

*Selected Bibliography of Films for Guided Viewing with Gifted Students*

The annotated bibliography below contains selected movies that may be used in guided viewing sessions with gifted students. Teachers and counselors will want to consider the community's value system and select movies that are appropriate for use in school settings with children and adolescents. The following films were selected with this consideration in mind. The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) rating is provided for each film along with a suggested audience and key issues that might become the focus of a guided viewing lesson.

***Akeelah and the Bee*** (Gains, Gains, Fishburne, Romersa, Llewelyn, & Atchison, 2006)

Akeelah Anderson, a fifth-grader in South Los Angeles, is feeling isolated from many students at Crenshaw Middle School because she is perceived as a "brainiac." Her natural aptitude for words spurs her principal to recruit her for competitive spelling bees. She joins forces with a coach, Dr. Joshua Larabee who is demanding but supports her as she proves her talent and moves on to compete in the Scripps National Spelling Bee. As Akeelah moves to higher levels of competition she encounters different expectations from family, spelling bee competitors, and her community.

Audience: Elementary-Middle School

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Family expectations for culturally diverse students; Influence of a significant mentor; Influence of peer group; Setting high aspirations

***Amazing Grace and Chuck*** (Field & Newell, 1996)

Chuck, a pitcher for his little league baseball team, learns about nuclear weapons and decides that he will refuse to pitch as a form of protest against them. Chuck's story makes its way to a star basketball player from the Boston Celtics, who agrees to join Chuck's protest and refuses to play as well. One by one, athletes from around the globe follow suit, earning Chuck the chance to sit down and talk with the President of the United States about eliminating nuclear weapons altogether.

Audience: Middle School

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Being true to self; Influence of a significant mentor; Sensitivity and emotionality in gifted students

***Because of Winn Dixie*** (Albert, Singleton & Wang, 2005)

Opal is a ten-year-old girl faced with another move with her preacher father. She adopts an orphaned dog, Winn-Dixie, named after the grocery store where she found him. The scruffy pet helps Opal to adjust to her new community, make new friends, and strengthen the troubled relationship with her father.

Audience: Elementary School

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Creativity and problem solving in young gifted females; Father-daughter relationships

***Bend it Like Beckham*** (Nayar, Chadha, & Chadha, 2003)

Jess Bhamra is a high school student growing up in West London where her family has maintained their Indian heritage. Her parents have aspirations for their daughter to graduate from law school, learn to cook, and marry a nice Indian boy. Although she has posters of David Beckham covering the walls of her bedroom, her parents do not realize that in her spare time she enjoys playing soccer with the boys in her neighborhood. Her talents in soccer are discovered and she is recruited to play for a local women's team. Jess spins a complex web of lies for her parents as she leads a double life of student and soccer player.

Audience: Middle School

MPAA Rating: PG-13

Key Issues for Discussion: Balancing academics and athletics; Family expectations for culturally diverse students; Gender issues for gifted females; Gifted girls supporting each other

***The Competition*** (Kline & Oliansky, 1980)

Heidi, a protégée of an internationally renowned pianist, earns the opportunity to compete in one of the music world's most challenging competitions. At the competition, Heidi meets and falls in love with Paul, a pianist who hopes to use the competition to help his financially strained family and alleviate stress for his father who has been diagnosed with cancer. Heidi becomes torn between whether or not to remove herself from the competition, knowing how important winning is to Paul. At the same time, Paul struggles with knowing that Heidi is more gifted than he. The two gifted musicians must examine their feelings and decide just where their relationship will take them.

Audience: High School

MPAA Rating: PG-13

Key Issues for Discussion: Gender issues for gifted females; Influence of a significant mentor; Gifted females balancing careers and relationships

***Dead Poets Society*** (Witt, Thomas, Seale & Weir, 1989)

John Keating is a new teacher whose unusual methods run contrary to the conservative nature of the New England prep academy in which he teaches. His passion for all things literary, however, inspires his students to discover their own love of poetry and to form a secret society with that as the focus. The story primarily follows two students, Neil Perry and Todd Anderson, each of whom goes through a journey of self discovery with the help of Keating. Todd learns to deal with his substantial shyness and living up to the legacy of his highly successful older brother, while Neil's true nature emerges despite the best efforts of his extremely controlling father.

