

HOW PARENTS HELP CHILDREN DEVELOP TALENT



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My Role as Talent Parent



When Keaton was in second grade, I reintroduced him to chess still believing this would be something he would enjoy and be good at. This time, Keaton took to chess like rooks to open files. He wanted to play every free minute before and after school. A few weeks later, I entered him in a local scholastic tournament. My fascination that he was the next Bobby Fischer was quickly dashed when his first-round opponent defeated him in just four moves using a standard check-mating trick we knew nothing about. Keaton limped through the rest of the tournament winning just a few games against children his age.

The sobering result did not dampen Keaton's chess enthusiasm. Quite the contrary; he wanted to learn more. Meanwhile, I realized that my scant chess knowledge was insufficient to help Keaton learn chess so I purchased several books and began instructing him from these. Rather than play chess, we studied it—openings, tactics, strategies, and endgames—for hours a day at his request. I translated the book's themes and set up problems for Keaton to solve. He relished these sessions. A few months later, Keaton participated in his second tournament—the Nebraska Scholastic State Championship. Keaton's name appeared at the bottom of the entry list among the 80 or so names ordered by chess rating. But, Keaton lost just once in the six-round tournament and finished third. His chess talent was emerging.

My Role as Talent Researcher

Ken Kiewra

RECENT NEWS



Olympic-level speed skaters are made, not born

November 27, 2017

'Prodigies of the Prairie' offers tips on raising talented kids

DOCUMENTARIES TELL THE STORIES OF SIX FAMILIES WITH HIGH-ACHIEVING CHILDREN

by Leslie Reed | University Communication



My Role as Talent Documentary Creator



My Role as Talent Author

Nurturing Talent: A Guide for Parents, Coaches, and Teachers

Contents

PREFACE	A Book For All Parents
CHAPTER 1	Why I Study Talent Development
CHAPTER 2	Introduction to Talent Development
CHAPTER 3	Early Experience and Parents' Roles
CHAPTER 4	Parents' Roles in Practice
CHAPTER 5	Parents' Roles in Mentoring
CHAPTER 6	Parents' Roles in Creating a Center of Excellence
CHAPTER 7	Parents' Roles in Establishing Singleness of Purpose
CHAPTER 8	Parents as Managers
CHAPTER 9	Beyond Talent Development: Fostering Academic Success
CHAPTER 10	Nurturing Talent Conclusion
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	

How Do Some Kids Get to Be So Good So Fast? What Role Do Parents Play?



1. Parents Understand That Talent is Made, Not Born

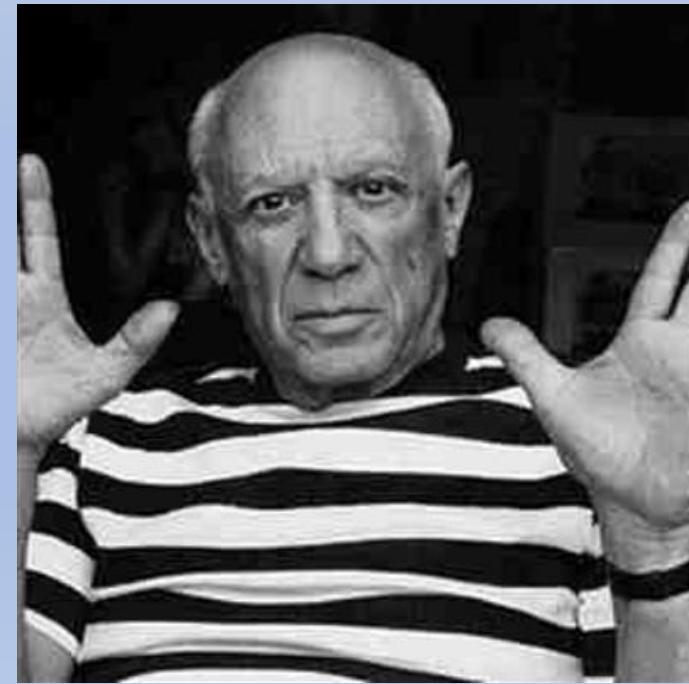
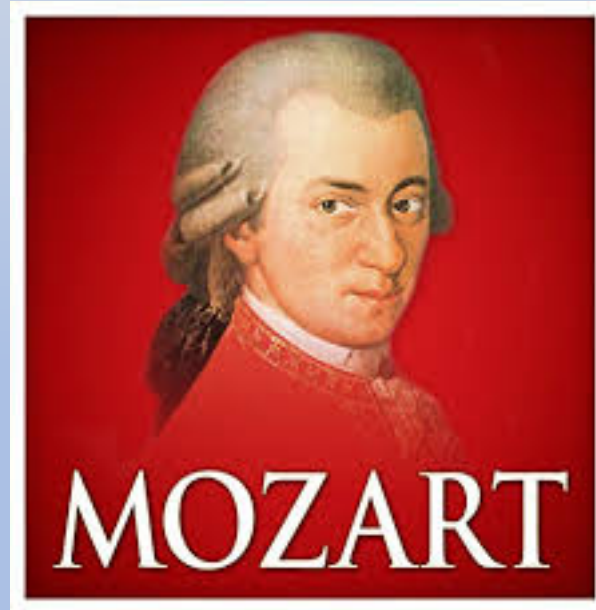
- 10-Year Rule
- Polgar Experiment



