

A program for gifted and talented students:
Family involvement in a more flexible
approach

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Porta Aberta

(meaning Open Door)

is a Program for gifted and talented students,
which takes place in a private regular school.

This Program originated in 1996

Gifted & talented students in the Program

- Boys = 41
- Girls = 18
- N = 59
- Age ranges from 7 to 18 years of age

All students are part of an enrichment program,
which offers them the possibility to participate in
alternative activities that are not included in the
regular school curricula.

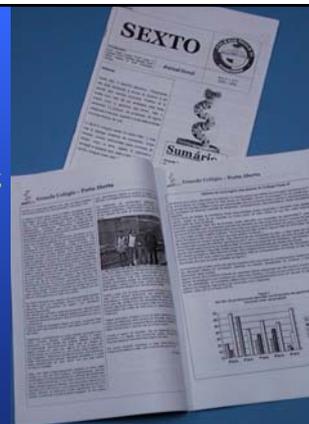


The focus of the enrichment program has been to
develop strategies to serve the students through
individualized and group solutions as specific
needs and opportunities vary.

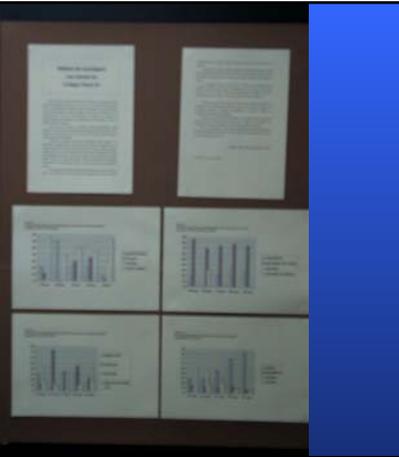
How does the enrichment program work?

- Weekly meetings
All students are sub-divided into 8
smaller groups according to age.
- Discussion of selected topics
- Various activities – according to abilities and interests
Creative writing
Interviews
Research work
Gardening

School
Newspaper:
Students'
creative writing
& research
work



Student's research work & interviews



Gardening activity



Marked by current child development paradigms & the need for more flexible programming trends

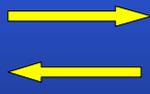
Olenchak & Renzulli, 2002



At the moment, this Program rests on:

- A framework of inter & transdisciplinary team work;
- A student-focused approach which favours inclusion;
- A family-centered approach

A student focused approach



A family focused approach

A shift from child-focused to family-focused intervention programs

- In the early seventies, on behalf of handicapped children, parents were recognized to have the right to participate in the educational planning process of their children.
Simeonsson & Bailey, 1995
- Sameroff & Chandler (1975) proposed a transactional theory in which children & caregivers influence one another in repeated ways over time.

A shift from child-focused to family-focused intervention programs

- Bronfenbrenner (1977) proposed an ecological model of development in which children are viewed as being nested within families, which in turn are nested within a larger neighbourhood or community system.

Families experience events in addition to those provided by intervention programs that can & do influence child development & family function.

Cornwell & Korteland, 1997

A shift from child-focused to family-focused intervention programs

- Minuchin (1985) summarized the key principles of systems theory, applying it to family functioning

The family as a system is an organized whole whose members are interdependent; The patterns of these members' interactions within the family system are circular rather than linear.

Cornwell & Korteland, 1997

Reasons for a family-centered approach

- Tremendous changes in early intervention and education have taken place so that parents' play an active role in the assessment of their children's developmental abilities, in decision making and in the entire educational program.
- Parents generally are becoming more sophisticated consumers of services for their children & more knowledgeable about the dimensions of services that they & their children require.
- Interventionists recognition of the need to extend the focus on intervention beyond the child.

Simeonsson & Bailey, 1995

Simeonsson & Bailey, 1995

According to Dunst & Paget (1991) a parent-professional relationship is *an association between a family & one or more professionals who function collaboratively using agreed upon roles in pursuit of a joint interest & common goal.*

Cornwell & Korteland, 1997

Workshops

which bring together gifted & talented students, their families, professionals of different fields & smaller segments of the school population, make opportunities available for students to demonstrate above average ability in task commitment & creative products related to specific selected topics.