Audience: High School

MPAA Rating: PG-13

Key Issues for Discussion: Identity development in gifted males; Influence of a significant mentor; Parental expectations for gifted males; Setting high aspirations

***Dreamer*** (Tollin, Robbins, & Gatins, 2006)

Ben Crane was a Kentucky horseman whose talents as a trainer were being wasted. Sonador was a horse with a promising future suddenly cut short by a broken leg. Considered useless by her owner, the injured filly is given to Crane as severance pay when he is fired. Ben's young daughter Cale uses her unwavering love of family and determination to bring her father and Sonador together in her quest to reach what others consider an impossible goal – to win the Breeder's Cup Classic.

Audience: Elementary

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Appreciating intelligence in young girls; Developing resilience to overcome adversity; Father-daughter relationships; Leadership talent in young girls

***Ellen Foster*** (Erman, 2002)

This movie features the story of a gifted, resilient young girl who is left alone following the death of her mother. She draws inner strength from her loving memories of her mother as she is forced to move from relative to relative in search of a family to replace her mother and abusive father. Her wealthy and bitter grandmother eventually takes her in, although Ellen's life in her grandmother's house becomes more emotionally desolate than ever. This intelligent young girl takes her situation into her own hands, designing a plan that she hopes will provide her happiness. In the end, Ellen's remarkable inner strength and determination enables her to free herself of her dysfunctional relatives and the emotionally traumatic events of her childhood.

Audience: Elementary School

MPAA Rating: G

Key Issues for Discussion: Developing resilience to overcome adversity; Influence of a significant mentor; Creativity and problem solving in young gifted females

***The Emperor's Club*** (Abraham, Karsch, & Hoffman, 2002)

William Hundert is a revered teacher of Western Civilization at St. Benedict's Academy, an all-boys private school. Each year St. Benedict's holds a contest in which the top three students answer questions about Roman history in a public tournament. The winner is crowned Mr. Julius Caesar. In his work with the group of highly intelligent young men, Mr. Hundert meets a challenge, Sedgewick Bell, the rebellious son of an influential state senator. Mr. Hundert succeeds in motivating Sedgewick to study for the Mr. Julius Caesar contest but when the contest takes place, he realizes that Sedgewick is cheating. Bell loses the contest, and returns to his rebellious ways. Twenty-five years later, Bell, a wealthy business tycoon, wants to reclaim his intellectual honor by sponsoring a rematch of the Julius Caesar contest and Mr. Hundert learns a difficult lesson regarding character development in men.

Audience: High School

MPAA Rating: PG-13

Key Issues for Discussion: Identity development in gifted males, Influence of competition in academic settings; Moral development in gifted individuals

***The Ernest Green Story*** (Higgins & Laneuville, 1993)

This biographical film depicts the true story of one young man's battle to overcome racial intolerance in the segregated South of the 1950s. Ernest Green, along with eight other gifted African-American high school students, comprised a group of the first students to integrate Little Rock, Arkansas's Central High School. Ernest and his peers face racial epithets, abusive mobs, biased teachers, and an uncooperative state government. With the help of mentoring from his grandfather, Ernest emerges as the leader and offers inspiration and encouragement to his friends. The courage and resilience of these nine teenagers allow them to cope with the adversity and overcome the inhumane treatment that they have experienced.

Audience: High School

MPAA Rating: Not Rated

Key Issues for Discussion: Developing resilience to overcome adversity; Developing a racial identity, Influence of a significant mentor; Setting high aspirations

***Finding Forrester*** (Connery, Mark, Tollefson, & Van Sant, 2000)

Jamal Wallace, an African-American teenager living in the Bronx is given a unique opportunity to attend one of New York's finest prep schools when he performs extremely well on a statewide standardized exam. Upon arriving at the new school, however, he discovers that his test scores were just as important to the administration as his skills on the basketball court. Distraught by the entire incident, Jamal has a chance encounter with William Forrester, a Pulitzer Prize winning author, who helps Jamal to pursue writing, his off-the-court passion. With Forrester's help, Jamal is able to overcome a number of challenges in his new environment, while having a powerful effect on his new mentor in the process.

Audience: High School

MPAA Rating: PG-13

Key Issues for Discussion: Influence of a significant mentor; Parental expectations for gifted, culturally diverse males; Influence of peer group; Pursuing one's passion

***Fly Away Home*** (Baum, Veitch, & Ballard, 1996)

After her mother's tragic death, 13 year-old Amy moves from New Zealand to Canada to live with her father. While struggling to adjust to her new surroundings, Amy discovers a nest of abandoned goose eggs. After they have hatched, she takes care of the goslings, raising them with the care that one would expect from a new mother. When the authorities inform her that it is illegal to raise wild geese without clipping their wings Amy decides that she would rather teach them to fly with the help of her father and a pair of hang gliders.

