

Regina Reyes, Age 15
Albuquerque, New Mexico
Valley High School

Why I Am Thankful for Gifted Education

As a gifted student, there are many reasons I am grateful for gifted education. In the place of mundane, tiring assignments, we have assignments that test not only our intellect, but also our creativity. Instead of being restricted to school requirements and a boring text book, we are allowed to explore and expand our interest and knowledge of the lesson by going in-depth and finding ways to apply the lesson to our own lives. Though I am grateful for the two reasons listed above, I must admit that the reason I am most thankful for gifted education is the bonds that form between the members of my gifted classes. Of course there are other reasons I am grateful for gifted education, but the three I have stated are my strongest and main reasons that I am thankful for my gifted classes.

Our creative assignments are a wonderful break from the numerous essays, reports, and research papers that are the usual requirement of high school classes. For the normal high school student, not only is school boring, but assignments such as essays and papers addle our brain until we start to hate such assignments. Unlike normal my curricular classes, my gifted classes often have assignments that could be enjoyable and also usually correlate to my class's interests. We learn our lessons in unconventional and different ways than a normal class. For example, we are currently writing a spoof of a Midsummer Night's Dream, with music, humor, and theatre, which correspond to the interests of those in my class in at least one way. Interesting and fun assignments such as the one we are working on right now keep school interesting.

We as a gifted class are allowed to go in depth and discover for ourselves how a subject relates to our lives. Our lessons are often interactive, letting us to really get into it. For example, when we studied history through music, we learned how to dance some dances from the 50's, 60's 70's, 80's, and 90's. We become involved with the lesson. As a result, we can have fun while learning. This freedom to explore helps us apply the lessons to our lives and enjoy it more.

I am perhaps most grateful for the bonds that form between the students in my gifted classes. While we are in the classroom, it is like we are in our own non-judgmental world. We have many open discussions, and we work out problems together. We give advice and simply appear to be friends within those walls. Even our teacher has become an important adult and confidant in our lives.

I am very thankful for gifted education. Not only are we allowed to learn in different and more enjoyable way, we are allowed to go in-depth in subjects that particularly interest us. The ties we create within that classroom are like no other, and without them I would be completely lost.

Janelle Jewell-Roth, Age 15
Albuquerque, New Mexico
Amy Biehl High School

Gifted Essay Contest

Why Am I Thankful For Gifted Education?

When I was younger, around the 5th grade, I asked my mom how she knew I needed to be in gifted classes and she used an example from when I was 3 years old. I made a self portrait out of my dress up jewelry, including the contents of my stomach. She said that there were many other examples but that that one was really good and easy to understand because it was obvious that I was extremely creative.

I was tested towards the end of the second grade and passed the IQ requirement. Ever since I have had an IEP every year to set goals and catch up with what I had accomplished. Many times I've wondered if things like that gave me an unfair advantage over other students, but I can also see why I need other options. I tend to get bored easily with a regular curriculum, and having alternative options has always been essential to my learning. In my eighth grade I had classes totally separate from everyone else, meaning that I wasn't being pulled from math or English, I had gifted math and English. I liked that system so much better than being pulled from class, I learned more from an entire class than I did from an hour away and an extra homework assignment like in elementary school.

Being in these separate classes automatically classified me as a nerd, but this wasn't necessarily a bad thing. This taught me to be accepting of differences and open minded to others opinions. If I thought something was right that didn't make it so; there were other people to consider, but I think they found my intelligence intimidating. Occasionally I wondered if I was only in gifted because my parents are extremely nurturing, you know the kind of parents you see in movies. But I realized that they're only part of this journey. They recognized that I had a different quality, and made sure that this was nourished as I grew up. Even I can recognize that I'm creative partially because I find myself drawing all over my work.

If I didn't have the gifted program I would definitely not be as into poetry, music, drawing or any of the things I love to do on a regular basis. I just finished helping the art teacher at my school put together a silhouette mural on Onate and the Acoma Indians, I'm writing what I hope will eventually be a book, and as soon as I finish this essay I want to draw a picture about 'what if up was down would down be up?'. I don't think I would be into any of these things if it weren't for the Gifted Program. I frequently wish everyone had the advantageous situation that I have, the world would be better off, but humanity has to take baby steps, so why not start with me?

Shelby Vigil, Age 15
Albuquerque, New Mexico
Valley High School

Gifted Education

Gifted education benefited me because it gave me the opportunity to think creatively and to go beyond textbooks. I first started out in the gifted program my third grade year. I didn't get to go into the gifted program till then because the school I was recently going to didn't have the gifted program. I'm thankful that I was able to join the gifted program because I was becoming bored which gave me the tendency to slack off because I didn't care. Gifted education helps us students that think differently express our thoughts. Gifted doesn't necessarily mean you're smart. It means you think in a different way than others.

In one way that we think differently is artistically. Some students will look at art and just see a drawing or painting. Gifted students look at art as a meaning or elaboration of something. We look beyond the drawing or beyond the paintings and find what the artist is trying to tell us. I'm not saying that all gifted students are into art, but they can find the meaning of it.

Gifted education has also helped students by putting us in classis with students who think like us. Most of the people in my class hang out in different groups of people, but when we are in the same room together we all become friends. Honestly through my eight years of being in the gifted program I've met many people, people I probably would of never talked to if I wasn't in the gifted program and I'm glad to say that most of those people are my friends. It's nice to be in a room with people you can carry a conversation and be on the same wave length.

In my opinion, the most important reason I'm thankful for gifted education is I have some time to think for myself, When I go to my contemporary issues class it's easy to say I get to relax. I'm in a smaller environment without any distractions which helps me focus on the task I need to complete. I'm able to think about things in a more complex way an find the deeper meanings of them. Plus it doesn't hurt to have some quiet time for myself.

