

Gifted children: an overview

[Family](#), [Children](#)



Started in the 1970's, America's Gifted & Talented programs are used to enhance the curriculum of students included in either category in order to challenge and strengthen their unique abilities. These students are usually provided a separate class with specialized lessons in all areas and a teacher with a special degree in gifted education. I feel that it is important that the teacher was a gifted student who would know what the students must face as "above average" members of their school. The job market for gifted education offers a wide range of opportunity and gifted teachers are needed all over the

One of the earliest programs for gifted and talented students was set up in 1974, at The Old Donation Center, in Virginia Beach. Students scoring within the top 3% of students on an assessment test are referred here to be further challenged. These students are considered gifted and have special teachers and classes to promote development of their talents and minds. Programs like this began to pop up around the nation in the 70's; however, gifted students were looked down upon by teachers, parents, and peers. Many people considered them to be "freaks" because they were different.

They didn't understand the implications of the terms "gifted" and "talented". Most people simply expected gifted students to act more mature or to be geniuses, even though gifted students are the same as other children in their needs as human beings. Some gifted students were forced to grow up too fast and some simply ignored the fact that they were smarter than others, thus, they were lost in the shuffle. The irony of it all is that gifted-ness seems to run in families and the children of these repressed gifted students are, themselves, But what exactly is a "gifted" student?

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Students (elementary & secondary) are given a repertoire of tests. These tests check IQ, psychomotor ability, specific academic aptitude/talent, creative and productive thinking, leadership ability, and skills in the visual and performing arts. The main requirement, the IQ, is tested by a standardized IQ test (remember, however, that IQ tests are not always perfectly accurate). Ratings are given to each bracket of IQ scores: If a student receives a rating of "gifted" or higher (130+), he/she is considered to be a gifted student and is introduced into the designated programs.

These students are given the opportunity to choose classes that are meant to teach them how to use their minds for critical thinking, reasoning, and artistic pursuits. Students in these classes are also exposed to culture, literature, and other subject areas that are not usually covered in what they term "normal classes". The gifted classes are mainly in an open format allowing the student to create the parameters of his/her work and allowing them to be creative in their learning experience. Each class is presided-over by a teacher that has specialized degrees in gifted education.

Almost every school in the United States has a need for a gifted class, making job opportunities endless; there are never Gifted teachers must have both a degree in education (secondary or elementary) and a degree in special education (gifted). These teachers are individuals that must have stamina, people skills, and open minds. It is also important (to the students) that the teacher himself/herself was also classified as gifted. It sets a common bond, shows them that the teacher understands the problems they face as so-called "smart kids".

These students are often ridiculed by their peers and looked-down upon by their teachers. They are often separated from others their age by a barrier that can only be described as their "intelligence". This is why, often, gifted teachers have degrees in administration, counseling, or psychology. All teachers that I interviewed told me that a continually upgraded education is a must (as are additional degrees). In order to keep up with the students one must attend seminars, workshops, special classes, etc. There is no end to the amount of education that could help you to understand gifted students and the role of their teacher".

Also, if a teacher has extra educational qualifications, he/she could be asked to step up to the position of administrator or, more often, counselor. This means pay raises. Though the average salary for teachers is approximately \$27,500 per year, it is "a worthwhile undertaking" according to Jane Mansueto, "It is incredible to work with gifted students. They are incredible!" She went on to remark that it is fascinating to imagine that they are of the same level of intelligence as the teacher and what they must be feeling inside.

She feels that the students are not bothered by what their peers think, but actually tend to understand that other's opinions mean little compared to their own. Mrs. Mansueto taught at Elm Grove Middle School for 5 years. She commented on her role as a gifted teacher to consist of "one part mentorship, one part hardship, and one part friendship". When asked what kind of hours she keeps, she laughed and asked if she was supposed to have time off. According to Mrs. Mansueto, unlike a "normal" teacher, a gifted

teacher has no books to go by or preset material to teach, or, or that matter, a preset subject to teach.

They are given a blank page and, using input from students, must draw up lessons from every subject area and constantly challenge the inquisitive minds of the gifted. Jane Mansueto attended Trinity College where she majored in both elementary education and gifted education. Her favorite part of being a gifted teacher is being with the students, working hand in hand with them to plan and carry out projects and trips. Though the pay is average, and there is not much room to be promoted if you wish to remain in the classroom, gifted teaching has its personal rewards.

Jeff Simpleton, a gifted teacher as well as a former gifted student, states, " I really think that by being gifted, I am in touch with what they have to go through. They know that I can understand. " Mr. Simpleton" s class consists of 6 high school students, who have many problems due to the intelligence barrier and a kind of isolation that has built up over the years between themselves and their classmates. They seem to feel that they have a reputation that they must live up to.

The students try to please everyone... they push themselves with sheer motivation and determination and drive. Mr. Simpleton feels that this is " what makes them so great". He feels that anyone with a sense of adventure and a need for something new day after day would find teaching a gifted class to be the perfect job for Gifted teachers are important to the development of their students minds. They are understanding individuals

who must work hard to make the curriculum interesting and challenging.

With the proper education it is possible to go far as a teacher of the gifted.