Audience: Middle School

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Dealing with the loss of a loved one; Creativity and problem solving; Paternal influence on gifted females; Finding friends in a new environment

***Frankie & Hazel*** (Hockin & Williams, 2000)

Francesca "Frankie" Humphreys and her best friend Hazel Perez are two multi-talented middle school girls growing up in a small New Jersey town. Frankie is an accomplished ballerina who wants to pursue playing baseball. Frankie's grandmother and guardian has definite plans for her granddaughter's future in ballet however. Frankie is torn emotionally as she attempts to please her grandmother while also following her own interests. Meanwhile, the charismatic Hazel has aspirations of becoming the first teenager elected mayor of her community. She dives into her role as a community activist and gains community support for her campaign to improve the town.

Audience: Middle School

MPAA Rating: Not Rated

Key Issues for Discussion: Gifted girls supporting each other; Gender expectations for gifted young women; Coping with familial expectations; Leadership talent in young women

***Freedom Writers*** (Devito, Shamberg, Sher, & Lagravense, 2007)

Erin Gruwell is a new English teacher who leaves her comfortable California suburb to teach in a tough, highly diverse Long Beach high school. Faced with serious racial tensions, Erin succeeds in building trust with her students when she incorporates innovative methods to teach the Holocaust and helps them to write about challenges from their own lives. Although she faces unsupportive colleagues she enjoys the success of her students as they graduate and move on to college.

Audience: High School

MPAA Rating: PG-13

Key Issues for Discussion: Developing resilience to overcome adversity; Influence of a significant teacher as mentor; Social injustice and discrimination; Setting high aspirations

***The Great Debaters*** (Black, Forte, Winfrey, Roth & Washington, 2007)

In the 1930s the historically black Wiley College in Marshall, Texas celebrated the efforts of its debate coach Melvin B. Tolson. During a time when Jim Crow laws were common and lynch mobs were a pervasive fear for African Americans, Tolson coached his team to a nearly undefeated season and experienced the first interracial collegiate debates in our country. The Wiley debaters, a team of four including a female student and a 14-year-old, received an invitation to compete against Harvard University's national championship team.

Audience: High School

MPAA Rating: PG-13

Key Issues for Discussion: Belief in self; Developing resilience to overcome adversity; Influence of a significant mentor; Setting high aspirations

***Gross Anatomy*** (Rosenman, Hill, & Eberhart, 1989)

Joe Slovak is a brilliant first-year medical school student whose casual, nonconforming approach to life becomes tested by a challenging anatomy course. Joe's free-spirited, independent style puts him at odds with Dr. Rachel Woodruff, a demanding professor who questions whether or not this gifted underachiever has what it takes to be a doctor. As Joe approaches the challenges of medical school in his own way, Dr. Woodruff begins to appreciate his brilliant mind and challenges him with a complex medical case study. As he works through the case, he struggles with existential questions regarding medicine and whether it is the right career path for him.

Audience: High School

MPAA Rating: PG-13

Key Issues for Discussion: Identity and moral development in gifted males; Selective achievement in gifted individuals; Alignment of one's value system with life goals

***I'll Remember April*** (Colichman, Harris, & Clark, 1999)

This movie follows the lives of Pee Wee, Duke, Tyler, and Willy, a group of ten-year-old boys growing up on the coast of California during World War II. Duke has an older brother serving in the Marines, and much of what his brother shares with him in his wartime letters becomes part of the daily military reenactments of the four young boys. Willy is a Japanese-American whose family is being sent to an internment camp. When he and his family experience racism directed at Japanese-Americans, his friends come to his support. After hearing of Japanese submarines off the Pacific coast, the boys enjoy fantasizing about being Marines in search of the enemy. While patrolling the beach, they discover a Japanese sailor who is stranded and wounded. Determined to become heroes, they take him prisoner and keep him a secret from their parents. When the sailor rescues Duke from drowning, the boys befriend their prisoner and struggle with a pact that could betray their country.

Audience: Elementary School

MPAA Rating: G

Key Issues for Discussion: Moral development in young gifted males; Influence of peer groups; Children coping with social injustice and bigotry

***The Journey of Natty Gann*** (Lobell & Kagan, 1985)

America is mired in the Great Depression, a time when families were often forced to live apart when jobs were available in another part of the country. In this setting, an intelligent and courageous young girl confronts overwhelming odds when she embarks on a cross-country journey in search of her father. During her quest, she forms a close bond with two traveling companions: a protective wolf, and a hardened drifter. This film offers a moving story of courage, perseverance, and applying one's intelligence to solve life's problems.

