

Ten Things All Administrators Should Know About Gifted Students*

1. Gifted students are not all alike. They vary in respect to general ability, domain-specific aptitude, interests and predispositions, and motivation and personality. Thus one program or service is insufficient to respond to their diverse needs. Therefore, a continuum of services is needed.
2. Gifted students benefit from interaction with peers. Intellectual peerage contributes to important growth patterns in all subject areas (Kulik & Kulik, 1992). For example, cooperative learning, carried out in heterogeneous classroom settings, produces no growth (Rogers, 2001). Cluster grouping and pull out services provide these growth opportunities for gifted students.
3. Gifted students need various forms of acceleration throughout their school years, ranging from content acceleration to Advanced Placement or dual enrollment to mentorships (Shiever & Maker, 2003; Renzulli & Reis, 2003; Clasen & Clasen, 2003).
4. Gifted students are capable of producing high level products in specific areas of learning at the level of a competent adult (NAGC, 1990). For example, fourth graders can draft a policy for pollution that would rival an adult community committee. Gifted pull out programs provide opportunities for deeper understandings, real-world problem-solving and authentic products.
5. Gifted students need to be challenged and stimulated by an advanced and enriched curriculum that is above their current level of functioning in each area of learning (VanTassel-Baska, 2003), including concept-based, problem-based, and service learning curricula.
6. Gifted students need to be instructed by personnel trained in the education of gifted students to ensure that they are sufficiently challenged, exposed to appropriate level work, motivated to excel (Croft, 2003), and must enjoy working with these high-level learners.
7. Gifted students at elementary level require differentiated staffing and flexible scheduling to accommodate their needs [which includes pull-out services]; at secondary level, they require special classes (Feldhusen, 2003).
8. Gifted students have counseling needs that require psychosocial, academic, and career preparation on an annual basis (Colangelo, 2003; Greene, 2002; Jackson & Snow, 2004; Silverman, 1993). At the elementary level, gifted specialists through pull out services provide these opportunities. At secondary level, assigning one counselor to the gifted may be the best staffing model to employ.
9. Gifted students have affective characteristics that render them vulnerable in school settings such as perfectionism, sensitivity, and intensity (Lovecky, 1992; Robinson, 2002). These affective needs are addressed in pull out services. However, these needs are not addressed due to lack of gifted specialists.
10. Gifted students in general have healthy social relationships and adjust well to new situations (Robinson, 2002). Concerns for social development more than cognitive growth are rarely warranted. However, gifted students look for intellectual peers, not age peers. Gifted pull out services provide opportunities for these healthy social relationships.

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