Ten Myths about Gifted Students and Programs for Gifted

The following is excerpted from CNN’s blog “Schools of Thought” in a commentary by noted teacher, speaker and author Caroline Coil.

- Myth No. 1: Intelligence is inherited and does not change. Gifted students, therefore, do not need any special services. “A beautiful flower inherits certain traits. But if it is not watered and fed and if it does not get the right amount of sunlight, it does not develop as it could. The same is true for gifted children.”

- Myth No. 2: Giftedness can easily be measured by intelligence tests and tests of achievement. “...[some] children may be gifted but are not good at taking tests. They may not score well on standardized tests but may be gifted, especially in creative and productive thinking.”

- Myth No. 3: There is no need to identify gifted students in the early grades. “providing engaging, responsive learning environments ... benefit all children, including young gifted children.”

- Myth No. 4: Gifted students read all the time, wear glasses and/or are physically and socially inept. “There is no one type of person or personality we can pinpoint as gifted.”

- Myth No. 5: Gifted kids are all model students – they’re well-behaved and make good grades. “...[some] challenge teachers, do their own thing instead of the assigned work, procrastinate until the last minute when doing long-range assignments, get low grades, are disorganized and have poor study skills.”

- Myth No. 6: All gifted students work up to their potential. “Gifted underachievers may decide they will only do the minimum requirements and choose the easy work instead of more challenging tasks. They often lack study and organizational skills because in the early grades they don’t need to develop them. Some get discouraged when the work doesn’t come easily, and others don’t want to look gifted because it isn’t ‘cool.’ ”

- Myth No. 7: Teaching gifted students is easy. “...good teachers add to their skills and learn new strategies and techniques targeted particularly to meeting the needs of the gifted. Most teachers of the gifted tell me this is the hardest, most challenging, most exhausting and most rewarding teaching they have ever done.”

- Myth No. 8: Gifted students will get by on their own without any special help from the school. “Gifted students require special services and programs to ensure the growth rather than the loss of their outstanding abilities.”

- Myth No. 9: It never hurts gifted students to teach others what they already know. “Peer tutoring using gifted students to teach others may be using for more advanced work, more rigorous and more higher-level thinking.”

- Myth No. 10: All children are gifted. “...all children have distinctive and unique qualities that make each one valuable. This does not mean, however, that all children are gifted. Being identified as gifted simply means that certain children have needs that are different from most others at their age and grade level.”