Audience: Elementary School

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Creative problem solving in gifted young women; Development of resilience to overcome adversity

***Little Man Tate*** (Rajski, Rudin, & Foster, 1991)

Fred is a seven year-old genius being raised by a single mother in New York City. Having trouble fitting in with other children and struggling to make friends, Fred garners the attention of Dr. Jane Grierson, a psychologist who runs a program that addresses the needs of gifted children. Fred's mother Dede agrees, but has second thoughts as she becomes further and further removed from Fred's upbringing. As he is pushed through Dr. Grierson's program, Dede fears that he is missing out on a normal childhood, and must learn to be the mother that Fred has needed all along.

Audience: Elementary-Middle School

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Asynchronous development; Importance of friendship for gifted children; Importance of parental support for talent development

***Lucas*** (Nicksay & Seltzer, 1986)

Lucas is an awkward, eccentric high school freshman who has always struggled with his desire to be popular while paying less and less attention to the students who have always considered him a friend. Upon befriending Maggie, a pretty cheerleader who is new to the town, Lucas decides to stand up to those who have always bullied him by trying out for the school football team. With Maggie and big man on campus Cappie at his side, Lucas embarks on a journey of friendship, self-discovery, and football that earns him the respect and admiration of his peers.

Audience: Middle School

MPAA Rating: PG-13

Key Issues for Discussion: Importance of friendship for gifted males; Examination of stereotypes; Value of intellectual and athletic pursuits

***Mad Hot Ballroom*** (Sewell, Agrelo, & Agrelo, 2005)

A group of eleven-year-old New York City public school students explore the world of ballroom dancing and learn a lot about themselves in the process. Told from the children's perspectives, this documentary presents their experiences as they engage in ten weeks of lessons in tango, foxtrot, swing, rumba and merengue and prepare for the culminating citywide competition. Interspersed throughout the film are the students' candid reflections on their lives and the complexity of childhood in a big city. The students triumph in the competition and their teachers celebrate the accomplishment of these new young "ladies and gentlemen."

Audience: Elementary School

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Pursuit of one's passion; Importance of healthy competition; Setting high aspirations

***Matilda*** (DeVito, Dahl, Shamberg & Sher, 1996)

Matilda Wormwood is a bright, sweet young girl whose desire to read books and learn about the world around her is virtually the only thing she cares about. Unfortunately for her, she faces obstacles in almost every direction, from her bratty brother to her evil parents to quite possibly the meanest school principal in history. While at school, Matilda befriends a teacher named Miss Honey, whom she later learns was also terrorized by the principal. Using her remarkable intelligence and a gift for telekinesis, Matilda vows to set things right for Miss Honey and outwit the evil adults in her life.

Audience: Elementary School

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Need for acceptance; Influence of a teacher as mentor; Family issues for gifted children

***The Mighty*** (Fields, Startz, & Chelsom, 1998)

The Mighty is a story of two young men who come together as outcasts. Kevin Dillon, a highly gifted yet physically challenged youngster develops a close friendship with his neighbor Max Cain when he becomes his reading tutor. In return, Max protects him from adversaries in their middle school. Though they both have problems that label them as pariahs, Kevin and Max realize that by combining their strengths and remaining united, they can overcome their individual limitations.

Audience: Middle School

MPAA Rating: PG-13

Key Issues for Discussion: Importance of friendship for gifted males; Development of resilience to overcome adversity; Creative problem solving in gifted young men

***Mona Lisa Smile*** (Goldsmith-Thomas, Schindler, & Newell, 2004)

Katherine Watson, a first year art history professor arrives at the prestigious and conservative Wellesley College in the 1950's. She soon discovers that the young women in her classes may be exceptional in their memorization of art history but have much to learn about becoming critical consumers of art. She works diligently to challenge her students and to convince the college's administrators that her unconventional teaching practices require her students to think critically. As she struggles with her own romantic relationships, she mentors the young women as several of them question the traditional societal expectations for females. When the school's administrators hesitate to renew her contract, she decides to leave for Europe and realizes that her young protégés have learned to appreciate her as a teacher, friend, and role model.

Audience: High School

MPAA Rating: PG-13

Key Issues for Discussion: Gender issues for gifted females; Cultural, community, and familial expectations for gifted females; Influence of a significant mentor

***Mr. Holland's Opus*** (Cort, Field, Nolin, & Herek, 1995)

Glenn Holland possesses one lifelong dream – to compose a piece of music that will leave a lasting impression on the world. While struggling to come up with that one perfect piece, Mr. Holland takes a job teaching music at a local school. In dealing with a number of issues, including his wife's pregnancy and a deaf son who will be unable to hear the music on which he works so hard, he discovers that success is not necessarily about that one perfect piece of music. Instead, he finds that sharing something that gives you so much joy with the rest of the world can be just as rewarding.