Meetings with parents



Workshop on waste materials



Workshop on waste materials



Workshop on waste materials



Workshop on waste materials



Workshop on waste materials



Exhibition of the workshop on waste materials



Workshop on building puppets



Workshop on building puppets



Workshop on paper recycling



Exhibition of the workshop on paper recycling



Workshop on tiles



Workshop on tiles



Workshop on tiles



Workshop on cooking



Workshop on cooking



Workshop on Rhetoric



Workshop on Rhetoric



Workshop on scare crows



Workshop on scare crows



Scare crows in the school outdoor area



Lunch time after on of the workshops



The workshops have two main objectives

- Children & adolescents, parents & professionals of different fields participate together towards specific goals, leading to realistic outcomes for the students.
- Teamwork & family empowerment are marked by a carry-over of the many aspects of the child's family & school life.

In our opinion, the form & content of the workshops...

... encompass contributions from family, school and cultural resources,

...bring optimal possibilities for an interrelationship among the emotional & social dimension, the exchange of information dimension, the decision making dimension, & the creative product dimension.

We believe that a program that favours team work, inclusion & a family-centered approach will effect some change



A ten-item questionnaire was used to measure various parental attitudes

Seven parental attitudes were examined

- Parental involvement
- Child involvement
- Improved social & child-parent relationships
- Child gains
- Pertinence of form & content of the workshops
- The importance of individual & group activities vs. workshops
- Need for further similar workshops

Assessment questionnaire

- A ten-item questionnaire
- All questionnaires were given out to the parents by a teacher & were collected in a closed envelop
- Three items that referred to (1) sex, age & grade of the child, (2) attendance of group activities, & (3) workshops
- Questionnaires received:
Boys = 33 vs. 41
Girls = 15 vs. 18
Total = 48 vs. 59
- All questions were multiple-choice
- Anonymous

Results of the assessment questionnaires

- Group one
1st – 4th grade students
- Group three
7th – 9th grade students
- Group two
5th – 6th grade students
- Group four
10th – 12th grade students

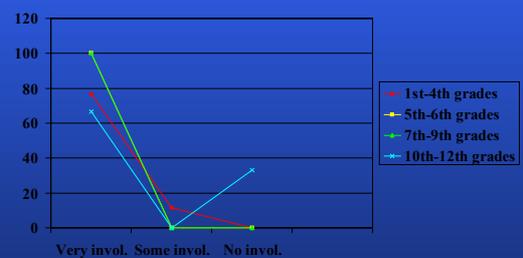
Parental involvement

- All four groups showed similar results: parents (100%) responded that parental involvement in activities together with their children, such as workshops, were very important to them.

Child involvement

- All four groups showed similar results: parents responded that their children showed a lot of involvement by participating in activities together with their parents.

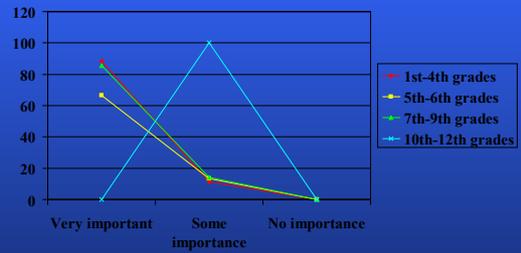
Child involvement



Improved social & child-parent relationships

- All parents responded that the workshops were very important for improved social & child-parent relationships.
- Only the parents of the older students (10th-12th grades) responded that the workshops were of some importance for improved social & child-parent relationships.

Improved social & child-parent relationships



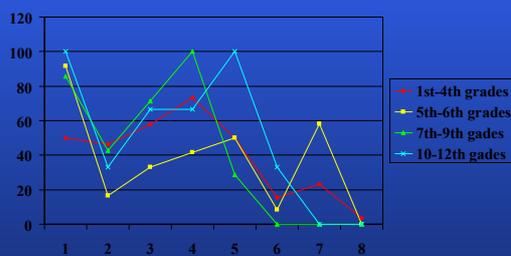
Child gains

1. In peer relationships.
2. In the way the child expresses opinions on various topics.
3. In the opportunity to discuss & work topics of the child's interest.
4. In the opportunity to do different things.
5. In group participation.
6. In class participation.
7. In grade & learning improvement.
8. In no relevant aspects.

Child gains

- All parents responded that their children's gains were mostly in peer relationships, followed by the opportunity to do different things, & thirdly, in the opportunity to discuss & work topics of the child's choice & group participation.
- Only one parent responded that the workshops brought no relevant gains to his/her child.

