

Q. Why do some teachers, principals, and other school personnel seem to have negative attitudes toward gifted students?

A. Unfortunately, studies show that this is too often true. Children who are gifted do not fit easily into the structure of most schools and classrooms. Because they can be two to four years ahead of the curriculum offered at any grade level, they make it very hard for a teacher of twenty to thirty other children to find appropriate curricular experiences for them. They often question and seek more information about ideas than the teacher is prepared to give. Teachers may see children who are gifted as a challenge to their authority. They may refuse to do work that they consider boring or to repeat or practice lessons if they already understand the material. In a classroom where everyone is expected to do much the same work and cover the same material, this can be seen as a real problem. Pupils who are gifted can be demanding, challenging, intense, critical, oversensitive, highly verbal, and physically active, and they can devour material rapidly. None of these traits are problems in themselves, but they can present real problems for teachers who are not prepared to meet these needs. Some teachers do not know what to do with these youngsters and feel incompetent and threatened by them. For administrators, children who are gifted present needs for special services. This may be perceived as pressure on an already tight budget or cause special arrangements to be made that seem unnecessary. Fortunately, these attitudes often can be changed with professional development in gifted education.

Q. Do culturally diverse students require a separate curriculum?

A. If instruction is differentiated, a separate curriculum is not necessary. What is important, however, is that the teacher and others involved in gifted programming in which cultural diversity exists hold positive attitudes toward cultural differences, that they are aware of cultural and ethnic history and traditions, that lots of resources related to diverse populations are made available, and that the program is flexible and responsive to each child's needs.

SOURCE: Adapted from B. Clark, *Growing Up Gifted*, 7th ed., © 2008. Adapted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.
