Practical Suggestions for Educators

- Avoid words like “brilliant”, “genius”, “gifted”
  - Don’t even say how brilliant Elizabeth Anscombe is
- Don’t tell anecdotes designed to illustrate how naturally gifted someone is
- Praise students for their effort and achievement, not for their inherent talent
  - “You worked so hard on this philosophy paper, and did a terrific job; you should be really proud of your achievement”
  - Not: “You have a real talent for philosophy”
- Explicitly emphasize to students the importance of working hard at the subject
  - No need to be subtle!
- Tackle ability beliefs head-on:
  - Say “some people think success at philosophy is a matter of natural talent, but really the main thing is sustained effort”
- Don’t comfort students by saying things like:
  - “It’s ok, not everyone is a math person”
  - “You have so many other talents, it’s alright that math isn’t one of them”

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• Have an open conversation about these different ways of thinking about abilities
• Share personal anecdotes about overcoming struggles
  ◦ With students, but also with colleagues
  ◦ Remember the problem isn’t just with student perception, but with the whole culture
• Challenge people who emphasize raw brilliance
• Start a conversation from the top down
  ◦ Senior academics need to be the first to stand up and say just how much ‘blood, sweat, and tears’ it took to get us here