10-Year Rule



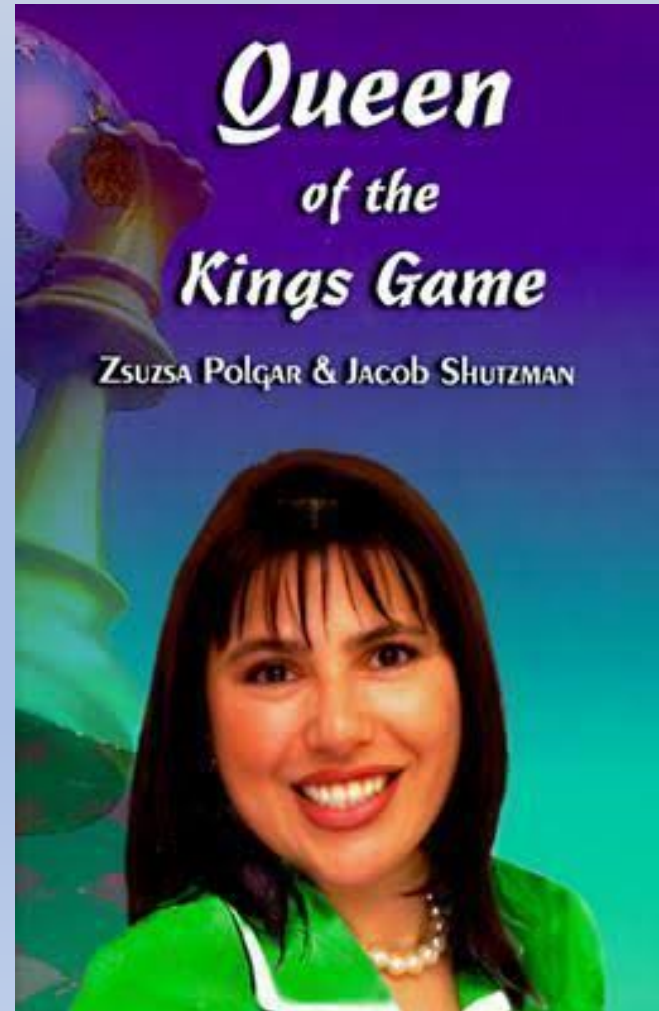
Bobby Fischer



Pablo Picasso

Polgar Experiment

- All earned International Master titles.
- Susan and Judit earned Grandmaster titles.
- Judit was youngest ever to attain GM title.
- Judit was 8th ranked player in the world.



