

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT GIFTED EDUCATION

CONTENT ADOPTED FROM THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GIFTED CHILDREN

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MYTH 1:

GIFTED STUDENTS
DON'T NEED HELP;
THEY'LL DO FINE ON
THEIR OWN

NO

Many gifted students may be so far ahead of their same-age peers that they know more than half of the grade-level curriculum before the school year begins. Their resulting boredom and frustration can lead to low achievement, despondency, or unhealthy work habits. The role of the teacher is crucial for spotting and nurturing talents in school.

MYTH 2:

TEACHERS CHALLENGE ALL
THE STUDENTS, SO
GIFTED KIDS WILL BE
FINE IN THE REGULAR
CLASSROOM

NO

Although teachers try to challenge all students, they are frequently unfamiliar with the needs of gifted children and do not know how to best serve them in the classroom. The National Research Center on Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT) found that 61% of classroom teachers had no training in teaching highly able students, limiting the challenging educational opportunities offered to advanced learners.

MYTH 3:

GIFTED STUDENTS ACT AS
A ROLE MODEL FOR OTHER
STUDENTS

NO

Average or below-average students do not look to the gifted students in the class as role models. Watching or relying on someone who is expected to succeed does little to increase a struggling student's sense of self-confidence. They prefer to model the behavior of students with capabilities comparable to their own. Similarly, gifted students benefit from classroom interactions with peers at similar performance levels.

MYTH 4:

ALL CHILDREN
ARE GIFTED

NO

All children have strengths and positive attributes, but not all children are gifted in the educational sense of the word. The label "gifted" in a school setting means that a child has an advanced capacity to learn and apply what is learned in one or more subject areas. This advanced capacity requires modifications to the regular curriculum to ensure these children are challenged and learn new material.

MYTH 5:

ACCELERATION
PLACEMENT OPTIONS ARE
SOCIALY HARMFUL FOR
GIFTED STUDENTS


NO

Academically gifted students naturally gravitate towards older students who are more similar as "intellectual peers." Therefore, accelerated placement options such as early entrance to Kindergarten, grade skipping, or early exit should be considered for these students.




MYTH 6:

GIFTED EDUCATION PROGRAMS ARE ELITIST **NO**

Gifted education programs are meant to help all high-ability students. Gifted learners are found in all cultures, ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic groups. However, most gifted education programs and services are dependent solely on local funds. This means that in spite of the need, often only higher-income school districts are able to provide services, giving the appearance of elitism. 


MYTH 7:

THAT STUDENT CAN'T BE GIFTED; HE'S RECEIVING POOR GRADES **NO**

Underachievement describes a discrepancy between a student's performance and his actual ability. Gifted students may become bored or frustrated in an unchallenging classroom situation causing them to lose interest, learn bad study habits, or distrust the school environment. Other students may mask their abilities to try to fit in socially with their same-age peers. No matter the cause, it is imperative that a caring and perceptive adult help gifted learners break the cycle of underachievement in order to achieve their full potential. 


MYTH 8:

GIFTED STUDENTS ARE HAPPY, POPULAR, AND WELL ADJUSTED IN SCHOOL **NO**

Many gifted students flourish in their community and school environment. However, some gifted children differ in terms of their emotional and moral intensity, sensitivity to expectations and feelings, perfectionism, and deep concerns about societal problems. Others do not share interests with their classmates, resulting in isolation or being labeled unfavorably as a "nerd." Because of these difficulties, the school experience is one to be endured rather than celebrated. 


MYTH 9:

THIS CHILD CAN'T BE GIFTED, HE HAS A DISABILITY **NO**

Some gifted students also have learning or other disabilities. These "twice-exceptional" students often go undetected in regular classrooms because their disability and gifts mask each other, making them appear "average." These students may be identified as having a learning disability, and as a result are not considered for gifted services. In both cases, it is important to focus on the students' abilities and allow them to have challenging curricula in addition to receiving help for their learning disability. 

MYTH 10:

OUR DISTRICT HAS A GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM: WE HAVE A.P. COURSES **NO**

AP courses are not a gifted education program. The AP program is designed as college-level classes taught by high school teachers for students willing to work hard. AP is limited by the subjects offered, which in most districts is only a small handful. Typically, it is offered only in high school and is generally available only for 11th and 12th grade students. The limitations of AP coursework mean that districts must offer additional curriculum options to be considered as having gifted and talented services. 

MYTH 11:

GIFTED EDUCATION REQUIRES AN ABUNDANCE OF RESOURCES **NO**

Though a fully developed gifted education program can look overwhelming in its scope and complexity, beginning one requires little more than an acknowledgement by district and community personnel that gifted students need something different. This, plus a commitment to provide appropriate curriculum and instruction, as well as teacher training in identification and gifted education strategies is enough to give gifted students the resources they need to excel. 