



Five Myths About Gifted Students

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Gifted students can sometimes be the target of myths or prejudice. These are the main ones:



1) GIFTED STUDENTS ARE TOP OF THE CLASS

Some gifted students perform very well at school, especially in the early years; in a welcoming, stimulating environment; if they choose a pathway that interests them; or if gifted education strategies are used at school. However, in other cases gifted students may will not be top of the class. Being an outstanding student at school is not the same as being gifted. Gifted youth have a non-sequential thought process, a method of learning which is qualitatively different from their classmates. They may give the answer without being able to explain how they got there, or offer original solutions, have abstract thoughts and desire to explore the topic in a more deep and nuanced way. These characteristics may lead them to not excel at school: some of them may underachieve and some may drop out of school at a early stage.

2) THEY ARE BRILLIANT AT MATHS

While some gifted children are brilliant at mathematics, some of them are not. Often, people think that achieving well in maths is a hallmark of the gifted children or teens; this is also a fairly common trope that is often seen in books and movies. However, gifted children may not present particular talent or strong passion for maths. They may have talents or interests in others areas (also extracurricular), such as literature, history, geography, geopolitics, economics, foreign languages, art, music, medical science, sport. These interests are just harder to identify than maths.

3) THEY DON'T NEED SPECIAL HELP AT SCHOOL

In contrast to what you might think, gifted children, being highly complex individuals, may find the school environment not stimulating, or may experience difficulties in learning according to the traditional methods used for other students. Especially in the early years of school gifted children may learn without having to study, by only listening to the lesson in class, hence they may not learn to develop a study method, and hence run into difficulties as the volume of work increases. Some of them may adapt themselves and lose interest for the academic subjects. Therefore, some gifted students underachieve, or even drop out of school at an early

stage. This is true especially if they do not receive support with educational strategies and with their emotional and relational needs. It is therefore essential that schools actively support gifted students by providing an inclusive environment that takes into account their special needs.

4) THEY ARE ENCOURAGED BY THEIR PARENTS

Gifted students can learn many things, also about unusual topics or subjects that may be considered complex for their age. Sometimes, teachers and peers' parents think that the knowledge they have on those topics is due to encouragement from their parents. However, the willingness to learn and analyze topics from deeper insights and perspectives is in the nature of these students. Additionally, they tend to show interest in unconventional topics, and want to learn more about them. Generally, this engagement with learning and knowledge is not influenced by parents and is not the result of pressure exerted on them, as these interests usually come from the children themselves. Usually gifted children spontaneously decide to read books in order to explore specific topics in a more nuanced way, or to visit museums, to attend workshops or to meet other children that share their same interests.

5) THEY HAVE BEHAVIORAL OR RELATIONAL ISSUES

Another myth about gifted students is that they may be seen as children or teens with behavioral or relational issues. However, this is not the case for many of them. Generally their behavior is often appropriate and they may also be seen as 'leaders' by their friends. However, on the other hand, sometimes gifted and talented children and teens may present some difficulties: this may happen because they are twice exceptional, such as in the case of ADHD, when children may appear restless and hyperactive, or in the case of autism spectrum disorder, when they may have difficulties with socialization or to adapt to changes in the routine. In absence of twice exceptionality, the difficulties in behavioral and social areas may depend on other factors linked to the characteristics of the gifted students or to an unsuitable environment. Appearing bored in lessons, having high levels of motor energy and impatience may cause the gifted children to wander around the classroom and disturb other students; due to their curiosity they may ask many questions; having specific interests not shared by their peers, a different approach to social interaction, more affinity with older children and teens lead them to a more complex

process of socialization. Very often, by encouraging these students or offering them more engaging material, and by supporting them in their emotional or relational needs, by including them in groups of students with similar interests, the behavioral and social issues previously stated will either diminish or disappear.

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