

# Myths About the Parents of Gifted Children

There are nearly as many myths about parents of gifted children as there are about gifted children themselves. It is important to understand these myths if you are going to engage and work with these parents to best help their child.

## Myth #1: Parents think their child is better than others

This comes down to the elitism that many gifted programs have been labeled with. Sometimes schools feed into this by saying they are putting their best and brightest together. By claiming these are the best kids, that does say to a parent we think these students are better. Instead, gifted programming should be careful to label itself as a service that fills a very specific type of child's needs. It is important for the school to take the lead in absolving this elitism.

## Myth #2: Parents are overly involved (helicopter parents)

To some the perception is the parents of gifted children are overly involved, when in actuality it just shows they care. There are many gifted children whose parents are not involved in their education at all and this lack of support can lead to underachievement. Parental involvement in school, especially when you engage the parent in two-way communication, has been found to positively affect the self-perception of a teacher as well as job satisfaction (Tschannen-Moran, 2007).

## Myth #3: Parents are too demanding of teachers

Because gifted students often are not challenged in the regular classroom, parents become dissatisfied and ask that the teacher challenge their child to reach his potential. After all, is that not why we send our children to school? This is where the misconception of being demanding parents comes in. From the parent's perspective, they are just asking the teacher to do his/her job. To the teacher, it seems like the parent is telling them how to teach her class.

## Myth #4: Parents push their child to excel

There is always tension in how much to push your child. How many children were not pushed and as a result fell into a comfortable routine where they do the bare minimum? There is nothing more frustrating as a teacher of gifted students than a child you know can do better but is not. High ceilings come with high expectations of ability and not pushing them a little would be doing them a disservice.

## Myth #5: Their child was just born gifted

Parents understandably want to be given some of the credit for their child's ability more than just contributing DNA,

especially if they have provided opportunities and worked to nurture them. To simply dismiss the hard work parents have done with their child and attribute a gifted child's abilities to good genes is demeaning to the efforts of these parents. Their child may have been born gifted, but without some sort of nurturing, it is difficult for a child to succeed. Acknowledging these efforts by the parents goes a long way in creating a good working relationship with them.

## Myth #6: Parents want their children in gifted programming

This is one I struggled with when I first became a gifted services coordinator. It did not make any sense to me when I offered services to a family and they decided to pass on them. I came to the realization that the school's role is to provide opportunities. If a family chooses not to use these opportunities, that is their choice.

## Myth #7: Parents of gifted children are all from the upper socio/economic range

There is no doubt that children from more affluent families tend to get picked up by the gifted radar more often than those from lower socio/economic backgrounds. In a recent study by the National Center for Research on Gifted Education (2018), researchers found that students from low income families are far less likely to be identified for gifted and talented programs. That does not mean these children are not gifted. It means school districts need to do a better job of identifying these children.

## Myth #8: Parents know how to best work and understand their gifted child

There is a difference between knowing your child well and understanding how to best work with a gifted child. This means you will have to spend time educating parents on how to work with gifted children. Many times, parents of gifted children feel as though the issues they are experiencing are unique to their family. Learning that others with gifted children experience similar problems can be reassuring that they are not in it alone. **THP**

## Reference

Hamilton, R., McCoach, D. B., Tutwiler, M. S., Siegle, D., Gubbins, E. J., Callahan, C. M., Mun, R. U. (2018). Disentangling the role of institutional and individual poverty in the identification of gifted students. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 62, 6-24