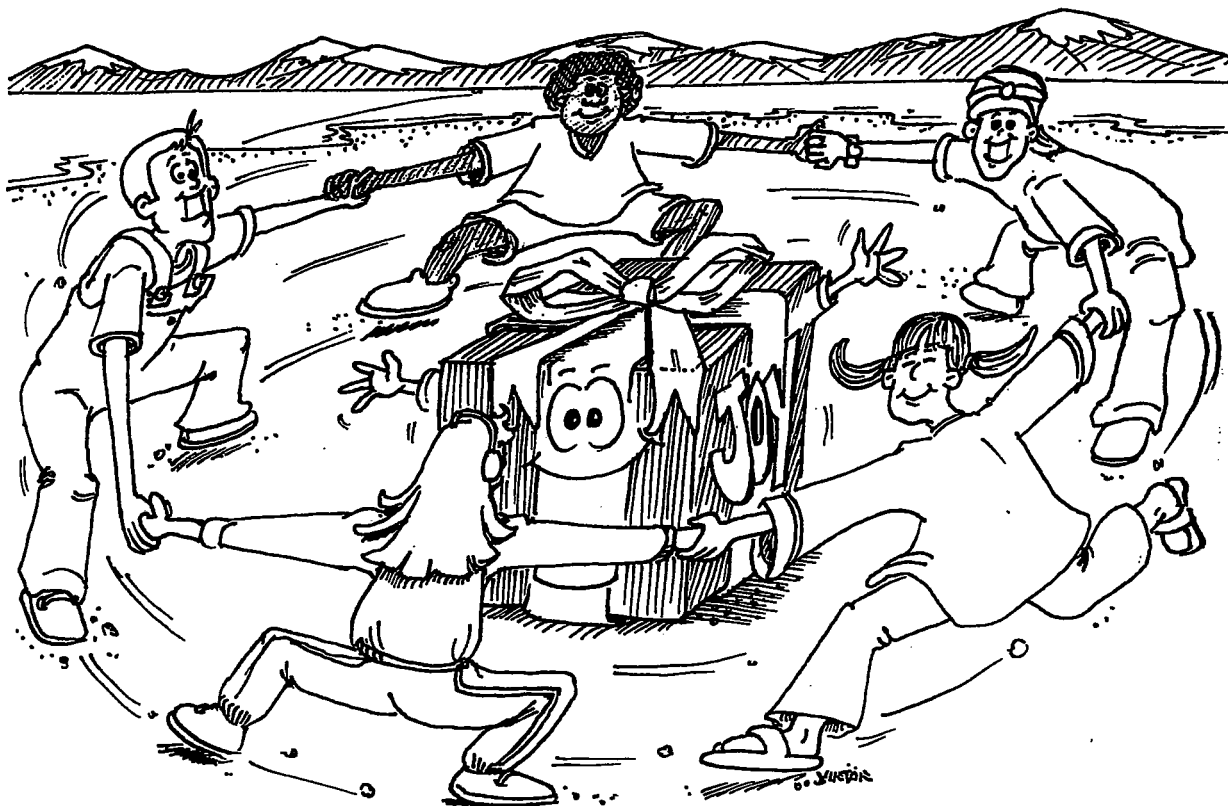


Myths Often Held by Gifted Students: Roadblocks To Self-Appreciation or Illogical and Unreasonable Beliefs

1. *Everyone has to like me.*
2. *I have to like everyone.*
3. *I can only be happy if I do what seems to make other people happy or what made me happy in the past.*
4. *As long as I like myself, I don't need to have friends.*
5. *Asking for help from parents, teachers, friends, and others is the same as admitting failure.*
6. *There's nothing left to learn and no one around who can teach me anything.*
7. *If something is unpleasant, I should worry and be upset about it continually for a long period of time.*
8. *If I can't do something perfectly, I shouldn't do it at all for I must be perfect in all respects.*
9. *Life is unfair, and I can't change anything to make it better.*

From: Delisle, J. and Galbraith, J. (1987). *The Gifted Kids Survival Guide II*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Publishing Press and Webb, J., Gore, J. Amend, E., DeVries, A. (2007). *A Parents Guide to Gifted Children*. Scottsdale AZ, Great Potential Press



