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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from  
*Teach to Develop Talent* by Jeanne L. Paynter.

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## Phase One: “What Is Talent?”—a True–False Quiz

Creating a talent development mindset begins with uncovering currently held attitudes about talent. “What Is Talent?” is a true–false quiz that helps to replace common misunderstandings such as “Talent is something you’re born with—you have it or you don’t” with new understandings such as “Talent must be developed” and “Effort counts as much as talent.” While quiz takers mark the statements as true or false, in reality the dichotomies aren’t always that distinct. Debriefing the quiz initiates a lively class discussion in which you will actually begin to see the talent aptitudes emerge: Curiosity, logical reasoning, metacognition, leadership, empathy, and communication all become evident now that you are looking for them.

Use the “What Is Talent?” quiz as professional learning for faculty and parent/community groups with the same goal of establishing the beliefs and assumptions foundational to a talent development mindset. The sample debriefing script in the next section is written for students but can be adapted for other audiences.

**Figure 3.0** *What Is Talent? Quiz*

What Is Talent?
A True–False Quiz
1. Talent is something you are born with. You have it or you don’t.
2. People have different talents; we are not all talented in the same way.
3. Talent can be developed.
4. Effort counts as much as, or more than, natural talent.
5. Most people know what their own talents are.
6. We discover our talents through the lessons we have in school.
7. The students in the gifted and talented/advanced classes are the talented ones.
8. “Aptitude” is another word for talent.
9. <i>Innovators</i> are persons who use their talents in new and useful ways.
10. I have new talents to discover and develop.

## Debriefing the Talent Quiz: Shared Understandings About Talent Development

The following script for debriefing the “What Is Talent?” quiz communicates the shared understandings and language of talent development and introduces students to the unique features of the talent-targeted teaching and learning model.

### 1. **Talent is something you are born with. You either have it, or you don’t.**

The answer is YES and also NO. There is a genetic (innate) component to talent. You were born with a “predisposition” to excel in certain ways. BUT—talents

can be hidden! You may not discover your talents unless you have the opportunity to express them. And talent, once discovered, must be developed!

## 2. **People have different talents; we are not all talented in the same way.**

YES, that is true. We all have strengths *and* areas that need development. Learn to develop your strengths to their fullest, and that will help you to grow in your weaker areas.

## 3. **Talent can be developed.**

YES! In fact, it *has* to be. Have you noticed? The most “talented” people are the ones who practice the most and work the hardest to improve. Talent that isn’t developed, *isn’t*.

## 4. **Effort counts as much as, or more than, natural talent.**

YES, that is true. Practice (and persistence) does makes perfect. There really isn’t any other pathway to success. Those successful people you admire have failed, made mistakes, and then gotten “right back on the horse” more times than you can count.

## 5. **Most people know what their own talents are.**

We hope that would be true, but often it is not. We discover our talents as we have opportunities to express them. To find your talents, you must be willing to explore new things. When we find that we have a **strong interest** in an area, we develop our talents as we pursue that interest.

When we are working in our individual talent area, we might experience what is called “flow.” This means that we lose track of time; we are completely engaged in the activity that we enjoy and are getting better at doing. The level of challenge is perfect! We are willing to work hard to improve.

Have this mindset: *You have talents that you haven’t yet discovered!*

## 6. **We discover our talents through the classes we have in school.**

YES, but also, not entirely.

School provides us with many opportunities to discover and develop our talents. But many talents are discovered through activities **outside of school**. Do you have hobbies that you work on at home? Do you participate in clubs, camps, or volunteering in the community? These are places where many people have discovered what they call their *passion*: Something they are motivated to do, not for a prize or reward, but for the enjoyment and satisfaction they gain from doing it. Seek out these kinds of opportunities outside of school. Have the mindset that you might discover your true passion there!

**7. The students in the gifted and talented/advanced classes are the talented ones.**

YES, but also, not entirely.

Advanced level or “accelerated” classes in school meet the needs of students with talents in specific academic areas like language or mathematics. These students have had opportunities to express and develop their talents beyond their age and grade level. These advanced classes are necessary for them to continue to develop their talents. It’s only fair that they have these opportunities to be able to learn at their depth and pace.

But *don’t* have the mindset that these students are necessarily “smarter” than other students, who also have gifts and talents but in different areas. With time and effort, you may “catch up” with the GT (gifted/talented) kids!

Remember, talent can (and must) be developed!

**8. *Aptitude* is another word for talent.**

YES! According to the dictionary definition, *aptitude* is *talent potential*.

*Aptitude* is . . .

- An *innate or acquired* capacity for something; a readiness or quickness, talent.
- *Potential* that has not yet been tapped but can be trained.
- Latin for *fitness*.

**There are general aptitudes.** These “fit” us for achieving in almost any area we go into. These are *curiosity, logical reasoning, creativity, insight, persistence, metacognition, and leadership*. We’ll begin to use these terms often in our classes.

**There are subject-specific aptitudes.** These fit us for achievement in particular subject areas, such as STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) or the humanities (languages, social studies, arts). You might find you have strengths in multiple areas, but your interests “fit” better in one subject than another.

We are going to be using the word *aptitude* a lot in this class. We will use the term *talent aptitude* as well. Are you ready to discover more about *your* talent aptitudes?

**9. *Innovators* are persons who use their talents in new and useful ways.**

YES! An innovation is a product, idea, or service that is both unique (new) and valuable to others. Some innovations have greatly changed our lives, like the smartphone. Other innovations haven’t had as great an impact but still represent unique and useful solutions that others appreciate and value. It’s important for you to know that with effort and persistence *you can develop* the aptitudes of innovators. *You* could become the next Steve Jobs.

## 10. I have new talents to discover and develop.

Again, YES! How do you find them? Start looking! We discover our talents by seeking out opportunities to explore and develop new interests. Some of these you'll want to pursue further, others not. But if you aren't willing to move outside your comfort zone, you won't discover your talents. And if you aren't willing to work hard, you won't develop them. Lost talent? We can't afford that. The world needs exactly what *you* have to offer. So let's get started!

**What's the point of all this talk about talent? It's about talent-targeted teaching and learning.**

In the next few weeks, we're going to be doing some things differently. In our lessons, we are going to focus on developing our talent aptitudes. Each lesson will have a talent goal along with the usual content and skill mastery goal. The lessons are designed to engage you in new interests and discover and develop your talents. You will begin a Talent Development Portfolio and record your progress. This portfolio is something we will share with each other and our families to show the ways in which we are uniquely talented and the progress we are making.