

Myths about the Gifted and Talented

Gifted kids have it made and will succeed in life no matter what.

Reality: Everyone needs help encouragement and appropriate learning experiences in order to make the most of themselves. Many learners with gifted abilities have disabilities or are underachievers and some will be dropouts from learning or from school unless they receive guidance and challenge.

Gifted kids like school, always get good grades and greet each new school day with enthusiasm.

Reality: Some studies show that as many as 20% of or high school dropout population is gifted. Gifted kids process information much faster and in different ways than other students. Classroom teachers do not have time to develop quantitatively different programs for each learner for all curriculums. Classroom teachers need help and resources to deal adequately with children who are not in the learning mainstream. More work – watch out these learners dislike any thing that looks like busy work. Teaching others – a wonderful societal goal but it doesn't educate a child at his or her own level.

Teachers can identify gifted and talented kids and like to work with them.

Some can and some can't. There are a number of teachers who feel uncomfortable with gifted and talented students. Certain teachers equate giftedness with a student who is conforming, polite and gets good grades. These qualities are not synonymous with being gifted and talented.

If gifted and talented kids are grouped together they'll become elitist and snobs.

Reality: Like the Jazz band or the Basketball team? We often group children according to their talents. We expect children will achieve their best at their own level. We should provide some grouping for gifted children, not so they can learn to be snobs but so they can experience working with children most like themselves. Empathy and appropriate behavior as well as mathematics can be taught to a group of learners.

All gifted kids have trouble adjusting to school and friends.

Reality: Some kids experience difficulties, and face problems but others are happy and know how to get what they want from life. As far as friends go we need to look at the all sides of the societal goal of making friends and getting along with peers. Chronological peers, Economic peers, Intellectual peers? Gifted children find their intellectual and talented peers stimulating and should be allowed some time to get along and work in their atmosphere as well as with others who are their peers in other ways.

Everyone is gifted.

Reality: Gifted students come from all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. They are also found among the handicapped and learning disabled. We are all athletic and musical to a degree. But we cannot all achieve all the same level all of the time. If we could, Olympic medals would be as common as dollar coins and we could all hold concerts to draw international audiences. The same is true for intellectual ability. We cannot believe that everyone is at the same place in their learning in the classroom and will be able to learn in the same way.

Research by Feldhusen (1989), Kulik and Kulik (1984), Oakes (1986)