

to provide such classes financially, but also wealthy in the fact that they recognize the exceptionality of gifted and talented students.

Other school districts do not have the funds or manpower to make separate classrooms. In some of these school districts they do not allow their gifted students to accelerate, but do provide enrichment. These enrichment classes are sometimes last only thirty to forty-five minutes a week and are under the special education department. Imagine how a gifted student might feel if they are told it is time to go to their “special ed” class. Gifted students do not need to be made to feel “different”, they already know they are.

Solutions

It would be easy to say that there was a one-size-fits-all solution to the unique challenges of dealing with gifted students. Of course there is no magic pill that will solve all of the issues created by their non-traditional learning situations. It is important as educators and parents to gifted students that we recognize their “different-ness” without drawing attention to it.

We should never make them feel stupid. One gifted 1st grader told her parents that her teacher thought she was the “stupidest kid on the planet”. The reason behind this was explained by the child. “They think I need to review the spelling words for four whole days to learn them, they must think I’m stupid.” Another gifted student complained that the reading list was the same two years in a

row. “Do they really think I need to read this book again this year? There are so many others I haven’t read yet!”

We should allow gifted students time to pursue their gift. If they excel in math, then allow them to accelerate and spend more time chasing more complicated math. One 8th grade gifted student complained that he had to spend too much time doing “normal” school stuff and not enough time studying the sciences that would help him get into veterinarian school. He explained his need to study this way, “Doctors only have to know one set of organs and systems, veterinarians need to know multiple systems because their patient might be mammalian, avian, or reptilian.”

We should remember that they are children. Despite the fact that they may have abilities beyond those of an average student, they still have issues with friends, hormones, and life, just like anyone else. Just because they are gifted does not mean that they will not feel stress, fear, or uncontrolled excitement, just like other children. We should also remember that they do see the world with a broader view than others their age. Gifted students often worry about things that are bigger than they are like world peace, or crashing economies, or the implications of pandemics. Adults might consider those things useless for gifted children to worry about, but that doesn’t stop the fact that these gifted students can and do worry about things that are beyond their ability to control because they are indeed still children.

Ways We Fail Our Gifted Students

Linda LW

Traditional education seems to have a love/hate relationship with gifted students. On one hand gifted students are much admired and desired. After all, their scores tend to raise the average, and they are easy to teach. On the other hand, to reach their full potential they need special circumstances, things that might be difficult to achieve in traditional classrooms.

Expectations

When students are considered gifted we expect them to be exceptional students across the board. When they are not as exceptional in all subjects they are often accused of being lazy or not trying. The truth is that gifted students often have asynchronous abilities. As teachers we need to understand that gifted students might be grades ahead in one subject, but on level or even behind in other subjects.

We need to adapt our expectations. Just because a student is gifted does not mean that they will be easy to teach or even cooperative. We also need to adapt our expectations so that those expectations do not cause the gifted student more stress. One example of this might be the expectation that a gifted student will automatically do well on tests, and eventually go to college, with full scholarships. Just because a student is gifted does not mean that their desire will be to follow that plan for their future.

Accommodations

In many traditional classroom models it is difficult to accommodate gifted students because they do not behave or learn like the average student, or the below average student. Most classrooms are geared to teach to the masses, meaning that at best the curriculum is geared to the average student. In recent years, with the No Child Left Behind model in place, sometimes the classroom is geared to making sure that the lowest ability students will be accommodated. But where does that leave the gifted student?

Sometimes the traditional system will “lose” a gifted student because that student is frustrated and bored. Worse than not challenging gifted students is the practice of pairing them with students who “need” extra help. While some gifted students thrive in this situation, others become even more frustrated because they are forced to share responsibility for another student’s success. If we do not allow the gifted student to soar where they can then it is truly a waste of a gift.

Special Education

In some traditional school districts there are gifted and talented classes where exceptional students are placed with other exceptional students so that they can learn to their full potential. Those school districts are wealthy indeed, not just in the ability