

Good Morning.
Welcome to Gifted Education Day.

I want to start by thanking Representative Karen Giannini for her hard work in making Gifted Education Day happen.

Today we are celebrating teachers, parents and legislators who have contributed so much to gifted education.

I am here as a representative of the parents. I have 2 gifted children. I am also president-elect of the ABQ Association for Gifted and Talented Students, a parent-led advocacy group. In addition, I am very active in our local school community, where I get to interact with many gifted students.

In 1972, the US Congress recognized gifted and talented students as the greatest resource for solving critical national problems. Starting that same year, and continuing non-stop to the present, gifted education has been available here in NM.

We celebrate New Mexico gifted education because it is funded, and mandated by the state. NM is one of only 11 states which guarantee gifted services under special education in the same way that the state guarantees services for children with disabilities.

We also celebrate NM gifted education because they offer a continuum of services, from modifications in the classroom to full-day classes, neither more nor less than a child's special needs, determined by a multi-disciplinary team that includes the teachers, the parents, and often the students themselves.

We celebrate the requirement for gifted teacher certification.

The federal government defines gifted students as students with high achievement potential in academic, creative, artistic, or leadership areas who need services not usually provided by the school to fully develop those capabilities.

We celebrate the mandate for identifying gifted students in NM and the State regulations that clearly define the standards.

As of December of 2009, 14,903 students from 92 districts and charter schools are receiving gifted services. And that number is growing with an emphasis on developing new protocols to aid in identifying ethnic minority gifted students. We have visiting today over 125 gifted students, from Las Cruces, Albuquerque, Los Alamos, Cedar Crest, and Shiprock. The remainder, are taking advantage of their

gifted education in their schools today.

Gifted services here in NM administered under special education are certainly to be celebrated. We have received many requests for information on gifted education here in NM from families moving into the state. Most of these families have no gifted services in their home state. One company was considering re-locating to NM primarily because the owner and several employees had gifted children. And before you start to worry about the additional pressures these new families may bring, consider that research shows that gifted children are usually the progeny of gifted parents. So gifted services not only enable NM students to grow into productive citizens, but gifted services also bring engineers, entrepreneurs, and other resources to our communities, helping to reverse the “brain drain”.

Research shows that gifted students who are not given services often perform below grade-average, have increased risk of social and emotional problems, and are more likely to drop out while gifted students with services are more likely to go on to post-secondary school and more likely to continue on... to earn a PhD.

But numbers and statistics can't tell the whole story... Let's hear it from the ones who know best.. the gifted students themselves. These are snippets from the gifted essays that were submitted as part of a contest to answer “Why I am thankful for gifted education” sponsored by the NM Association for the gifted.

“... I knew I did and thought things differently than my friends. I was doing things in a way they would not have normally done. It was like I had to think in somebody else's mind. I am now with people that think the same way I do. I feel normal in gifted education. .. (HL age 8, Cedar Crest)

Gifted kids also need time with other gifted kids. We usually think similarly, so it is good to put our minds together. .. When you're in a class with other gifted kids, you can learn and think the way you like. Usually when you are gifted, most of your friends are also gifted. The gifted teachers also understand us because they were probably once gifted kids too. SW age 11 ABQ

Gifted class also enables me to expand my skills, as if I am in a box which is constantly expanding, while other peoples' are expanding slowly... to organize my thoughts as well as the skills I am good at, but leaving room for those that I need to work on. This helps me understand how my brain works, and helps me calm down if we are again having a lesson on something I know by heart. I understand that they need this lesson, but gifted class lets me clear my mind and think. DT age 11

Bosque Farms

Go back to fourth grade. Where you happy, sad, or angry? When I was in fourth grade I hated school. I was bullied every day, and ended up becoming very depressed; that was, until I got into Gifted Education. That day, I felt like I was stepping into a wonderful, happy, and warm world where...everyone accepted me for who I was. I never again was bored during class lessons, and had discussions about things I had never even bothered to think about before. That was three years ago, but I still feel the exact same way. . RH. ABQ age 12

Gifted is all-star baseball for students. By that I mean that you have to be good at what you do or you will not make it. Practicing with all star students is like a performance against good players – you have to play at your highest ability. Like sports, if you work hard everyday and keep practicing, you will get it right. LdD age 11 ABQ

Why do people pay money for really good athletes but not for good minds? Imagine a world without intelligence. Where would we be without Albert Einstein or Sir Isaac Newton? If we didn't have great minds we would have so many problems in the world... Those highly intelligent minds didn't invent or discover by being like everyone else. Instead they experimented, took risks, and thought outside of the box. That's how we have a lot of amazing inventions that have solved so many problems. We still have many more to solve. We need to keep gifted in schools so those young minds can excel and help solve the other many problems that the world has. Why would they give more money to athletic people? Sports are fun but sports are not going to help solve problems. Make the world a better place and keep gifted in schools. LC 10 Roswell

Thank you NM for providing outstanding services to these gifted students.