

ADHIPURUSA PARENT SUPPORT GROUP FOR PARENTS OF THE GIFTED IN SURABAYA

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Just a few years ago Surabaya society had a limited knowledge and understanding in identifying gifted children. The parents recognized the signs by intuition only. Their children were behaving differently than the average children in their age group at schools or within the community. Parents only guessed that their children were learning faster and some even thought that their children had problems learning at school. The children seemed to dislike studying and only enjoyed playing. They were considered as hyperactive.

These parents were not aware of what was happening to their children. Whether these experiences were negative or positive, most parents experienced anxieties in how to deal with these unknown issues. They did not know whom to consult to help them in solving this problem. They could not let this things continue without some help.

Many parents experienced this dilemma for a long time period of time. Until one day a parent started to understand what their child was going through. They recognized that their child was a gifted child. However, they faced another challenge, there was no formal education agency that could assist them and their children.

Actually, a lot of parents had paid attention to their children's gifted behavior. However, their efforts to help were most likely stopped due to a lack of financial sources, information, or professional help. Other parents who had more knowledge and funding sought professional help out of town or overseas.

This type of solution was not suitable on a continuous basis, due to limited funds and time. For parents who cannot afford long distance professional help, the ordeal is still there and getting more complex. Meanwhile the children continue to grow up, even the schools are not able to provide help, nor accommodate their needs.

Based on the problem faced by these parents, and to help their gifted children, the Psychology Education Laboratory of the Psychology Department of Surabaya University invites the parents who have gifted children to get together to share information and to support each other in how to nurture their gifted and talented children.

On May 18, 2002 the Parents Support Group (PSG) was formed. The objective of this support group is to increase the parent's knowledge concerning gifted characteristics. To provide parents with proper information and skills to deal with their children's gifted nature. The programs are seminars on thinking skill enhancement and personal counseling. The Parent Support Group Board members consist of the elected members of the Parent Support Group and psychologists.

The Parent Support Group has monthly meetings, with enable parents and education specialists to share information and experiences base on topic of the meeting. These meetings allow the members to be involved in planning and organizing various activities for the gifted children and their parents, seminars for the public, creating brochures and web site about gifted children.

The community's response toward this information and the support group has been very positive. They are enthusiastically attending the public seminars and reading informational brochures. People ask questions and through phone counseling discussing their children's potential. They are interested to know whether their children are gifted. The support group provides them with more detail information and also invites them to join the group. These parents are encouraged to participate in various activities in developing the creativity and potential of their gifted child.

From the group's funding in 2002, to this day (April 2003) there are 40 parents as members that have children under 10 years old of age. Most of these children are attending elementary school. 60 % of them are boys. Approximately 90% of these children are attending public school and only 10% attending schools that have programs to accelerate these children's capabilities.

Most of the elementary schools in Surabaya do not provide acceleration programs for these gifted children, which will be accepted under the national education standards. Besides, there are not enough teachers who have the capabilities and enthusiasm to teach

gifted children. While alone, parents do not have enough knowledge to deal with the problem.

According to a survey, most of these parents have a college degree. Among them, only 30% are actively involved in parent support group activities. This limited number of participating parents is considered as a set back. They feel that the meetings and programs are not beneficial anymore. They will only listen to the experiences and knowledge of others. While limited time for the parents is another obstacle. Both working parents cannot spend enough time on their gifted children, such as to planning and organizing special activities for them.

Gifted children in general have more aggressive behavior and are often considered as naughty. They may not follow the rules at school, are destructive, or are not a team player. Their behavior makes these children unable to get along with their peers, teachers, and other adults. At school these children are considered as a problem.

Obstacles:

- Limited sources of information or specialist in gifted children are barriers to the parent support group organizer in providing information and developing its members.
- Lack of funds and practically beneficial activities or programs, are discouraging the parent support group members from participating.
- Cultural aspects that hinder parents from being actively involved, sharing and asking questions or openly discussing an issue.
