

Parenting Gifted Kids 101: An Introduction to Gifted Kids and Their Needs (A Mini-Course for Parents)

Tracy Inman, Ed.D.

The Center for Gifted Studies at Western Kentucky University

World Council for Gifted and Talented Children 22nd Biennial Conference

Sydney, Australia

tracy.inman@wku.edu

Parents of gifted children should learn all they can about giftedness, be engaged in their students' lives, be advocates for their children in schools, be intentional about finding appropriate services outside of the school, and above all, be cautious about their social/emotional needs. That's a tall order, huh?

Jennifer Chaplin, Gifted Resource Coordinator

Course Outline

- ◇ What does gifted mean?
- ◇ What are the myths about gifted children?
- ◇ What does a gifted child look like?
- ◇ What are the social and emotional needs of gifted children?
- ◇ What should school look like for my child?
- ◇ What challenges might school hold for my child?
- ◇ How can I communicate and partner with my child's school?
- ◇ What can I do at home to help my child?
- ◇ What does it mean to be twice-exceptional?
- ◇ Where can I find more information?

What are the
myths about
gifted
children?



There are a lot of teachers that still believe smart students are the ones that are obedient and complete all their assignments. It is difficult to get them to understand that the biggest troublemaker in their classroom might be the most gifted. It is also difficult to get them to understand how much gifted students can struggle with executive functioning such as self-regulation and flexibility.

Tracy Harkins, parent

True or False: What Do You Believe? What Does the Research Say?

- _____ 1. All children are gifted.
- _____ 2. Gifted kids get by on their own.
- _____ 3. Grade skipping is emotionally and socially damaging.
- _____ 4. Gifted students are needed in every class to be role models.
- _____ 5. Using gifted students as tutors is a good service for them.
- _____ 6. Gifted students are high achievers.
- _____ 7. IQ or achievement tests are effective ways to identify gifted students.
- _____ 8. A child with a learning difficulty can be gifted.
- _____ 9. Gifted children thrive with more work.
- _____ 10. Just because a child is gifted in one area does not mean he is gifted in all areas.
- _____ 11. Even if the curriculum is accelerated for all students, services are still needed for gifted learners.
- _____ 12. Do not expect gifted students to be model students.

3. Grade skipping is socially and emotionally damaging.

False

While the popular perception is that a child who skips a grade will be socially stunted, fifty years of research shows that moving bright students ahead (whether that be through grade skipping, early entrance to school, or any other of the many types of acceleration) has strongly positive results, both academically and socially.

How do we know this?

A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students (2004)

www.accelerationinstitute.org/nation_deceived/

A Nation Empowered: Evidence Trumps the Excuses Holding Back America's Brightest Students (2015)

[www.accelerationinstitute.org/nation_empowered/Institute for Research and Policy Acceleration](http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/nation_empowered/Institute_for_Research_and_Policy_Acceleration)

The Connie Belin & Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Development, The University of Iowa

www.accelerationinstitute.org/

Acceleration is so important to children. Why must our kids always be grouped by age? What if the primary grades all did reading at the same time and split into reading groups by readiness? What if they did the same for math? The upper elementary grades could do the same thing. We are very assessment driven these days, but only seem to care about the end-of-year assessment. We use assessment as a gotcha at the end or as a worry stone about the gotcha at the end. If we really used assessment to determine what kids already know and allow them to move on, we'd have lots of documentation to show they grew.

Lynette Breedlove, state residential STEM school director

If we allow ourselves to challenge, question, and probe some of gifted education's myths, we can develop new models and approaches that will be practical, cost-efficient, and readily implemented in schools.

Donald Treffinger, gifted education scholar

What does a
gifted child look
like?



Bright children are often opinionated and can be quite obstinate. They are often hard to parent as they are quite stubborn and also can be quite self-sufficient. Don't let this fool you; they definitely need boundaries and parenting. They doubt themselves and lack self-confidence just like most children. All children need love and reassurance even when they think – and sometimes are – smarter than their parents.

Karen Bickett, parent

What do we know?

The picture of the “egghead,” scrawny, bespectacled genius child is a myth.



Gifted children are more likely to be healthy, attractive, active youngsters with above-average emotional stability, personalities, and social competence.



Their characteristics may be interpreted positively or negatively depending on the person and the situation.

Two-Sides of the Same Characteristics

For each characteristic, list an example or two of how it might be perceived positively and an example or two of how it might be perceived negatively.

Positive Perception	Characteristic	Negative Perception
	Reasons well	
	Learns rapidly	
	Extensive vocabulary	
	Sensitive	
	Curious	
	Questions authority	
	Vivid imagination	
	Concerned with fairness and justice	
	Long attention span; hyper-focus	
	Excellent memory	

(Characteristics based on Silverman's Characteristics of Giftedness Scale available here: <http://www.gifteddevelopment.com/media/235>; Handout adapted from Lynette Breedlove)

I would like classroom teachers to be more familiar with the characteristics of gifted students. For example, gifted students are not always the highest performing students in the class. They are sometimes the students who are unorganized, do not complete class work, and are sometimes distracted or not paying attention to instruction. They also may be the students who have anxiety because they want everything they do to be perfect.

Ruth Kertis, parent

E. Paul Torrance's Manifesto

- ◇ Don't be afraid to “fall in love with” something and pursue it with intensity. (You will do best what you like to do most.)
- ◇ Know, understand, take pride in, practice, develop, exploit, and enjoy your greatest strengths.
- ◇ Learn to free yourself from the expectations of others and to walk away from the games they try to impose on you.
- ◇ Free yourself to “play your own game” in such a way as to make good use of your gifts.
- ◇ Find a great teacher or mentor who will help you.
- ◇ Don't waste a lot of expensive, unproductive energy trying to be well rounded. (Don't try to do everything; do what you can do well and what you love.)
- ◇ Learn the skills of interdependence. (Learn to depend on one another, giving freely of your greatest strengths and most intense loves.)

Tracy Inman, Ed.D.
tracy.inman@wku.edu