2. Parents Provide Early Start

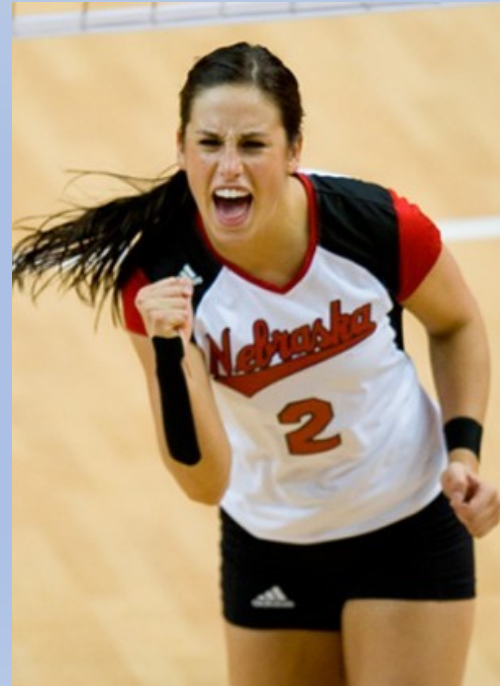
- Born into Talent Area
- Accumulated Advantages



Born Into Talent Area

- Bonnie Blair and Dan Jansen, Speed Skating
- Lauren Cook, Volleyball
- Barrett and Bo Ruud, Football
- Baton Twirlers
- Jayde Atkins, Rodeo

But not always...



Accumulated Advantages

- Hockey Players
 - January-March—40%
 - April-June—30%
 - July-September—20%
 - October-December—10%



3. Parents Arrange Instruction

- Series of Mentors
- Target Teacher
- Inner Conversation

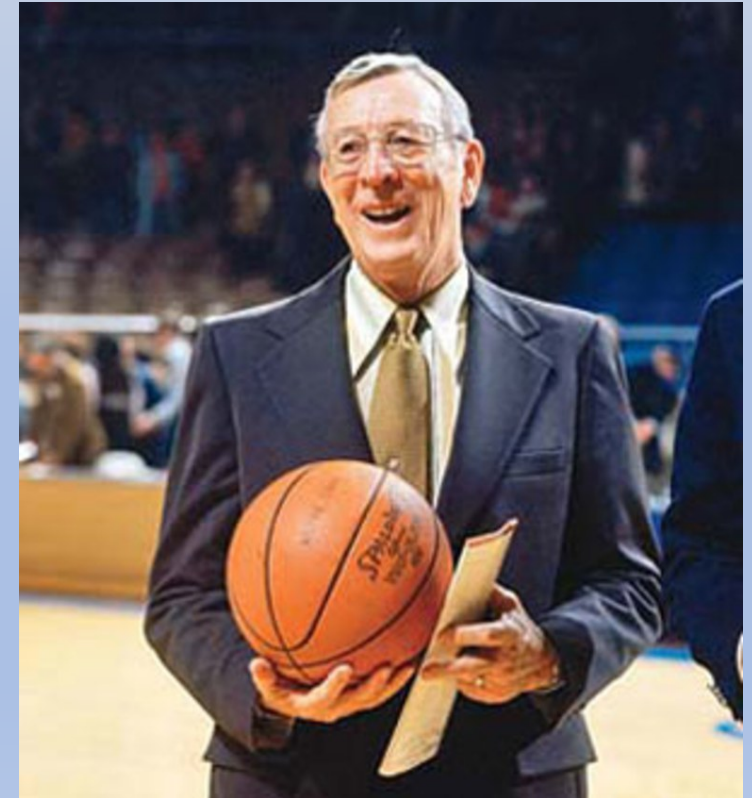


Series of Mentors

- Fun: He was a wonderful coach...he really got the kids to laugh and enjoy. They would eat jellybeans.—Samson Benen's Chess Parent
- Technical Expert: His first teacher encouraged us after a short while to take William to a different teacher who worked with young talented students.—William Hagen Parent
- Artistic Style: I was fortunate to have somebody when I was in my early teens: A graduate student at the Cleveland Institute of Music. Although this is a classical conservatory, my mentor was more of a pop-jazz guy and he related to what was going on in my mind—that I had a pop sensibility about my song writing. He advocated for my pop song writing and nurtured and influenced that part of me.—Jim Brickman, Music Performer

Target Teacher

- John Wooden (2,300 teaching acts)
 - 7% Complements
 - 7% Expressions of Displeasure
 - 75% Bursts of Target Gold
- Take the ball softly; you're receiving a pass, not intercepting it.
- Crisp passes, really snap them. Good, Richard, that's just what I want.
- Hard, driving, quick steps.



