

Renzulli, J. S. (2022). Foreword. In F. H. R. Piske & K. H. Collins (Eds.), *Identifying, preventing and combating bullying in gifted education* (pp. ix–x). Information Age Publishing.

Foreword

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The physical, social, and emotional characteristics of any child or adult who is different from the majority of their peers is likely to result in misunderstanding or bullying. Bullying can occur in face-to-face situations, behind the back of targeted individuals, or in more recent times, through what has been termed cyberbullying.

Gifted students often stand out because of their academic superiority or their moderate to extreme sensitivity to issues, ideas, or situations. These young people often have deeper concerns about issues ranging from world problems such as world peace, climate devastation, and child labor to local situations such as unfairness on the part of teacher or parent, unreasonable inflations of commonly purchased products, or even the act of bullying itself on the parts of classmates or others. Expressions of these sensitivities are often ridiculed by others in the form of name-calling, exclusion from social situations, lost friendships, or outright hostility on the parts of their peers. Very little empirical research has been conducted on the topic of gifted student bullying, but the personality characteristics of both the person being bullied and the perpetrators(s) of the bullying is a topic of much needed research.

Gifted students often have highly focused interests, challenges, and concerns, and a values structure that may make them feel different from their peers; and any type of “difference” may result in bullying. The first-hand case studies and classroom experiences of the chapter authors provide invaluable insights about and guidance learned from the experiences of gifted young people who have been bullied or who have, on occasions, bullied other people. Interesting topics in the book include social characteristics such as problems that some talented students experience in following rules, working effectively with peers, and the need for more freedom and independence in their overly structured school curriculum and overly rigid schedule. The students’ tenaciousness, persistence, various interests, and increased need for emotional support and acceptance often bring gifted students into conflict with both their peers, parents, and teachers and these conflicts may be the same cause of being bullied or being more aggressive toward others.

The chapters in this book address both types of situations that result in bullying and suggestions for dealing with the conditions that are evident when bullying takes place. I highly recommend this book for teachers, parents, and school administrators who are faced with bullying problems at home and in school and looking for ideas and ways to support and help their students.