

GIFTED EDUCATION NEWS

December 2015, Gifted Education Coordinators and Communities

Featured Article Resource from **Gifted Ed. Students Are More Than Just Really Smart Kids**, by Anthony Colucci, Nov. 2015

Just this week, a teacher came to me to get advice about how to help a gifted student who is failing her class. Another teacher wanted suggestions about a behavioral plan for an out-of-control student who is gifted. "What do I do about a gifted student who won't write?" asked a coworker. True teacher concerns about meeting the needs of a special, but often misunderstood, group of students. Let's be honest. Most of the discussion about gifted education revolves around identification and under representation issues. While these concerns are discussed and debated over and over again, the needs of the 3 million gifted students right in front of us are put on the back-burner. It's time we started putting an added emphasis on meeting the unique needs of the current gifted population.

My experience teaching an enrichment program for students identified as gifted has given me important insight into gifted students and gifted programs. While policymakers and theorists ponder the future of gifted education, I strongly believe teachers could better serve gifted students now by following these recommendations.

Recognize That Gifted Students Are Exceptional-Education Students

For years, there have been debates about how to foster the development of gifted children. These controversial issues include skipping grades, creating full-time gifted programs, or employing pull-out enrichment programs. The truth is all service models have advantages and disadvantages. What I've learned is that teachers' assumptions about gifted students are more important than a particular structure for teaching them. Unfortunately, many teachers who do not receive training about teaching gifted students believe gifted students are simply really smart kids. On behalf of teachers who teach gifted programs and parents with gifted students, I will say this is perhaps the most exasperating belief a person can have about this complex group of students. Last year, a parent of gifted children wrote a blog post that gets to the heart of this issue.

If you want gifted kids to be successful, you must believe that gifted education is exceptional education. Many teachers do extraordinary things to help students with learning disabilities be successful. However, when it comes to students who are gifted, some teachers are inflexible and resentful of the behaviors characteristic of being gifted. Not a week goes by when one of my students' regular education teachers doesn't give me an earful about my students' lack of organizational skills, continuous questioning of authority, or underachievement. I do understand their frustrations; however, these behaviors are actually characteristics of gifted children. Can you imagine teachers berating children with disabilities because of their characteristics? While it may seem counter-intuitive to focus on gifted students in the same way we focus on those with disabilities, it really makes sense.

For the rest of the article, see: <http://mobile.edweek.org/c.jsp?cid=25919971&bcid=25919971&rssid=25919961&item=http%3A%2F%2Fapi.edweek.org%2Fv1%2Ftm%2F%3Fuuid%3DB02CA9F2-9208-11E5-9ABD-71C9B3743667>

Upcoming event:

FDOE Gifted Webinar:

**January 7, 3 p.m., Twice
Exceptional Student issues
and meeting their needs,
with guest speaker Dr.
Kristy Mall.**

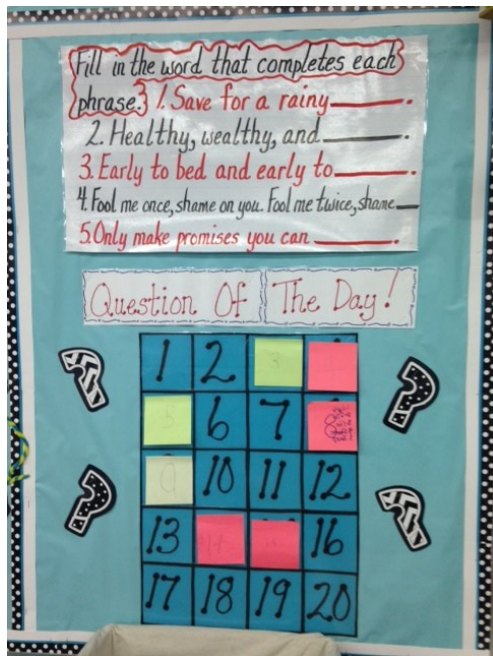
For info on how to join the
webinars, email
Kathleen.Casper@fldoe.org



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Highlights from the

Districts:



A great way to see which students have the answers— each student has a number and they put a sticky note on top of it to answer the questions. (From Marion County.)



Students at Parkway Middle School's CITY program are helping NASA by participating in a project to grow plants with artificial light. (Broward County)

Monroe County's North Pole Adventure

The airport and school district in Key West partner to provide a unique holiday experience for their pre-kindergarten students, that they call the North Pole. Each December, they bus students from all over the Lower Keys to the airport, where they have community members such as police, firefighters and more meet with the students and the students get to see police vehicles, robots, etc. They get to listen while volunteers and teachers read them books and they have music to listen and dance to and more. Then the students receive a meal and a gift and get to mingle with "Santa and his crew."

At the North Pole event this year on December third, the level of excitement was palpable- students were eager to meet the volunteers, they had music playing and Santa was talking with the students. In the schools after that event, the teachers tied the experience to other lessons- students classified their gifts, practiced math skills with candy, read books about holidays and more.

The Whole Community Learns Together in Miami

Coral Park Elementary School's staff and students are proud of their new library that was donated by Target through a communities grant. The room is bright and cheerful and full of new books, furniture and computers that the community can use even beyond the school hours. This community resource stays open until 7 pm and is even open on Saturdays because the district employees are aware that their students and families may not have computers or as many books at home and they often need access to the technology and books at the school so that students can complete homework and parents can help them learn.

Coral Park also provides a Saturday school and about 300 students come in for extra help. Many of the students come from homes where English is their second language, and some families need additional help with school work, so the students and parents are provided with free tutoring and assistance. The Coral Park after school program serves about half of the students who attend the school, and the staff is excited to continue these activities and look for more ways to help their students and families achieve.