Inner Conversation

As I stand at the foul line, I bounce the ball several times like this to loosen and prepare my muscles. My eyes never leave the target, which is just over the front of the rim. This keeps me focused on the target instead of noise and movement in the gym that might distract me. A real key for me is gripping the ball softly like this with my fingertips. This will give me better control when I spin it back and release it like this. When I shoot free throws, I just do three simple mental checks: bounce and relax, find the rim and focus, and gently grasp the ball for control. Now you try and tell me what you think.



4. Parents Facilitate Practice

- Deliberate Practice
- Learn Chunks



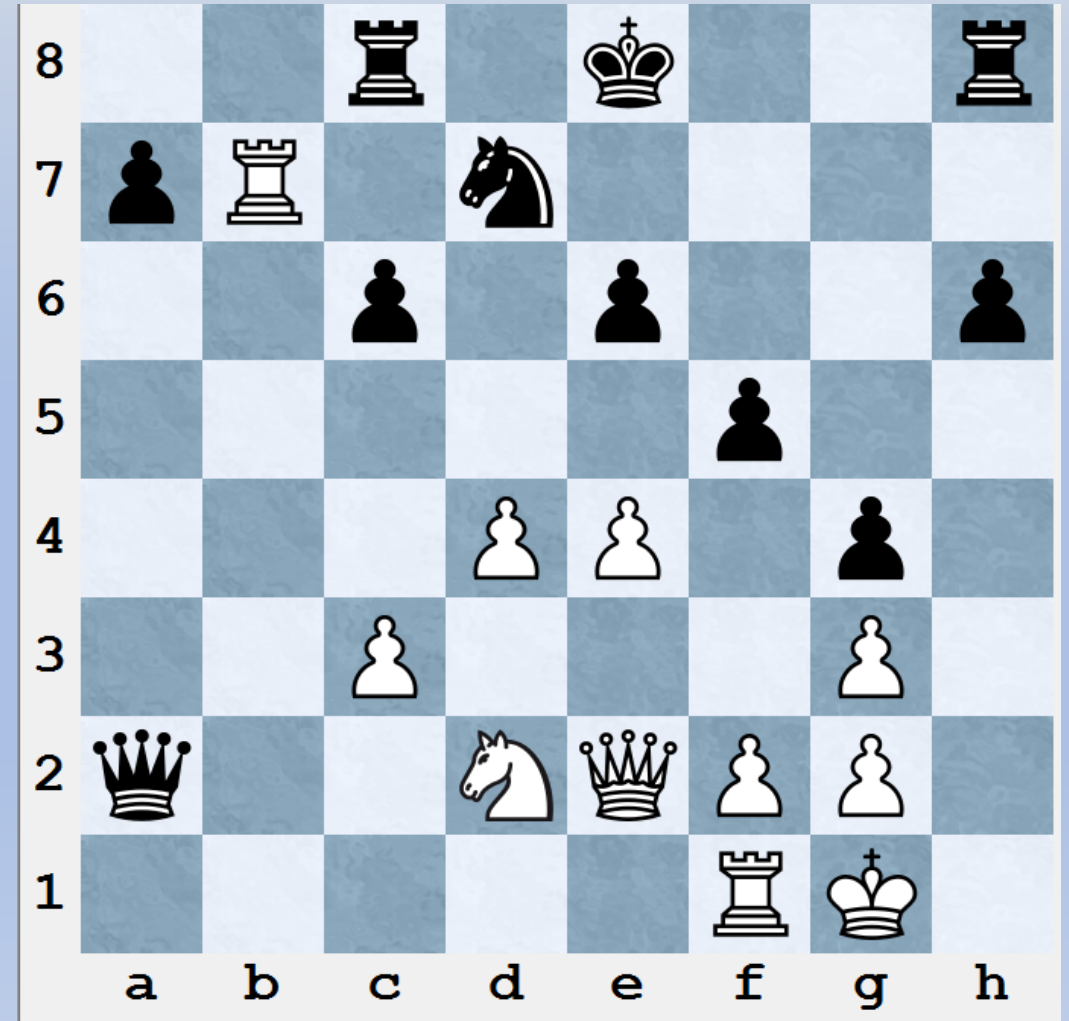
Deliberate Practice

Some days in practice you're just so exhausted. You're sore and your entire body aches, and it's hard to find motivation. But you remember your goals and you find motivation. You push through each 100-, 50-, or 25-yard sprint. Your brain shuts down but your body keeps going through the muscle aches and heavy breathing and throwing up. People don't realize how hard swimming is and how hard we practice. People think that you just get in the pool and swim a few laps.—Caroline Theil, Swimmer



Learn Chunks

- White has castled his king to the king side and is safely tucked behind his castle of pawns, although the h-pawn is doubled on the g-file and that can become a weakness. Black has failed to castle his king and lies vulnerable in the center. The Black king is flanked by his rooks but neither is powerful because both rest on closed files. There is tension in the center. White is threatening to capture Black's f-pawn, which is unprotected because Black's e-pawn cannot recapture because it is pinned to the king by White's queen. Meanwhile, White's knight is pinned by Black's queen...



5. Parents Support Singleness of Purpose

- Rage to Learn and Master
- Forsake Well Roundedness



Rage to Learn and Master: What Chess Parents Say

- He is passionate about it, just thrilled by it. It gives him a lot of joy and satisfaction.
- He loves it. He loves it. I don't know why. This is the thing that he loves.
- He loves it... He likes doing something really well. But the main thing is that he has a passion for the game. He just loves it.



