

Advocating Effectively for Gifted Education: What to Say and Why

Centralia School District

February 25, 2016

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- Some myths about gifted kids
- A few basics
- Smart affects more than school performance
- What adults who care can do

Things we will explore

- I hate the word “gifted”
 - Poorly understood (“Every child is gifted”)
 - Negative connotations
 - Many believe it is elitist
- But, it’s the term used by researchers and most professional organizations
- Synonyms
 - Smart, very bright, high intelligence, highly capable
 - NOT (necessarily) high-achieving

Gifted is the LEGAL term for really smart

Those students who perform or who show promise of performing at high levels in any one of five categories: general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking, leadership ability or visual/performing arts.

U.S. federal definition of gifted

Intelligence is
inherited and does
not change, i.e., needs
no special services.

Myth #1

Gifted students will get by on their own without any special help from the school.

Myth #2

All children
are gifted.

Myth #3

Gifted kids are the
over indulged
children of affluent
parents

Myth #4

Gifted is **DIFFERENT** than bright and needs intervention



Highly capable
education is an
intervention

Not a privilege!



All gifted students
work up to their
potential

Myth #5

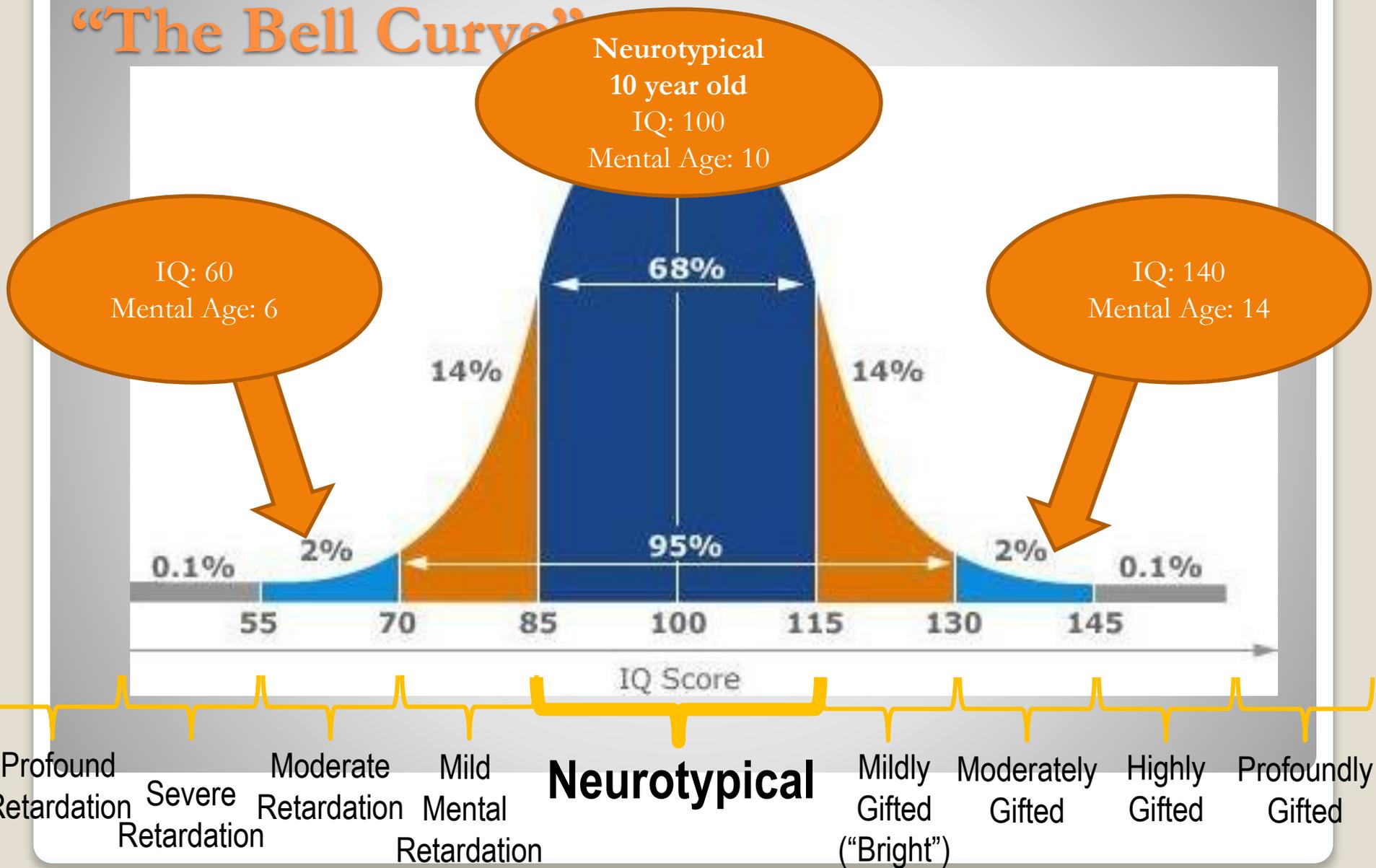
- Smart is not cool.
- Hard to talk about.
- Similar to a thin person trying to explain to others why it is hard to gain weight.

