could you address compensation - this was so hard for us with our son)

**Absolutely! And one issue, the giftedness or the learning disability, can mask the other. So, a highly gifted child who learns to read with seeming ease, may have a visual tracking problem go unnoticed. Or, the gifted child with ADHD may never be recognized as bright in the classroom.**

**I have attached an article by Linda Silverman, Twice Exceptional Children: Lost Treasures, for more on this.**

What are some common weaknesses that gifted kids face. (How to word that? ) (Thinking of sensory, vision issues, coordination, add type stuff or anything else you think would fit here.)

**We seem to see a lot of kids with auditory processing issues (CAPD) and vision issues. Because of our vast cumulative experience in sorting through subtest scores, we also now see a lot of twice exceptional children who have astronomical IQ scores (above 200) coupled with something along the autistic spectrum. I would feel more comfortable, though, asking Linda to answer this as she is the Director of the Center. Unfortunately, she is out of town until Sept. 5th.**

Thanks for your time in answering all these questions, There will be a blurb in our newsletter that will go out to hundreds of families. It will give people a link to this article. Thanks, Lisa

**No problem, I'm happy to help! Please let me know how I may access whatever is published.**

Allie