Rage to Learn and Master

My life was marked by *National Geographic* stories. I bought my first house in Nebraska while I was on assignment shooting the Gulf Coast. My son was born in the middle of a long story about the Endangered Species Act. My daughter came along with a pack of gray wolves. Twenty stories later, though, it's the North Slope I'll remember best: Alaska's loss of wilderness and innocence—and the story during which my wife got cancer.—Joel Sartore, Nature Photographer



Forsake Well Roundedness

- He just lives and breaths chess. If someone were to take chess away, he'd not be a complete person. It would be like yanking out the soul.— Chess Parent
- Well, I knew he had talent and I didn't want to see it wither. If you're really good at one thing, you're very, very fortunate so I just wanted to encourage that in him. I was proud of his skill. I just knew it gave him joy.—Chess Parent



6. Parents Make Full Commitment: No Child Can Do It Alone

- It is a full-time job and sometimes even more than full-time and it can be hard. But the reason I keep doing it is that I don't just manage somebody. The person I manage is my daughter. At one point I said to my daughter, This is so much work for me, would you rather I hire some kind of professional? Someone who can do a better job? And she said, But who will rub my tummy when I have a tummy ache? We just don't see how anyone else could take on my role.—Mother of Adora Svitak
- You have to be willing to pay the price. If you're not, it won't happen. It's a huge burden. Absolutely. It's not overstating that our life is entirely structured around his chess. I spend several hours a week managing his chess career. It's a part-time job.—Mother of Kayden Troff
- I'm his personal secretary. I'm his assistant. It's work. I have an office. I go there and use the computer, fax machine, and copier to do skating work. For half the day, all I do is skating work.—Mother of Olympic Figure Skater

Make Full Commitment: No Child Can Do It Alone

- Take on second and third jobs.
- Build a great room onto the house.
- Fly every week from Utah to California for lessons.
- Quit jobs and relocate 200 miles away.
- Spend the summer at camp.
- Fly instructors to your home.
- Home school.
- Remortgage home and spend retirement savings.



