

Classes help parents deal with gifted kids

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

Even parents of bright kids need assistance.

"Parents are often not equipped," said Nancy Serlin, a pre-school and parenting specialist on the emotional needs of the gifted. "We like to give parents a tool box."

For 16 years, Serlin, who teaches at Temple Israel in West Bloomfield and Jerry Kaplan, a retired Farmington Public Schools counselor and parenting specialist, have held parenting classes about the social/emotional needs of gifted children.

"There's not many vehicles for them to network with other parents who have similar characteristics," Kaplan said.

After the first class, parents feel relieved. The teachers often can't get them out of the classroom because they are so excited and have found a lot of things in common.

"They often say, in class, 'Those people have my kid,'" Serlin said.

It's sometimes difficult for gifted children to find peers. These children think in different ways, their vocabulary is more advanced and they think out of the box.



Nancy Serlin and Jerry Kaplan

"I had a four year old invent a game, which the other kids didn't have a clue because they didn't think like he did," Serlin said.

Some children lack social skills, and sometimes the child isn't the problem, the parent is. Children can be turned off, if they are bored and not challenged.

Or, those who are used to learning things easily may just stop when they encounter more difficult material.

"They can have perfectionistic tendencies," Kaplan said. "They tie their self esteem to

their ability to do well. They have to be at the top. If they can't be at the top they will lose their homework or procrastinate. So many of them will shut down and not work, because that gives them more attention for not doing their work."

Kids who feel they have their own way of doing work may feel they don't have to show their work to a teacher, Kaplan said.

Some children are gifted in leadership. They have a charisma, other children flock to them and they manipulate

Parenting classes offered locally

Two classes for parents of gifted children meet weekly Sept. 30-Nov. 4 in downtown Farmington.

They are open to families from all school districts.

The morning session is 9:30 a.m.-11 a.m. and the evening session is 7:30-9 p.m. at the Farmington Training Center, 33000 Thomas Street in Farmington. Registration is due Sept. 25. After that

deadline, people can call on the first day at (248) 489-3399 or (248) 489-3401 to see whether there is still room.

Send registration form and check to: Farmington Public Schools, FTC—DELTA Gifted, 33000 Thomas Street, Farmington, MI 48336-2347.

With just Anyre Makupson, Serlin and Kaplan will help facilitate

"Young, Gifted & Underachieving" at 62 CBS/UPN 50 Studios, 26909 11 Mile Road, in Southfield.

They are looking for a studio audience.

Taping is 4:30 p.m. Sept. 25. The show will air on Channel 62 at 11:30 a.m. Sept. 28 and 8 a.m. Oct. 5 on Channel 50. To make a reservation, call (248) 355-7089, 24 hours a day.

their environment in a positive way, Kaplan said.

That was the case with Mike Shpiece, a Farmington Hills resident and local attorney.

"This young man was sophisticated on how things work," Kaplan said.

When Shpiece was at Harrison High School, and the voting age was changed to 18, he registered as many eligible students as he could. He ran for Farmington school board and was elected.

"He was the youngest school board member in the State of Michigan," Kaplan said.

"I was the youngest at that time—18 and six months," said Shpiece, a former president of the Michigan Freedom of Information Committee (1975-1983). Since then, a Marquette woman was elected at age 17 and had turned 18 when she took office, he said.

Shpiece remembered teaming with Gary Lichtman to change the Farmington school budget. Both were criticized for questioning administration in a lengthy debate. The issues were approval of a fund to create a gifted program and doubling the amount of money for

girls' sports.

"We purposely put the two together because we knew individually we didn't have the votes," Shpiece said.

The result: a 6-1 vote in favor. The Farmington school district no longer identifies children as gifted but identifies talents and strengths, Kaplan said.

Teachers have more and more "on their plate," Serlin said. "Classrooms are all-inclusive and they have to tend to the needs of all their children," she said.

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CRASH

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Church in Livonia when a Cadillac driven by a Walled Lake man, 66, collided into a vehicle of mourners, causing the latter to roll over. The Cadillac driver, who was not part of the procession, was ticketed.

A third vehicle was also struck in the crash, which was handled by Farmington Hills and Livonia emergency crews. Though no one was seriously injured in this case, traffic safety experts wonder if processions are always practical.

"We talk about it all the

time," said Sgt. Wes McKee, Livonia police traffic bureau supervisor. "They're so dangerous because there is so much traffic today."

"It was nice 100 years ago where people would come out and line up along the side of the road to pay their respects. Nowadays, they're just too risky."

Funeral directors are increasingly aware of the issue but blame harried motorists for a lack of awareness, and respect. Vehicles in funeral motorcades, which travel no more than 20 miles an hour, are required to have their high-beam headlights and hazard lights on. Hearses are increas-

State law requires all vehicles in a funeral procession to bear an orange flag.

ingly using amber flashing light or strobes to call attention to an oncoming procession. State law requires all vehicles in a funeral procession to bear an orange flag. "It used to be like when an ambulance or fire engine would approach. People would automatically pull over to the side of the road," said Mike

Fisher of Fisher-Goodnuff Funeral Home in Redford. "Some people would even take off their hats or put their hands over their hearts. Now they're just as soon run you over."

Many times services take place in the late morning, which means motorcades often enter the roadway during lunch hours when traffic is heavy, Fisher said.

A state Senate bill would increase penalties for violating the right of way during a procession. State SB No. 1262 would assess four points on a driver's record and make the offense a \$200 civil infraction. A manager at Harry Will

Funeral Home in Livonia said accidents like the one on Orchard Lake Road are rare.

"To say (funeral processions) are risky, I wouldn't go that far," said Kevin Bullock, who recalls only two traffic crashes involving motorcades in 16 years in the profession.

Any attempts to curb the tradition would hurt grieving family members, said Phil Douma, executive director of the Michigan Funeral Directors Association.

"We believe these processions are an integral part of the funeral process," Douma said. In cases where there are more than 40 vehicles, police will often provide an escort.

Redford Township police assisted with the large cortege of a Detroit firefighter, whose funeral Mass took place at Our Lady of Loretto Church. The escort was coordinated with Detroit police, a traffic officer said. While processions have the potential to create traffic hazards, "they're something that is a part of society," Sgt. Eric Gillman said. "It's something we have to deal with as safely as we can."

"They (accidents) can happen. The laws are pretty stringent about it right now. You have to yield to a funeral procession." lbuck@homecomm.net | (734) 953-2049

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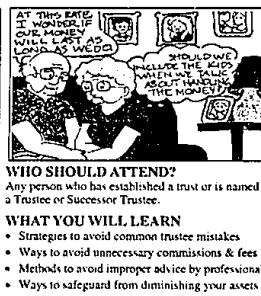
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COMMON MISTAKES MADE BY TRUSTEES



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PLYMOUTH Wednesday, September 25, 2002 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. (Afternoon) Plymouth Cultural Center 525 Farmer Rd. (blwn. N. Teritorial & S. Mile off Shelton)	SOUTH LYON Thursday, September 26, 2002 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. (Afternoon) Salem/South Lyon Dist. Library 9800 Pontiac Trail
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WATERFORD Tuesday, October 15, 2002 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. (Afternoon) Waterford Senior Center 6455 Harper	FARMINGTON Thursday, October 17, 2002 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. (Evening) Farmington Community Library 23500 Liberty St. (1 blk. S. of Grand River)

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