

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT GIFTED STUDENTS

- 1. Myth: GIFTED STUDENTS ARE GENERALLY WHITE, MIDDLE CLASS CHILDREN.**
Many early academic tests favored this group. Gifted education programs are meant to help all high-ability students. Gifted learners are found in all cultures, ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic groups. However, many of these students are denied the opportunity to maximize their potential because of the way in which programs and services are funded, and/or flawed identification practices. For example, reliance on a single test score for gifted education services may exclude selection of students with different cultural experiences and opportunities.
- 2. Myth: BOYS AND GIRLS ACHIEVE EQUALLY.**
At age nine boys and girls show scholastic achievement that is fairly equal, but by age thirteen females have begun to decline in achievement that continues downwards through teenage years and into adulthood. Research suggests this disparity is not the result of different abilities, but the result of stereotyping.
- 3. Myth: I.Q. TESTS ARE THE BEST WAY TO IDENTIFY THE GIFTED CHILD.**
No single criterion can be used to determine giftedness. I.Q. tests measure a limited aspect of intelligence. Gifted behaviors include behaviors beyond intellectual ability.
- 4. Myth: GIFTED STUDENTS CAN ALWAYS BE IDENTIFIED BY TEACHERS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT BECAUSE THEY EARN GOOD GRADES AND ARE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT SCHOOL.**
Although many gifted students earn good grades, others become underachievers, behavior problems, or dropouts. 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.
- 5. Myth: A CHILD WHO PERFORMS POORLY CAN'T BE GIFTED**
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 and still others may have a learning disability that masks their giftedness. 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.
- 6. Myth: A CHILD WHO HAS A DISABILITY CAN'T BE GIFTED**
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.

7. Myth: GIFTED STUDENTS IN SPECIAL PROGRAMS WILL HAVE SOCIO-EMOTIONAL ISSUES.

Many problems are brought on by the frustration of ability, although special classes for the gifted actually helps most adjust to these frustrations. 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 gifted students tend to be happier with older students who share their interest than they are with children the same age. Acceleration placement options such as early entrance to Kindergarten, grade skipping, or early exit should be considered for these students.

8. Myth: GIFTED STUDENTS SHOULD REMAIN IN REGULAR CLASSES TO SERVE AS EXAMPLES OR ROLE MODELS. THEY MAKE EVERYONE ELSE SMARTER.

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.² Similarly, gifted students benefit from classroom interactions with peers at similar performance levels and become bored, frustrated, and unmotivated when placed in classrooms with low or average-ability students.

9. Myth: GIFTED STUDENTS ARE SELF-SUFFICIENT AND DO NOT NEED HELP. IF THEY ARE REALLY GIFTED, THEY CAN MANAGE ON THEIR OWN.

Research negates this myth on several accounts. They may perform at a level far below their intellectual ability and also suffer from anxiety, insecurity, and loneliness.

10. Myth: THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE GIFTED STUDENT IS AT THE SAME LEVEL AS HIS OR HER INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT, THEREFORE ARE MATURE AND WELL BEHAVED.

Gifted students are asynchronous. Their chronological age, social, physical, emotional, and intellectual development may all be at different levels. For example, a 5-year-old may be able to read and comprehend a third-grade book but may not be able to write legibly.

11. Myth: GIFTED STUDENTS ARE NERDS, SOCIAL ISOLATES, AND TEND TO NOT BE GOOD AT SPORTS.

There are many types of giftedness and many forms in which it can be expressed. Gifted students can be gifted in areas such as leadership, visual and performing arts and psychomotor. 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.

12. Myth: GIFTED STUDENTS ARE GIFTED IN ALL AREAS. ALL CHILDREN ARE GIFTED.

All children have strengths and positive attributes, but not all children are gifted in the educational sense of the word. "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 (or in the performing or fine arts) when compared to others his or her age or grade. This advanced capacity requires modifications to the regular curriculum to ensure these children are challenged and learn new material. Gifted does not connote good or better; it is a term that allows students to be identified for services that meet their unique learning needs.

13. Myth: THE GIFTED STUDENT'S FAMILY ALWAYS PRIDES THE CHILD'S ABILITIES. THEY ARE ALSO EASY TO RAISE.

Families may not be aware a child is gifted and be confused or upset by certain behaviors. Families may not know how to deal with a gifted child. Some gifted children can be highly emotional, have volatile temper, talk incessantly, exhibit high levels of energy, and be very impulsive. Other gifted children can be depressed or suffer anxiety as a result of their giftedness – feel as though they don't fit in, aren't understood, or that they are alone.

14. Myth: GIFTED STUDENTS CAN ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING THEY PUT THEIR MINDS TO. GIFTED STUDENTS ARE NATURALLY CREATIVE AND DO NOT NEED ENCOURAGEMENT.

Gifted students may prefer to work independently and may not need much guidance, however they still require necessary supports. Not all gifted students are gifted in all areas.

15. Myth: GIFTED CHILDREN ARE A WELCOME ADDITION TO ANY CLASSROOM AND ARE ALWAYS EASY TO TEACH.

Gifted students require more time and effort to ensure they are appropriately supported within the class. Teachers of gifted students should receive professional development on working with gifted students.

16. Myth: GIFTED STUDENTS ARE ALWAYS RECOGNIZABLE EARLY IN THEIR SCHOOL YEARS.

It may take time before certain gifted students are able to be identified. Teachers must be aware of the clues and realize there maybe students who have fallen through the cracks.

17. Myth: Gifted STUDENTS ARE FOCUSED AND COMPETITIVE.

Gifted students can seem distracted. Some may have a long attention span, but only if they are highly interested in the topic. Not all gifted students are competitive. Some may be shy and not wish to have attention placed upon accomplishments.