

# **Myths about Gifted Students**

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For decades, misconceptions about gifted and talented students and their learning needs have persisted. These “myths” have often become barriers to learning for these students.

#### Examining the myths:

1. In what ways is this myth a barrier to learning for gifted students?
2. What policy or practices are in place or need to be in place so this myth no longer exists?
3. What is the truth?



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*Myth #1: All children are gifted.*

*Myth #2: Gifted students don't need help; they'll do fine on their own.*

*Myth #3: Acceleration placement options are socially harmful for gifted students.*

*Myth #4: Gifted students make everyone else in the class smarter by providing a role model or a challenge.*

*Myth #5: Teachers challenge all the students, so gifted students will be fine in the regular classroom.*

*Myth #6: That student can't be gifted; he's receiving poor grades or she has a disability.*

*Myth #7: Gifted students are happy, popular, and well adjusted in school.*

*Myth #8: Gifted education requires abundant resources.*

*Myth #9: Our district has a gifted and talented program - We have College Board Advanced Placement.*

*Myth #10 : Gifted education programs are elitist.*

**Examined the myths to determine:**

- 1. In what ways is this myth a barrier to learning for gifted students?**
- 2. What policy or policies are in place or need to be so that this myth no longer exists?**
- 3. What is the truth?**



**Change the myth -----**

**-----to a true statement about gifted children**



## Myth #1: *All children are gifted.*

### Truth:

- While all children are special and deserving, not all children have exceptional gifts that require additional or different support.

## Myth #2: *Gifted students don't need help; they'll do fine on their own.*

### Truth:

- Gifted students need guidance from well-trained teachers who challenge and support them.
- 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.
- The resulting boredom and frustration can lead to underachievement, despondency, or unhealthy work habits.
- The role of the teacher is crucial for spotting and nurturing talents in school.



## *Myth #3: Acceleration placement options are socially harmful for gifted students.*

### Truth:

- Although teachers try to challenge all students, they are frequently unfamiliar with the needs of gifted children.
- The National Research Center on Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT) found that 61% of classroom teachers had no training in teaching highly able students.
- This report and others confirm that teachers need to **be able to vary the pace, depth, and complexity of the learning experience** in order to challenge and support gifted learners.

## **Myth #4: *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.
- Likewise, gifted students benefit from classroom interactions with peers who perform at similar performance levels to their own.



## ***Myth #5: Teachers challenge all the students, so gifted students will be fine in the regular classroom.***

### **Truth:**

- Gifted students need guidance from well-trained teachers who challenge and support them.
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- The resulting boredom and frustration can lead to underachievement, despondency, or unhealthy work habits.
- The role of the teacher is crucial for spotting and nurturing talents in school.

## ***Myth #6: That student can't be gifted; he's receiving poor grades or she has a disability.***

### **Truth:**

- 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 may mask their abilities to try to fit in socially with their same-age peers.
- Some gifted students also have learning or other disabilities.
- "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.
- It is important to focus on the student's abilities and allow them to have a challenging curricula in addition to receiving help for their learning disability.



## ***Myth #7: 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 for many gifted children.

## **Myth #8: *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 always necessary.
- 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.



## ***Myth #9: Our district has a gifted and talented program - We have College Board Advanced Placement.***

### **Truth:**

- While AP classes offer rigorous, advanced coursework, they are not a gifted education program.
- The program is limited in its service to gifted and talented students :
  - 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 AP coursework has a one-size-fits all approach with textbooks and extensive reading lists.
  - Districts must offer additional curriculum options to be considered as having gifted and talented services.

## Myth #10: *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.





**Myths are barriers to learning for gifted students.  
Policies are needed so that myths no longer exist?**

