Myths & Misconceptions of the Gifted Child

Week 1 - Nature & Needs of Gifted Students
Describe a “gifted” child...
Did you say...

- Quiet, reflective?
- Neat, organized?
- Accurate, specific?
- Creative, unpredictable?
- Conforming?
- Engaged in learning?
- Well behaved?
- Noisy, spontaneous?
- Messy, disorganized?
- Guessing, vague?
- Logical, predictable?
- Non-conforming?
- Bored?
- Acting out?
You’re right!

- The gifted child is nothing short of a paradox, and each child is different.
  - Different learning styles
  - Different strengths
  - Different interests
  - Different needs in your classroom
Not every gifted child is “identified” as gifted

- Not all will pass the I.Q. requirement of 130 required to be “officially” gifted.
- Does this mean someone with an I.Q. of 129 is really any less gifted?
- How will you meet the educational needs of “gifted” students in the regular classroom?
- A good starting point is to dispel any myths and misconceptions held about gifted students.
The Bell Curve

![Bell Curve Diagram](Image)

- **SD = Standard Deviation**
- **2%**
- **14%**
- **34%**
- **34%**
- **14%**
- **2%**

**Legend:**
- **Orange Arrow:** Same as others
- **Pink Arrow:** Probably more than others
- **Purple Arrow:** Definitely more than others
- **Green Arrow:** Probably less than others
- **Blue Arrow:** Definitely less than others

- **+1 SD**
- **-1 SD**
- **Mean Score**

**Percentages:**
- 2%
- 14%
- 34%
- 34%
- 14%
- 2%
Points to consider:

- An IQ of 130 is two standard deviations from the norm
- An IQ of 70 is two standard deviations from the norm
- Does IQ tell us anything?
- Does IQ tell us everything?
- There is no “one assessment fits all”
Quick!

Can you name the most recent:

- Super Bowl Champions?
- World Series Champions?
- Academy Award for Best Picture?
- Best Actor? Actress?
- Grammy?
- Emmy?
Now, what about the most recent…

- Nobel Prize Winners?
- Pulitzer Prize Winners?
Do you believe we live in an anti-intellectual society?

- If so, how does this affect gifted children?
- Teachers of gifted?
- Parents of gifted?
Do you agree...?

“One of the quickest ways to turn very able children off to the excitement of learning is to bore them with mundane repetition of skills they have long ago mastered.”

(J.A. Wolfle, 1987)
Do you agree...?

- There is considerable variation among students of the same grade and age.
- Students learn best when there is a good match between learning readiness and curriculum.
- It is educationally sound to assess readiness, then match with a curriculum.

(Colangelo, 1997)
Do you agree...?

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(Colangelo, 1997)
If you said, “YES!”...

- ...then you agree with the rationale for gifted education.
- If you said, “Yes!” three times, you might be thinking there is something wrong with this PowerPoint (or the person who put it together).
YES! The same slide repeated 3 times!

- If we repeat information to gifted students once, they will probably think, “Okay, the teacher’s a little forgetful.” But, when we repeat and review material they have long ago mastered, we will turn them off to learning altogether. Gifted students are more at risk of dropping out than any other group because of this persistence in reviewing and drilling the same old material over and over and over...
What does it mean?

- **EQUAL** treatment is not necessarily **FAIR** treatment.
- **EQUITY** - giving each child what he/she needs is the foundation of differentiation.
- Now, let’s dispel some myths!
Myth 1

- Gifted children are generally weak and sickly.
- **FACT:** Gifted children tend to be physically stronger, have fewer illnesses and generally exceed their age-mates in height and weight.
Myth 2

- The gifted child is different or “odd.”
- **FACT:** Gifted youngsters are highly stable. In fact, teachers have often failed to identify gifted children because they seem so “normal.”
Myth 3

- Gifted students are white, middle-class youngsters.
- **FACT:** Gifted children are found in *all* ethnic, cultural and religious groups, and they exist in all socio-economic classes.
Myth 4

- The gifted child is a bookworm, wears glasses, and does not participate in normal children’s activities.
- **FACT:** Most gifted children are good readers but they also engage in many types of activities and have many interests. (Some even need remedial help in reading!)
Myth 5

- Gifted children are enthusiastic about school.
- **FACT:** While many are enthused about school, many others are bored, under-challenged, and some drop out.