Audience: High School

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Influence of a significant mentor; Setting high aspirations; Pursuit of one's passion

***My Girl*** (Grazer & Zieff, 1991)

The film presents the story of one summer in the life of Vada Sultenfuss, a gifted eleven-year-old girl growing up in the 1970s. Vada lives with her widowed father and elderly grandmother in their home, which is attached to her father's funeral parlor. Vada, a creative writer, is delighted when she learns her heartthrob, a fourth grade teacher, is offering a summer poetry class. She enrolls in the adult class and spends her summer struggling with her schoolgirl crush on her teacher. When her father announces an engagement. Vada struggles to accept a replacement for her mother. Moreover, she must overcome the tragic loss of her friend Thomas when he dies from an allergic response to being stung by a hive of bees. With emotional support from family and friends, Vada ends her summer by writing a memorial poem in honor of her beloved friend, enabling her to apply her creativity and deal with her grief.

Audience: Elementary School

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Appreciating intelligence in young girls; Importance of close friendships; Nurturing one's imagination and creativity; Dealing with the tragic loss of a loved one; Father-daughter relationships

***October Sky*** (Franco, Gordon, & Johnston, 1999)

Homer Hickam has no reason to think that he will be any different from other boys growing up in Coalwood, West Virginia, where all young men are expected to become coal miners like their fathers. Homer has no way out of his predetermined life, until 1957 when Sputnik flies over his community. Homer begins a mission to build and launch his own homemade rockets with a group of his loyal friends. Although their frequent mishaps get the "Rocket Boys" in trouble, the small mining community becomes more intrigued with their scientific endeavors, offering resources and support. The efforts of the four aspiring scientists are supported by their science teacher who encourages them to enter the state science fair competition with hopes of securing college scholarships. When the Rocket Boys win the national science fair, earning themselves college scholarships, Homer's father begins to appreciate his son's determination and passion for science.

Audience: Middle-High School

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Peer group influence; Parental expectations for gifted males; Athletic pursuits versus intellectual pursuits; Influence of a significant mentor

***A Painted House*** (Welsh, Shields, & Arau, 1998)

During the long hot summer of 1952, ten-year-old Luke Chandler experiences a chapter in his life that will shape him as an adult. As the grandson of a cotton farmer in the Arkansas Delta, Luke observes two groups of migrant workers and two very dangerous men working on his family's farm. Several horrific events take place and Luke must shelter dark secrets that could shatter lives. As the young boy experiences this complex summer, someone is furtively painting the bare clapboards of the Chandler farmhouse, slowly bathing the dilapidated farmhouse in gleaming white.

Audience: Elementary – Middle School

MPAA Rating: G

Key Issues for Discussion: Being true to self; Moral development in gifted boys; Importance of emotional support from family

***Pictures of Hollis Woods*** (Bauman, Paulson, & Bill, 2007)

Hollis Woods is an artistically talented twelve-year-old girl who has spent most of her life in foster homes. To her social worker she is trouble because she skips school and runs away, even from the Regans, the one family who wants to give her a real home. When she is placed with Josie Cahill, a quirky retired art teacher, she wants to stay; however, she sees that the loving elderly woman is growing more forgetful every day. Hollis knows that if her social worker

discovers this she will be removed from Josie's care, so she plans their winter escape. Through her art and her care of Josie, Hollis ultimately finds her family.

Audience: Elementary School

MPAA Rating: G

Key Issues for Discussion: Emotional support from families; Art as therapy; Emotional sensitivity in gifted girls; Developing resilience to overcome adversity

***Pride*** (Oboven, Rosenfelt, & Gonera, 2007)

Jim Ellis is an aspiring teacher with a lifelong passion for competitive swimming. When he takes a position supervising a deserted recreation center in one of the toughest neighborhoods in Philadelphia, he becomes determined to recruit disenchanted teenagers and transform them into championship swimmers. Despite his challenges with racism, violence, and unsupportive city officials, Ellis takes his team to the state swimming championships where his protégés who represent the Philadelphia Department of Recreation (PDR) exhibit the pride, determination and resilience he has instilled in them.