Difficult Conversation

- Underachievement that is hard to reverse
- No opportunity to develop grit
- Twice exceptional issues may be hidden until the material gets challenging enough
- 15-20% of gifted drop out of high school
- Suffer self esteem issues
- Experience isolation and alienation
- No peers
- Awkward socially

Why does it matter?

“The Bell Curve”



- Different ability/maturity levels in different areas
- Example: a 5 year old
 - Doing math like an 8 year old
 - Reading like a 10 year old
 - Writing like a 6 year old
 - Emotional maturity of a 4 year old
 - Social maturity of an 8 year old
 - Social skills of a 5 year old
- Most gifted kids develop asynchronously
- Don't assume a higher level of maturity...
- MYTH: "If she can't do XX well, then she's not gifted"

Asynchronous

Students who perform or show potential for performing at significantly advanced academic levels when compared with others of their age, experiences, or environments. Outstanding abilities are seen within students' general intellectual aptitudes, specific academic abilities, and/or creative productivities within a specific domain. These students are present not only in the general populace, but are present within all protected classes according to chapters

WAC 392 – 170 – 035

What does Washington law say?

This advanced capacity requires modifications to the regular curriculum to ensure these children are challenged and continually learn new material. Gifted does not connote good or better; it is a term that allows students to be identified for services that meet their unique learning needs.

What is the challenge?

The Columbus Group, 1991: "Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted **renders them particularly vulnerable** and requires modifications in parenting, teaching and counseling in order for them to develop optimally."

What is Giftedness?