"You're not allowed to use the sprinkler system to keep your audience awake."
Myth 6

- Gifted students have few or no emotional difficulties.
- **FACT:** Gifted students do have counseling needs, especially in the area of building self-esteem. They are also often faced with the dilemma of “too many talents/too many choices.”
Myth 7

- Teachers need no special training to work with gifted students.
- **FACT:** Teachers with *at least* minimal awareness and knowledge of gifted (what you are getting out of this) have been more responsive with these children.
Myth 8

◆ Gifted students will be successful **whether or not** they receive special attention.

◆ **FACT:** This is one of the most debilitating myths of all! They *do* have special needs and have been responsive to programs tailored to meet those needs.
Unfortunately…

...we cannot measure the talent loss of all those students who could have developed more of their potential if they had been given the opportunity.
Famous Failure #1

- As a boy his teachers told him he was too stupid to learn anything. “I remember that I was never able to get along at school. I was always at the foot of my class. I used to feel that the teachers did not sympathize with me and that my father thought I was stupid.”
- Who was it?
Thomas Edison

- Edison held the world’s record of 1,093 patents for inventions such as the light bulb and phonograph.
Famous Failure #2

- This person was told by an editor that she could never write anything that had popular appeal.
- Who was it?
Louisa May Alcott
Myth 9

- Teachers can readily recognize children who are gifted.
- **FACT:** Teachers without any training in the area of gifted are only 50% (chance) effective in identifying giftedness.
Myth 10

- Gifted students do not have learning disabilities.
- **FACT:** Some gifted students do have learning disabilities, yet are extremely capable in other areas. (Sometimes the learning disability and giftedness can “mask” each other so the child appears to be “average.”)
Myth 11

- Teachers like gifted students.
- **FACT:** Generally teachers do not like gifted students in their regular classes. This seems mostly due to the challenges and misbehaviors of gifted when bored. (Would the pressures of standardized test scores impact the identification of gifted...?)
Myth 12

- Parents of gifted understand their children.

- **FACT:** Parents of gifted, like parents of other exceptional children, are often anxious and confused because their child is not “normal.”
Myth 13

- Gifted children can be identified by I.Q.
- **FACT:** I.Q. tests still tend to be culturally biased. Also, I.Q. tests do not determine characteristics of creativity, artistic ability, or leadership potential.
Myth 14

- Gifted students are successful in school.
- **FACT:** Many gifted students do not perform well academically either because they are bored or purposely do poorly to conform to peer pressure.
Myth 15

- Grouping gifted children will lead to elitism or snobbishness.
- **FACT:** There is no evidence to support this claim.
Myth 16

- Gifted students with the same I.Q. have similar interests and abilities.

- **FACT:** Gifted students are not a homogeneous group. Students with the same high abilities differ in the unique expression of their talents.
Myth 17

- Gifted children who are accelerated in school (skip grades) do not adjust socially.
- **FACT**: Gifted students who skip grades generally adjust very well socially.

Okay... maybe this is a bit extreme!
Myth 18

- All children are gifted.

**FACT:** “If by the phrase “all children are gifted” it is meant that all children are of value, all can do more if encouraged, and all have untapped potential, I am in your camp. But if the phrase means that all kids can do calculus in sixth grade, all students can achieve a composite score of 32 on the ACT… that all students can be piano virtuosi, or play professional basketball, then I am gone from the group.”

~Nicholas Colangelo
“Harrison Bergeron”

- **Equal** treatment is not necessarily **fair** treatment.
  - What does this mean?
  - How will you respond in your classroom?
  - How has this affected you in your life?

- **Source:** Nicholas Colangelo, Ph.D.
  The University of Iowa