Audience: High School

MPAA Rating: PG-13

Key Issues for Discussion: Belief in self; Developing resilience to overcoming adversity; Mentors for talent development; Social injustice and discrimination

***The Red Sneakers*** (Stephenson & Hines, 2002)

Reggie Reynolds is the dedicated manager of his urban high school basketball team. His problem is that he wants to be a basketball superstar but his dreams of becoming a college player seem impossible because Reggie is intellectually gifted, but not athletically talented. When the neighborhood junkman sells him a magical pair of red sneakers, he becomes an overnight sensation who leads his team to the New York City high school finals. As Reggie enjoys his instant success, he struggles with the jealousy of his teammates, his mother's changing views of his intellectual abilities, the high scholarly expectations of his math teacher, and a new set of adoring female admirers. In addition, sport scouts descend upon Reggie to offer him a golden future. In the end, Reggie acknowledges his true gifts and remains true to himself and those he loves.

Audience: Elementary School

MPAA Rating: G

Key Issues for Discussion: Talent development in urban youth; Anti-intellectualism; Influence of peer group; Societal pressure to be athletic

***Ruby Bridges*** (Rees, Hopkins & Palcy, 2004)

This movie presents the inspirational story of Ruby Bridges, a gifted six-year-old girl chosen to be the first African American child to integrate the New Orleans public schools in the 1960s. Though she is subjected to traumatizing racism for the first time, the love and emotional support of her devoted parents combined with the deep religious faith of her family enables her to develop the resilience she needs to cope with the stress she undergoes each day. This little girl's story of her heroic struggle for a better education is a story of a gifted child displaying exquisite dignity and courage as she continues to believe in herself, her family, and the important mission for which she was chosen.

Audience: Elementary School

MPAA Rating: Not Rated

Key Issues for Discussion: Developing resilience to overcome adversity; Internal strength and courage in gifted young children; Importance of family support

***Rudy*** (Fried, Woods, & Anspaugh, 1994)

For as long as Rudy Ruettiger has dreamed about playing football at The University of Notre Dame, there has been a friend, family member, teacher, or classmate at his side to tell him that it will never happen. With only his best friend Pete to support him, Rudy keeps the dream alive while working in a factory in suburban Chicago. After Pete's tragic death, Rudy decides that the time to fulfill his dream has come, and heads to Notre Dame to take his shot. With the help of an unlikely mentor, Rudy will attempt to succeed in that which almost no one would ever have thought possible.

Audience: Middle-High School

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Familial expectations; Importance of friendship; Setting high aspirations; Importance of a significant mentor

***The Sandy Bottom Orchestra*** (Mauer & Wigor, 2000)

Norman and Ingrid Green and their fourteen-year-old daughter Rachel are considered an eccentric family in Sandy Bottom, Wisconsin. Ingrid is a sophisticated woman who has abandoned her promising career as a classical pianist to follow her dairy farmer husband to the rural community. As the head of the local church choir, she spends her days trying to introduce new selections of music to the congregation and challenge the community's rural mentality. Norman dreams of being an orchestra conductor. Rachel, a gifted high school freshman, struggles to find friends who appreciate her. As she excels academically, she also outgrows her private violin lessons and her parents struggle with whether to have their daughter audition for a private arts academy. When her father decides to produce a classical concert for the community, both Rachel and Ingrid become members of the orchestra. With the overwhelming success of the concert, the Greens celebrate their community's acceptance and realize that Sandy Bottom is the town where they belong.

Audience: Middle-High School

MPAA Rating: Not Rated

Key Issues for Discussion: Being true to self; Finding a place where you are appreciated; Influence of a significant mentor; Women's choices between career and family

***The Sandlot*** (de la Torre, Gilmore, & Evans, 1993)

Fifth-grader Scott Smalls is finding it difficult to make new friends after he moves to California with his mother and his athletic stepfather. He idolizes a group of baseball-playing kids in the neighborhood, but fears that he may be too awkward and non-athletic to play with them. After the group's best player takes Scott under his wing, Scott learns valuable lessons about friendship, honesty, and being a ten year old.

Audience: Elementary-Middle School

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Importance of friendship; Creative problem solving in gifted males; Balancing academics and athletics; Parental influence on gifted males

***Searching for Bobby Fischer*** (Horberg, Rudin, & Zaillian, 1993)

The story of the world champion chess player, Bobby Fischer serves as a backdrop for this movie. In this story, seven-year-old Josh Waitzkin becomes intrigued with men playing chess in a New York City neighborhood park. When his parents recognize his fascination for the game and his natural talent for chess, his father finds a chess teacher for his son. Under his guidance, Josh brings home impressive trophies from multiple competitions. Joshua's father, a sports journalist, becomes overly enthusiastic about his son's abilities as a competitor while his mother, recognizing Josh's sensitivities, points out to her son what is most important in life. Joshua's mentor begins to build the competitive edge in his young protégé, insisting that he have contempt for his opponents; however, Josh resists. The tensions between his parents mount and Joshua fears disappointing his father.

