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Why I'm grateful for Gifted Education (and why we should keep it)

The walk that day was scary. My walk was to the gifted classroom at A. Montoya Elementary School. I had just been accepted into the gifted program after being tested twice. I was thrilled to get in, but so nervous. What if they didn't like me? What if it turned out I wasn't smart enough and they had to kick me out? I was shaking by the time I pulled on the handle of the door that creaked loudly then, and probably still does, when anyone opens it.

Of course, my fears were disproved. My classmates and my teacher were welcoming, ziggurats out of clay while our teacher, Ms. Del Verne, read the story of Inkidu and Gilgamesh to us. If we had a substitute, we would make up our own stories about them. In the next three years I would delve deep into Egyptian mythology, write scores of stories, reports, and poems, design a museum made entirely out of different geometric shapes, and create my own mini-newspaper. When it was all over and I was in middle school, I would remember, fondly, all this and more. But as I try to remember individual projects that I did in my 'normal' classes, the ones I spent the most time in, only two or three come to mind.

One of the reasons I'm thankful for Gifted Education, and there are many, is having memories of elementary school. It may sound like one of the minor reasons, but when you think about it, it means something deeper than just memories. When you remember something, that means it was special; it stood out- and it made you learn something. I learned so much in my gifted class, and now, in addition to having the knowledge, I remember learning it. That is a valuable personal tool.

Sadly, I do have negative memories of elementary Gifted, and not of being teased endlessly by classmates because I was smarter than them. No, the negative memories I have are all of being freezing cold. Gifted, since it was not a full time class, was always in a portable classroom. That particular portable, and others, were not adequately heated- if at all. In the wintertime, when it was extremely cold, we would come in from outside and not take off any winter clothes. Writing with gloves was certainly a challenge. Sometimes, when it was really cold, we would all troop up to the main building and get a couple space heaters that weren't being used, then lug them back and take turns huddling around them, working.

This is only one example of how gifted education is underfunded, though I suppose it could be considered a maintenance issue. The important part is: this has happened to many others, not just me. Please, keep gifted programs going, and their subjects warm, so we can all have definite and fond memories as well as the learning we gained!