

“Myths 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

“It's no wonder that truth is stranger than fiction. Fiction has to make sense.”

(Mark Twain)

truth

The 10 Truths About Gifted Education





10

myths

>about gifted education

For decades, **myths about gifted education** have distorted educators' and the public's perceptions of what gifted students are able to do and what they need in the classroom.

The **result has been** an underfunding of gifted education services, a widening achievement gap between high ability, poor children and those from middle- and upper-income families, and too many children across this nation who feel bored, unwelcome, or misunderstood in their classrooms.

1

Gifted children will do fine on their own.

Truth

Gifted children cannot teach themselves.

Just as star athletes train with skilled coaches, gifted students need guidance from well-trained teachers who challenge and support them in order to fully develop their abilities.

Here's What We Know:

- Many gifted students are so far ahead of their same-age peers that they know more than half of the grade-level curriculum before the school year begins.**
- Others learn new concepts quickly, but are made to wait until classmates catch up.**
- Resulting boredom and frustration can lead to underachievement and poor work habits.**
- The role of the teacher is crucial for spotting and nurturing talents in school.**

Teachers challenge all students.

2
Truth

Most teachers have not been prepared to work with advanced students.

Gifted students not only learn more quickly than other students, they learn differently.

Here's What We Know:

- The majority of classroom teachers have had no training in teaching highly able students.
- In spite of commitment and dedication, teachers are often unable to recognize and support gifted learners without specialized training.

3 Truth

Gifted students are role models for other students.

Average or below-average students do not look to the gifted students as role models.

Students model their behavior on those who have similar capabilities and are coping well in school.

Here's What We Know:

- **Watching those who are expected to succeed does little to increase a student's self-confidence.**
- **Gifted students respond to and benefit from classroom interactions with their academic peers.**

4 Truth

All children are gifted.

All children have strengths and positive attributes but are not all gifted in the academic sense of the word.

The label “gifted” in a school setting is applied when 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 compared to others his or her age or grade.

Here's What We Know:

- Advanced capacity requires modifications to the regular curriculum.
- 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.

5 Truth **Academic acceleration is socially harmful.** **Gifted children are often happier with older children who share interests and abilities.**

Acceleration interventions can provide the flexibility in curriculum delivery to meet student needs without negative consequences.

Here's What We Know:

- Many gifted students do not have intellectual or interest peers at school, which can lead to social and emotional discomfort and isolation.**
- Accelerated students go on to succeed professionally at higher levels than those in the general student population and report they wish they had even more opportunities for acceleration while in school.**
- Successful acceleration placements, strategies, referral policies, student screening, and transition planning can ensure acceleration is used only when appropriate.**

Gifted education programs are elitist.

Truth

Gifted education programs help all high-ability students.

Many students are denied learning opportunities because of flawed identification practices and the way in which programs and services are funded.

Here's What We Know:

- Gifted learners are found in all cultures, ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic groups.
- Single test score reliance for gifted education services may exclude students with different cultural experiences and opportunities.
- Without federal or state funds, providing an adequate funding stream, most gifted education programs and services are dependent solely on local funding.
- In spite of the need, often only higher-income school districts are able to provide services, giving the appearance of elitism.

7 Truth

Students getting poor or average grades cannot be gifted.

Not all gifted students are academically successful.

The causes of underachievement differ greatly. It is imperative that perceptive, well-trained adults recognize gifted learners and help them break the cycle of underachievement .

Here's What We Know:

- High-ability students may become bored or frustrated in an unchallenging classroom causing them to lose interest, learn poor study habits, or distrust the school environment.
- Students may mask their abilities to try to fit in socially
- Students may have lacked access to a rigorous, high quality early education.



Gifted students are happy, popular, and well-adjusted.

School can be a negative experience for some gifted students.

Although many gifted students flourish in their school, some gifted children are prone to emotional and moral intensities. It is important that counselors and other school personnel are trained to recognize these issues.

Here's What We Know:

- Gifted students may be sensitive to others' expectations and feelings, struggle with perfectionism, and/or have deep concerns about societal problems.
- Students may not share interests with their classmates, resulting in isolation or being labeled a "nerd."
- Time in school is often something to be endured rather than celebrated.



A child receiving special education services cannot also be gifted.

Having strengths in one area does not preclude the need for support in another.

It is important to focus on the students' abilities and strengths, providing access to challenging curricula in addition to receiving support for a recognized disability.

Here's What We Know:

- “Twice-exceptional” students often go undetected in regular classrooms because their disability and gifts mask each other.**
- Appearing “average” often causes ineligibility for either gifted or special education services.**
- Twice-exceptional students are often identified for special education services but are not considered for gifted services.**

10 Truth

Gifted education programs require an abundance of resources.

Offering gifted education services does not need to break the bank.

Starting a program requires understanding and commitment that gifted students require qualitatively different services.

Here's What We Know:

- **Effective and comprehensive gifted education services require an investment in professional development, assessments, and advanced curriculum.**
- **Gifted education strategies must be flexible and varied.**

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Dispelling Myths, Serving Students

"Myths are created and continue to exist because they explain phenomena that are not easily understood or appear to validate ambiguous ideas with ambiguous evidence" (Kaplan, 2009)

For decades, myths related to gifted education have had detrimental effects on providing quality instruction for our nation's high-ability learners. These myths have affected every facet of the field, and in turn have distorted the perception of not only what gifted students need in the classroom, but also what they can offer the nation now and into the future.

Persistent belief and the subsequent response associated with gifted education myths contribute to an overall lack of attention and challenge for high-ability students in our schools. As a result, gifted education programs remain underfunded, achievement gaps continue to widen, and too many children across the nation who require "something different," have no place to thrive.

More On Myths In Gifted Education

The fall 2009 *Gifted Child Quarterly* is a special issue on the myths in gifted education. [Click here to view the GCQ table of contents.](#) **NOTE: 3 articles may be downloaded free!**

[Click here to access the special issue of GCQ via Sage Publications.](#)

[Click here to read an overview of the GCQ special issue, written by](#)



NEW Career Center

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Resources on the NAGC Website

- Access the Myths web pages for additional myths, references, and resources.
<http://www.nagc.org/myths.aspx>
- Advocacy Resources
 - Frequently Asked Questions: <http://www.nagc.org/index2.aspx?id=548>
 - Teacher Training Makes a Difference: <http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=3422>
 - Why We Need Gifted and Talented Education:
<http://www.nagc.org/index2.aspx?id=533>
 - Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards:
<http://www.nagc.org/index2.aspx?id=546>
- Fall 2009 special issue of *Gifted Child Quarterly* on the myths in gifted education.
 - Table of contents <http://www.nagc.org/index2.aspx?id=5176>.
 - Overview of the special issue from *Teaching for High Potential* <http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=1498>
- 8-minute video on Myths in Gifted Education produced by teens in Baltimore (MD) Public Schools for the MD Department of Education.
http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/giftedtalented/top_ten_myths_video

Resources for the 10 Myths

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The **National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)** is an organization of parents, teachers, educators, other professionals, and community leaders who unite to address the unique needs of children and youth with demonstrated gifts and talents as well as those children who may be able to develop their talent potential with appropriate educational experiences.

We support and develop policies and practices that encourage and respond to the diverse expressions of gifts and talents in children and youth from all cultures, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic groups. NAGC supports and engages in research and development, staff development, advocacy, communication, and collaboration with other organizations and agencies who strive to improve the quality of education for all students.

***NAGC** defines a gifted person as someone who shows, or has the potential for showing, an exceptional level of performance in one or more areas of expression.*