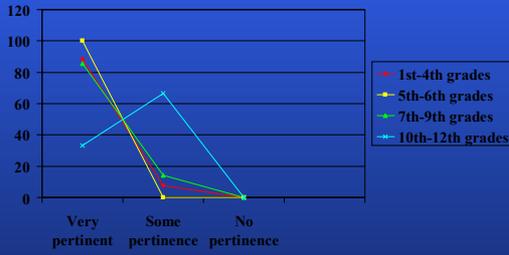
Child gains



Pertinence of form & content of the workshops

- All parents responded that the form & content of the workshops were very pertinent to them & their children.
- Only the parents of the older students (10th-12th grades) responded that the the form & content of the workshops were of some pertinence to them & their children.

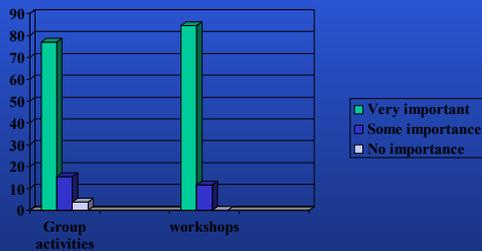
Pertinence of form & content of the workshops



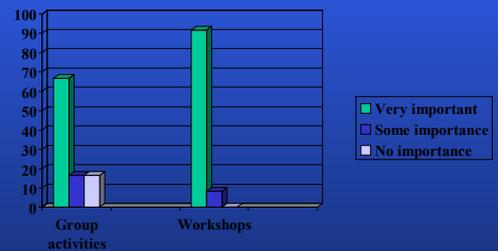
Group activities vs. workshops

- The parents of the first two groups (1st- 4th grades) responded that both the group activities & the workshops were very important to their children.
- The parents of group three (7th-9th grades) responded that the workshops were more important than group activities.
- The parents of the older students (10th-12th grades) responded that the group activities were more important than the workshops.

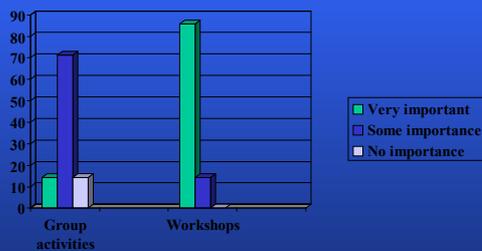
Group activities vs. workshops (1st-4th grades)



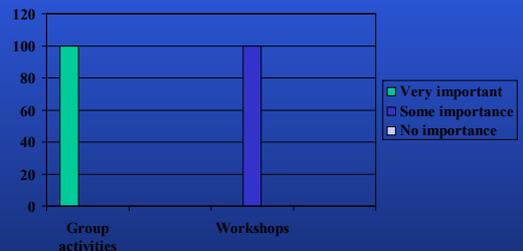
The importance of individual and group activities versus workshop (5th-6th grades)



The importance of individual and group activities versus workshop (7th 9th grades)



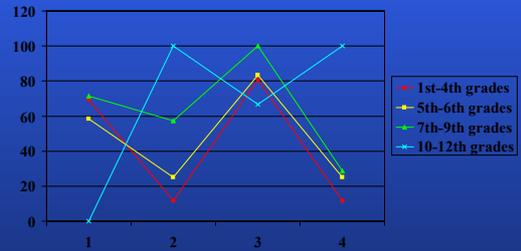
The importance of individual and group activities versus workshop (10-12th grades)



Need for further similar workshops

- The parents of the first two groups (1st-4th grades) responded that similar workshops with students, parents & teachers as well as workshops with students, parents, teachers & other guest speakers are important.
- The parents of group three (7th-9th grades) responded that similar workshops with students & teachers after school as well as workshops with students, parents & teachers & other workshops with students, parents, teachers & other guest speakers are important.
- The parents of the older students (10th-12th grades) responded that similar workshops with students & teachers after school & during school are important.

Need for further similar workshops



General findings

- Overall, parents seem to believe that doing activities together with their children brings gains to themselves & to their children.
- Some of those gains have to do with improved social & child-parent relationships, as well as, child-peer relationships, group participation, the opportunity that their children get to do different things, to discuss & to work topics of their choice.

General findings

- Overall, parents seem to believe that both workshops & group activities are important to their children.
- Some differences according to age.
Parents of younger children feel that their children favour parental involvement more than parents of older children/adolescents.
Parents of older children believe that their children favour group activities more than activities where parents are invited to work together with them.

We are left with one important question

- What associations there may be between such involvement & child & family outcomes?