Audience: Elementary-Middle School

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Influence of a significant mentor; Importance of healthy competition; Dealing with parental expectations

***School of Life*** (Milliken & Dear, 2005)

When Michael D'Angelo, a new social studies teacher arrives at Fallbrook Middle School, he brings a much different approach to teaching. As his students engage in lively discussions and historical reenactments, they realize that Mr. D does not just teach history, he lives it. His passion for the subject becomes infectious yet one frustrated teacher is threatened by the students' enthusiastic response to the dynamic newcomer. When he attempts to learn more about Mr. D's background, he discovers why the inspirational teacher approaches everything he does with so much passion. From Mr. D, the students and teachers at Fallbrook Middle School learn important life lessons not taught in textbooks.

Audience: Elementary-Middle School

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Appreciating individual differences; Belief in self; Facing life's challenges; Influence of a teacher as mentor

***Selma, Lord Selma*** (Seitz & Burnett, 1999)

This uplifting true story presents the childhood of Sheyanne Webb, a charismatic young African American girl living in Selma, Alabama during the turbulent civil rights movement. Sheyanne sneaks off from her fifth grade friends before school begins and meets Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who is visiting her community. Inspired by Dr. King, she becomes involved in the marches for freedom. Sheyanne finds herself the only elementary school student involved in the movement and remains committed to the cause despite the admonitions of her parents and teachers. She finds support in the friendship of a young White seminarian, a Freedom Fighter from the North struggling to get the Black community members registered to vote. Eventually, Sheyanne's passion for the cause convinces her teachers to become active in the movement.

Audience: Elementary-Middle School

MPAA Rating: G

Key Issues for Discussion: Developing resilience to overcome adversity in life; Importance of courage in pursuit of a goal

***Shrek*** (Katzenberg, Warner, Williams, Adamson, & Jenson, 2001)

Shrek is an ogre who inspires fear in the hearts of the residents of nearby Dulac. Shrek doesn't seem to mind, however, as he has always enjoyed living alone just outside the town and appreciates the peace and quiet. After Shrek's home is taken from him and the beautiful Princess Fiona is kidnapped by the evil Lord Farquaad. Shrek is forced to abandon his life of solitude in order to save them both. Along with his dear friend Donkey, they discover the value of persistence and learn an important lesson about appearances in the midst of their quest.

Audience: Elementary-Middle School

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Importance of friendship; Acceptance of individual differences; Importance of courage in pursuit of a goal

***Smoke Signals*** (Estes, Rosenfelt, & Eyre, 1998)

Victor Joseph and Thomas Builds the Fire are two Native American teenagers living on a reservation. Victor is tall, athletic, handsome and angry; while Thomas is gifted, awkward, wears thick glasses, and constantly shares colorful stories. Though they are very different from each other, the budding relationship between Thomas and Victor provides both young men with the support they need to cope with the adversity in their lives. Victor's father, an abusive man, abandoned his family when Victor was a child. When Victor learns of his father's death, he and Thomas travel to Arizona to recover his father's ashes. The journey and subsequent adventure allow Victor to begin to come to terms with his father's life and death.

Audience: High School

MPAA Rating: PG-13

Key Issues for Discussion: Developing resilience to overcome adversity; Father-son relationships; Friendships between gifted males; Coping with anger towards missing parents

***Spellbound*** (Welch, Blitz, & Blitz, 2002)

This powerful documentary follows eight highly intelligent young people as they compete in the national spelling bee sponsored every spring by Scripps-Howard newspapers. Through vignettes of their daily preparation, family life, local and regional competitions, viewers gain an insider's look into the culture surrounding such a competition and enjoy the diversity of the eight unique personalities. Viewers also listen to their reflections on studying, competition, victory, and defeat. Once at the national bee in Washington D.C., we observe the competition, celebrate with the final champion, and empathize with those who have come so close.

Audience: Middle-High School

MPAA Rating: G

Key Issues for Discussion: Value of persistence; Keeping competition in perspective; Parental expectations; Celebrating diversity in gifted youth

***Stand and Deliver*** (Musca & Menéndez, 1988)

This film features the biographical story of Jaime Escalante, a math teacher in a tough East Los Angeles high school. He draws upon his own cultural heritage and forms a bond with his largely Hispanic student body. Mr. Escalante dedicates countless hours motivating his students and preparing them for the Advanced Placement (AP) examination. With Escalante as their teacher, the students' academic achievements greatly improve and they excel on the exam. Regardless of their outstanding performance, the AP test administrators do not believe that a group of culturally diverse students from an urban high school are capable of such success. Accusations of cheating take place and Escalante and his students must prove the authorities are wrong.