7. Parents Enjoy the Benefits

- Skating has brought us the greatest joy. It has made the family united. Skating competitions have allowed us to see the world, learn so much, and join together. Skating has helped make us what we are as a family.—Mother of Olympic Skater
- His skating path put him on a path to much more. There is confidence, a strong identity, and pride—so many things other than skating success.—Mother of Olympic Skater



8. Why Parents Nurture Talent?

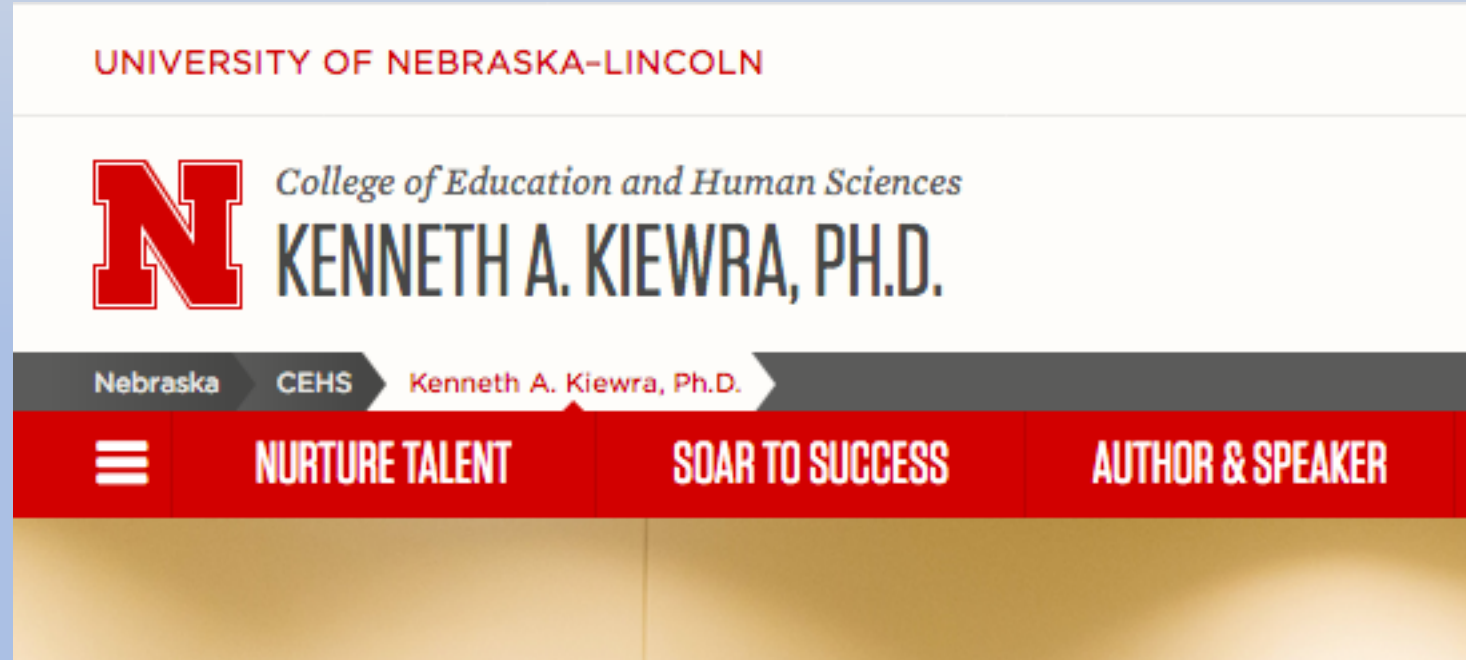
- Schools educate children from the neck up and slightly to the left.
- Talent development is a continuum and all children are on that continuum.
- Nurturing talent is a labor of love.
 - Because he's my son and I want him to be whatever he can be. And, if it happens to be chess, then that's what I want for him. I love my son, and I love his chess too.



Research Summary

1. **Take Away Points**—Talent is made, not born, and parents are prime movers in nurturing talent.
2. **Advancing Early Childhood Practice**—Encourage parents to expose young children to a variety of experiences and feed interests and talents.
3. **Advancing Early Childhood Policy**—Provide talent development opportunities. Support talent not potential.
4. **Additional Research Needed**—What role can early childhood programs play?
5. **What Lessons Can Inform This Research?**—The chess lessons gleaned from the South Bronx and Montgomery County.

Kiewra Website



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