Gifted is **DIFFERENT** than bright and needs intervention



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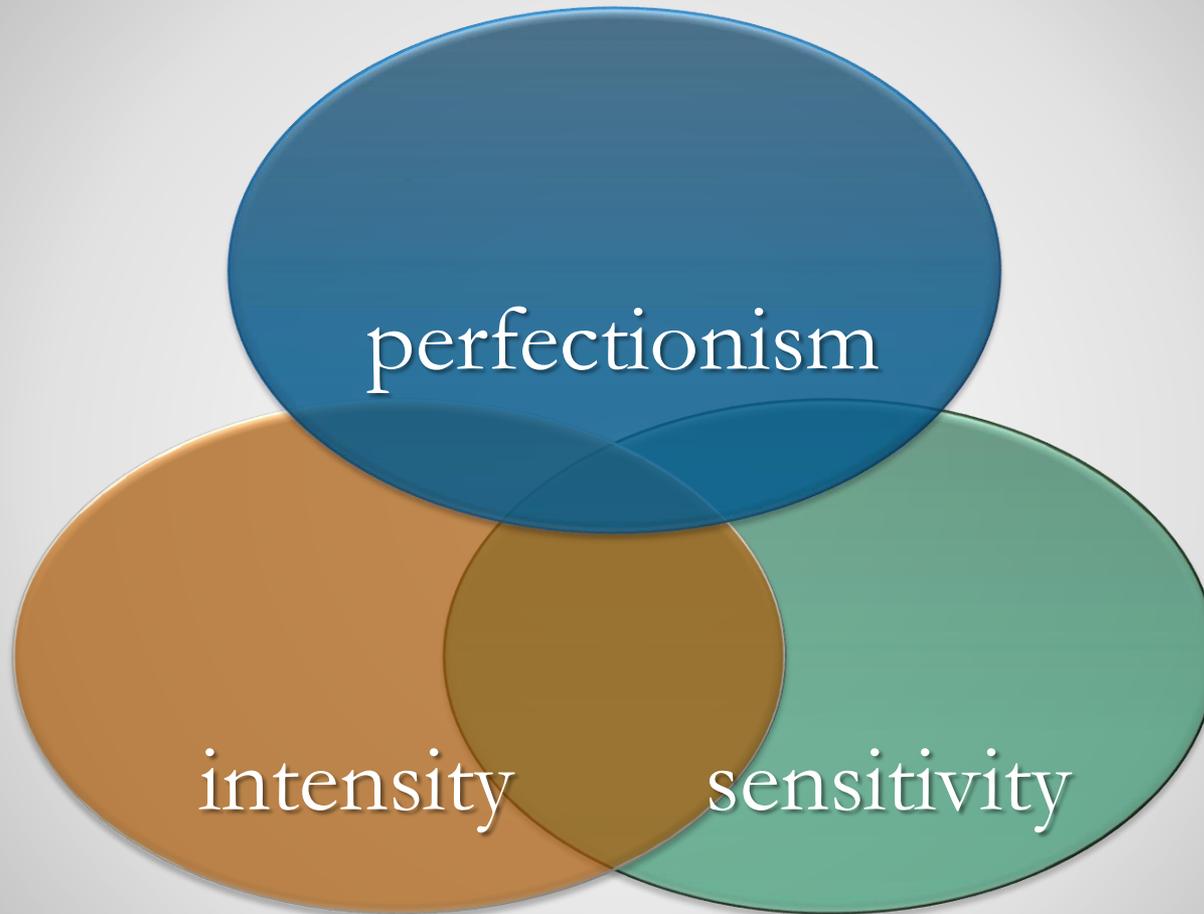
There are well researched
tactics for helping
gifted kids
accommodate their unique
learning styles
and “quirks”

Adults need extra training to help

Gifted kids are all model students – they're well-behaved and make good grades.

Myth #6

Social Emotional
Uniqueness



3 core personality traits

SENG: Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (www.sengifted.org)

All gifted students
work to their
potential.

Myth #7

Perfectionism

- Erase a hole in the paper
- Impatient with others, aren't "doing it right"
- Meltdown at the first sign of trouble
- Can't make a decision
- Hate criticism
- Trouble accepting compliments
- Dwell on mistakes
- Unwilling to start, afraid to try, "I don't want to"
- Reach for impossible goals

- Too loud: fireworks, movies, toilets
- Too scary: movies, even Disney ones!
- Scratchy tags in clothing, buttons, zippers
- Low pain tolerance
- Bathing/swimming: water in my eyes/nose!
- Sensitive to smells
- Picky eater, don't like foods to touch, textures
- Food sensitivities/allergies
- Big reactions to minor setbacks, overreacts to discipline
- Sensory seeking - loves snuggling, soft fabrics...
- Or, hates to be touched...

Sensitivity

- Tears of joy at a beautiful sunset
- So focused they don't "hear" you
- Obsessions about a topic of interest
- Difficulty with transitions
- Big focus on fairness
- Competitive: most, best, fastest, highest
- Intense nightmares, fears
- Sleep issues, hard to settle down to sleep
- Major meltdowns
- Mood swings: higher highs, lower lows
- Stubborn, strong-willed, inflexible

Intensity

Academic Accommodations

- 2013-2014 Transition Year
- 2014-2015 Full Compliance Expected
- Must have nomination, assessment, and selection of the “most highly capable” students in grades K-12

Chapter 28A.185.020 RCW

(1) The legislature finds that, for highly capable students, **access to accelerated learning and enhanced instruction is access to a basic education.**

- 2015 - Historic new federal provisions in ESSA for gifted & talented students

New WA State Law

- Different kids are in different places
- Every kid should learn something new at school every day
 - Vygostky's Zone of Proximal Development
- Not **MORE** work, **DIFFERENT** work
 - Not just more classwork on top of the “regular” stuff
 - Make sure the kid doesn't feel punished for being smart by giving them more work
 - Piles of homework is NOT the goal
 - Not a pressure cooker, just the right level