Audience: High School

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Developing resilience to overcome adversity; Pursuing one's passion; Social injustice and discrimination

***UP*** (Rivera, Peterson, & Docter, 2009)

Carl Frederickson, a quiet and shy boy, befriends an outgoing tomboy named Ellie. When Ellie tells Carl of her dreams of moving her clubhouse to Paradise Falls, a majestic waterfall cliff in South America Carl promises to help her. Carl and Ellie are married, enjoy life, and grow old together. When Ellie dies, she leaves Carl a lonely widower. Rather than be forced into a retirement home, he is determined to fulfill his promise to his wife. He turns their house into a makeshift airship using thousands of helium balloons to lift it off the ground. Russell, a young Wilderness Explorer trying to earn his final merit badge for assisting the elderly, becomes a stowaway on Carl's flying house and joins him on his adventure. With his young friend's help

Carl discovers that the real adventures of life that should never be overlooked are the important relationships we have with people around us.

Audience: Elementary School - Adult

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Celebrating lifespan changes; Pursuing one's dream; Managing grief and loneliness; Importance of friendships; Developing resilience to overcome adversity; Heroes as flawed individuals

***The War*** (Avnet, Kerner, & Avnet, 1994)

During the summer of 1970, Stu and Lidia Simmons watch their father, a Vietnam veteran, return home to Mississippi from the war with high hopes of rebuilding his life and buying a home for his family. Wounded physically and psychologically he is unable to keep a job. As their father struggles with his scars from the war, he shares his pacifist philosophy about violence with his children. Both Stu and Lidia gain a new appreciation for their father's beliefs about getting along with others. As they face adolescent challenges, they remain inspired by their father's example and succeed in strengthening their close-knit family.

Audience: Middle School

MPAA Rating: PG-13

Key Issues for Discussion: Developing resilience to overcome adversity; Important relationships between father and children

***Wide Awake*** (Konrad, Woods, & Shyamalan, 1998)

Joshua Beals, a highly sensitive, intelligent fifth grader attends an all-boys Catholic school. Following the death of Joshua's grandfather, who was also his best friend and role model, Joshua feels lost, despite the fact that his family and friends offer emotional support. This poignant film examines the young boy's struggle to understand mortality, and his preoccupation with knowing whether or not his grandfather is in heaven. Throughout the movie, Joshua faces typical adolescent issues such as coping with a schoolyard bully, discovering girls, and developing empathy for boys who are not appreciated by their peer group. Through these experiences, Joshua confronts his issues and realizes that he is "wide awake" with a new awareness of life.

Audience: Elementary School

MPAA Rating: PG

Key Issues for Discussion: Dealing with the loss of a loved one; Sensitivity in gifted young males; Importance of friendship

***Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken*** (Williams & Miner, 1991)

Living in the 1930s, young Sonora Webster dreams of becoming a “diving girl,” riding a horse as it dives into the pool below. After leaving her home in Georgia to pursue this dream, a tragic accident leaves Sonora blind, forcing her to question the possibility of making her dream a reality. Overcoming her disability and a striking lack of support from the other individuals involved with the diving horse act, Sonora proves that persistence and dedication can go a very long way.

Audience: Elementary-Middle School

MPAA Rating: G

Key Issues for Discussion: Overcoming a disability; Gender issues for gifted females; Creative problem solving; Developing resilience in the face of adversity

***With Honors*** (Robinson, Weinstein, & Keshishian, 1994)

Montgomery Kessler, a Harvard University senior, is determined to graduate summa cum laude. His computer crashes as he is completing his senior thesis. On the way to the library to photocopy a backup version of his printed work, his only copy of the thesis falls into the hands of Simon Wilder, a homeless man living in the basement of Harvard's library. The homeless gentleman who survives by his applied intelligence drives a hard bargain with Monty as he agrees to return the thesis for food, shelter, and favors for each individual page. As Monty and Simon develop a life-changing friendship, Monty views life through Simon's perspective, leading him to question his values and restructure his philosophical world view.

Audience: High School

MPAA Rating: PG-13

Key Issues for Discussion: Being true to self; Sensitivity and empathy in gifted males; Gifted students developing a personal code of ethics

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