

Ten Things Arkansas Teachers Need to Know About Gifted Students

1. They are students with special needs.

Arkansas Rules and Regulations for Gifted Programming defines "gifted" as children of high potential or ability, whose learning characteristics and educational needs require qualitatively differentiated educational experiences or services.

2. Gifted students don't "take care of themselves."

Gifted students don't come to us having all the knowledge and skills necessary to reach their full potential. Gifted programs in Arkansas join hands with regular education in providing support in differentiating instruction to provide gifted students with the specialized learning opportunities that will provide them with growth. When gifted students are left on their own, their skills diminish and their interest wanes. Behavior problems may emerge, and the child's sense of self-worth is jeopardized. In looking at dropout statistics, it is important to note that being gifted does not protect students from dropping out.

3. They may require any of a range of services, including academic programming and social and emotional guidance.

Gifted students generally benefit from two types of curriculum modification - *acceleration* and *enrichment*. Through acceleration, the student completes the prescribed curriculum in less time. Acceleration strategies - such as early entrance to primary, skipping a whole grade, within-subject acceleration, curriculum compacting, telescoping, challenge for credit and early admission to college or university - increase the pace at which gifted students learn. Enrichment strategies may be employed when the student keeps pace with his age peers but has blocks of time available for in-depth study of a topic of interest. Not only academic needs, but social and emotional needs of gifted students must be met through specialized guidance to help students tap their full potential.

4. Gifted students go through a thorough identification process.

In Arkansas schools a placement committee of at least five professional educators, chaired by a licensed teacher of the gifted reaches a consensus that a student needs gifted services to meet their unique educational needs. This decision is based on data from multiple criteria including both objective assessments and subjective data. Referrals are sought from a wide variety of sources. No single criterion or cut-off score is used to include or exclude a student.

5. They need opportunities to be with other gifted students.

Gifted students need time to be with their same-ability peers. An extensive meta-analysis on ability grouping conducted by Karen Rogers (1998) has revealed that:

- Advanced students benefit from being grouped together.
- Like-ability groups are academically beneficial to all students when compared to mixed-ability groups.
- Pairing a low-ability student with a high-ability student academically benefits the low-ability student only.
- Grouping of any sort without curricular modification does not produce academic gains.

Arkansas encourages a variety of gifted programming options that allows gifted students to be with their academic/intellectual peers.

6. Gifted students are not required to make up all regular classroom work when being pulled for gifted services.

Curriculum for the gifted extends or replaces the regular curriculum. Arkansas Gifted and Talented Rules state "Curriculum for the gifted must differ not only in degree, but in kind. It is important to avoid simply 'more of the same.' It should be in place of rather than in addition to required classroom work. Students should not be penalized for being identified as gifted by being given extra work."

7. They mature at different rates in different domains.

Asynchronous or uneven development in physical, emotional, social, and cognitive domains occurs in all children, but it is more pronounced in gifted students because their intellect invites more adult treatment. For example, a thirteen year old student could be ready for college level courses, but not be ready to live in a dorm.

8. Gifted students exist across cultural, gender and socio-economic groups.

Statistics show that certain populations are at risk of not being referred, identified, or served in gifted programs. Arkansas is making efforts to do a better job identifying gifted students who are also minority, low-socioeconomic, and English language learners. It is the responsibility of teachers to consider each child individually and not against a hypothetical image of a typical "gifted child." For example, summer regression due to lack of enrichment opportunities can camouflage our gifted low-socioeconomic students.

9. They are not all typical "teacher-pleasers."

Gifted students are typically portrayed as high-achieving, polite, model students who go to college and become professionals. However, while many gifted characteristics manifest themselves in positive behavior, others show up as negative behavior. Some gifted students are plagued by boredom, oversensitivity, disorganization, perfectionism, self-doubt, antagonism, sarcasm or immaturity. It is important to note that gifted students are not gifted in everything. Often overlooked are those gifted students with co-existing disabilities known as twice exceptional students.

10. They need strong advocates.

Gifted education is not without controversy. The focus of much of our educational programming focuses on providing services for the struggling students. Gifted students need administrators, teachers and parents who believe in their potential and seek to have their talents developed. Gifted education is not a frill - it is the nurturing of our future leaders.



AAGEA

Arkansas Association of Gifted Education Administrators

Adapted from *Ten Things Teachers Need to Know About Gifted Students* by Janine MacAulay