Common Gifted Education Myths*

ILLUSTRATION BY KEN VINTON

M yths are created and continue to exist because they explain phenomena that are not easily understood or appear to validate ambiguous ideas with ambiguous evidence”
—Sandra Kaplan, 2009

Myth: Gifted Students Don't Need Help; They'll Do Fine On Their Own

Truth: Would you send a star athlete to train for the Olympics without a coach? Gifted students need guidance from well-trained teachers who challenge and support them in order to fully develop their abilities. 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: Teachers Challenge All The Students, So Gifted Kids Will Be Fine In The Regular Classroom

Truth: 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 teach-

ing highly able students, limiting the challenging educational opportunities offered to advanced learners.¹ A more recent national study conducted by the Fordham Institute found that 58% of teachers have received no professional development focused on teaching academically advanced students in the past few years. Taken together, these reports confirm what many families have known: not all teachers are able to recognize and support gifted learners.

Myth: Gifted Students Make Everyone Else In The Class Smarter By Providing A Role Model Or A Challenge

Truth: In reality, average or below-average students do not look to the gifted students in the class as role models. They are more likely to model their behavior on those who have similar capabilities and are coping well in school. Seeing a student at a similar performance level succeed motivates students because it adds to their own sense of ability. Watching or relying on someone who is expected to succeed does little to increase a struggling student's sense of self-confidence.² Similarly, gifted students benefit from classroom interactions with peers at similar performance levels

Myth: All Children Are Gifted

Truth: While all children are special and deserving, not all children have exceptional academic gifts that require additional

or different support in school. Interestingly, most people readily accept that there are gifted children in performing arts or athletics whose talents are so far above those of others their age that they require additional or different training or coaching. It is important to understand that these same characteristics and differences apply to academically gifted students who need support and guidance to reach their full potential.

Myth: Acceleration Placement Options Are Socially Harmful For Gifted Students

Truth: Academically gifted students often feel bored or out of place with their age peers and naturally gravitate towards older students who are more similar as “intellectual peers.” Studies have shown that many students are happier with older students who share their interest than they are with children the same age.³ Therefore, acceleration placement options such as early entrance to Kindergarten, grade skipping, or early exit should be considered for these students.

Myth: Gifted Education Programs Are Elitist

Truth: Gifted education is not about status, it is about meeting student needs. Advanced learners are found in all cultures, ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic groups. However, not every school district offers services for gifted students, even though there are gifted students in every district. Because of a lack of state and federal financial support, only affluent districts in many states can afford to offer gifted education programs and services, which leaves many gifted students behind.

Myth: That Student Can't Be Gifted; He's Receiving Poor Grades

Truth: Underachievement describes a discrepancy between a student's performance and his actual ability. The roots of this problem differ, based on each child's experiences. 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. See ERIC digests on underachievement in gifted boys; underachievement of minority students.

Myth: Gifted Students Are Happy, Popular, And Well Adjusted In School

Truth: 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. It is estimated that 20 to 25% of gifted children have social and emotional difficulties, about twice as many as in the general population of students.⁴

Myth: This Child Can't Be Gifted, He Has A Disability

Truth: 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.” Other twice-exceptional students are 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.⁵

Myth: Our District Has A Gifted And Talented Program: We Have AP Courses

Truth: While AP classes offer rigorous, advanced coursework, they 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. The program is limited in its service to gifted and talented students in two major areas: First AP is limited by the subjects offered, which in most districts is only a small handful. Second it is limited in that, typically, it is offered only in high school and is generally available only for 11th and 12th grade students. Coupled with the one-size-fits all approach of textbooks and extensive reading lists, the limitations of AP coursework mean that districts must offer additional curriculum options to be considered as having gifted and talented services.

Myth: Gifted Education Requires Abundant Resources

Truth: While, over time, developing an effective and comprehensive gifted education program may be costly and require talented, well-qualified professionals, an abundance of resources is not necessary to begin offering gifted education services. A belief that gifted students require something different from the regular curriculum, followed by hard-work and commitment from community and district personnel, are the most critical components in designing and implementing successful gifted education programs and services. ■

RESOURCES

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Editor's Note This list of myths was prepared by the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and is reprinted by permission. It can be found on the NAGC website at nagc.org.*