

**The Role of Executive Functions in Talent Development**  
**[A work in progress]**

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One of my favorite findings in the longitudinal study by Lewis Terman is what was learned after following up his gifted subjects for almost 40 years? The following quote from the final volume of his five-book series called *Genetic Studies of Genius* provides a hint of often unrecognized conclusions of Terman's work about important non-intellectual factors in talent development.

A detailed analysis was made of the 150 most successful and 150 least successful men among the gifted students in an attempt to identify some of the *non-intellectual factors* that affect success. Since the less successful subjects do not differ to any extent in intelligence as measured by tests, it is clear that notable achievement calls for a lot more than a higher order of intelligence.

The results [of the follow up study] indicated that personality factors are extremely important determinators of achievement. The four traits on which the [most and least successful groups] differed most widely *were persistence in the accomplishment of ends, integration toward goals, self-confidence, and freedom from inferiority feelings*. In the total picture the greatest contrast between the two groups in *all-round emotional and social adjustment, and in drive to achieve*. (Terman, 1959, pg. 148; italics not in the original)

This finding has motivated us to do some research that led to the development of the following Taxonomy of Executive Function Skills; and Del Siegle and I are working on a study that hopefully will result in the future publication of an instrument that is based on this or a revised of the taxonomy.

## Taxonomy of Executive Function Skills

<b>A. Action Orientation</b> Goal setting Decision Making Networking Organization Persistence Time Management Delegation of Responsibilities Focus Attention to Details	<b>B. Realistic Self-Assessment</b> Appraisal of Personal Strengths and Weaknesses Confidence in Leadership Skills Willingness to Accept and Act Upon Constructive Feedback Optimism Self-Management Self-Motivation Sense of Humor
<b>C. Social Interaction</b> Listening Written, Verbal, and Non -Verbal communication Friendliness Respect for the Opinions of Others Cooperation and Collaboration	<b>D. Awareness of the Needs of Others</b> Empathy Tolerance Generosity Kindness Patience Calmness Trust
<b>E. Altruistic Leadership</b> Teamwork Positive Reinforcement Recognition of Other's Strengths Negotiation and Mediation Openness to Idea Exchange	

In the meantime, we have been searching the research literature for guidance on developing these skills, and if you click on the following article by Stephen Merrill you will find some good advice that we believe is particularly relevant to advancing learning for high potential students.

### RESEARCH

### 8 Ways to Bolster Executive Function in Teens and Tweens

Middle and high school students suddenly face more complex schedules, tougher academic work, and an expanding network of friends. How can we help them manage it all?