“Equity” does not mean the same education for every kid

**Have gifted students
to teach others what
they already know to
keep them engaged.**

Myth #8

- Remove traditional rigid age-based curriculum
 - Eliminate 40-50% of curriculum first day
 - Cluster grouping with peers
 - Curriculum compacting
 - Early entrance to kindergarten
 - Acceleration/Grade skipping
 - Magnet school
 - Charter school
 - Private school
 - Homeschool
-
- Let's gifted children move on and explore new or more complex content that is at their level

“All kids should receive gifted education programming

Tremendous emotional
resistance to
these types of
accommodation

Barriers

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Gifted students have fewer problems than others because their intelligence and abilities somehow exempt them from the hassles of daily life.

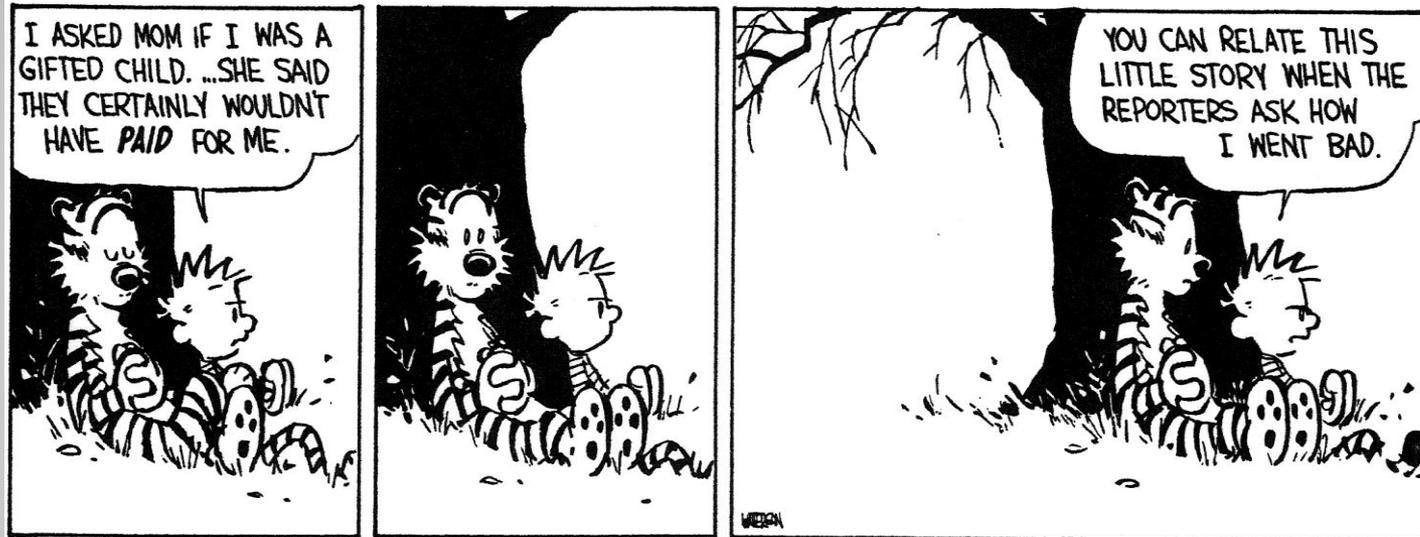
Myth #9

What do the kids think?



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Who should benefit?



**“Gifted Kids Say (and Do)
the Darnedest Things”**

1. No one explains what being gifted is all about.
2. School is too easy and too boring.
3. Parents, teachers, and friends expect us to be perfect all the time.
4. Friends who really understand us are few and far between.
5. Kids tease us about being smart.
6. We feel overwhelmed by the number of things we can do in life.
7. We feel different and alienated.
8. We worry about world problems and feel helpless to do anything about them.

Eight Great Gripes of Gifted Kids

Teaching gifted
students is easy.

Myth #10

- Fund HiCap programs
- Early identification & services are important
 - Social, emotional & academic development
 - They can be tricky to identify, particularly 2e
- Keep looking in secondary school
 - Learning disabilities often get diagnosed late
- Support full time classrooms for HiCap
 - Professional development for HiCap teaching strategies
- Learn more! (see handout)

What can you do?

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