In conclusion, the gifted program benefits me and other gifted students by putting us with people like ourselves, letting us think for ourselves, and giving us the ability to show our artistic sides. Gifted education isn't just about reading a book and memorizing it. It lets us go above and beyond to think more creatively. This is why I'm thankful for gifted education and think it's beneficial to keep the gifted programs running.

Jerome Candelaria, Age 15
Albuquerque, New Mexico
Valley High School

I've been in the gifted program for 5-6 years now. And until last year, I really didn't understand what it was there for. I always thought it was just a special class for smart kids. But it's so much deeper than that. It's a class where I can express my opinions and not be judged for them. I can interact with peers that I have things in common with. We get to have discussions on history, current events, anything we want. For the first time as I'm writing this I truly am grateful to have a gifted education.

I'm grateful for my gifted education because as I've stated before, we have open discussions on things we enjoy. Some examples are: Kent State and other rebellious events that went on in the 60's. Another example would be discussions on religion and how they came into existence. Before this year, I didn't know what Islamic religion was.

Personally my favorite example would be how music has influenced us as a species. We've discussed Bob Dylan and other folk musicians that influenced the 60's. We also discussed how The Grateful Dead and other bands of the San Francisco Sound influenced the psychedelic age. And finally, we've discussed the Beatles. From the time they were a boy band to their hippy age, which then led to their Abbey Road days which all led up to their final performance on the Apple Corp. rooftop. These are just a few of the many examples I have done in the gifted program so.

I am proud to say the gifted program has also affected my look on reality. I used to be somewhat of an optimist but since high school I've been slowly converting into a realist. The gifted program has been like a gateway for me to a whole new world filled with many undeniable truths. It has also helped me understand myself a bit more.

In conclusion, writing this essay has made me think about being a gifted person. I like being in a class where I can express my opinions and not be judged for them. It's also good to have a place where I can interact with my gifted peers. I really enjoyed the projects we have done and the things we have learned. Listening to the music of the 60's was also a great experience. I can only hope the rest of my time in the gifted program will be just as wonderful.

Anna Giles, Age 16
Las Cruces, New Mexico
Las Cruces

My Regards to the Innovators

Almost every morning I force myself to wake up early and complete the school work I failed to do the night before. My eyes are sore with sleep and my limbs scream for me to lie down for just five more minutes. I monotonously prepare for school and rev up the engine of my 1960 BMW. Upon arriving at school, I pull out my notebooks and head to what I call a "sanctuary." In other words, the Advanced Educational Services room. Here, I can find every resource vital to my success as an advanced student. Facilitators greet me cordially and computer monitors hum dully. I sit down at the computer in the middle and solemnly get to work.

Being advanced doesn't necessarily mean that you have seven AP classes and a 5.0 G.P.A. Obtaining the qualities of self-discipline and determination can also open the doors to a so-called advanced education. Personally, I am not a naturally smart and gifted student. I have to grind my way through math and ask for assistance on problems in chemistry. However, studying hard and asking questions has enabled me to work with naturally smart kids and learn at their level. Pushing myself and finding classes that challenge me are what expand my education. Consequently, if I didn't have a facilitator to speak with that could help me find these opportunities, I'm certain that I wouldn't have been able to find them on my own. Having a gifted education is a privilege desired by many. I consider my label as a gifted student very fortunate and I am eternally thankful for the advantages a gifted education bestows upon me.

College is a stressful and ambiguous time period for all high school students. Decisions about what colleges you want to apply to, which one you will attend, and what you want to major in hinder every student. I have begun my college preparation early by taking the S.A.T. and researching scholarships provided by the schools of my choice. Getting involved with my community and demonstrating leadership is a big part of my college application. I have worked as hard as possible at taking every opportunity I can and putting forth one hundred percent effort. However, not all credit must go to myself, my gifted education facilitator, Mrs. Swickard has unlocked doors key to my success as college bound student. I feel that I have a good understanding of what life is like "in the real world" and what it takes to pay for college and get the best value for your money. For this insight, I am forever thankful to my facilitator and the entire gifted education program. Like dribbling a soccer ball, my gifted education is the feet that keep the ball in place; the feet that keep my goals on track.

So why am I thankful for a gifted education? Because I would be lost in a dark and uncertain abyss of ignored opportunities without it.

Ilioextreme, Age 16
Albuquerque, New Mexico
Eldorado High School

The question is not why I am thankful but should be edited to why I wouldn't I be thankful. May it just be the challenge that allures me to its doors every year or is it the enjoyment one feels after each and every class. May it even be the teacher-class bond that is created in such a short time? There is no other class where I feel more unique, Not only is there a bond evident between the teachers and students, but also in between the children themselves. We joke, laugh, and even cry together making friendships that last lifetimes. If one plays their cards right, epiphanies may become a daily experience.

One prime attribute, and maybe the best, is the challenge that fills each class. While looking through my old fifth grade work from gifted, I spotted a puzzle that was very similar to a math problem the other day. Also, Gifted goes into more depth and is substantially more intellectually stimulating than any AP class. We delve into the corners of culture, philosophy and social issues that have no right or wrong answer. We question the unanswerable. Even those with mathematical minds see the great cognitive thought put into each class.

Not only is it great for the challenge, but also because of what gets us off topic, slows down the class and maybe even ruins the teachers plans. Those are the students. There is only one class in my day where the class size falls below twenty-five students: My gifted class. I met two of my closest friends in the gifted program. Once we enter that class, though sometimes off topic, our social switch turns immediately on.

The small class size does not only allow us to gain more friends, but also makes the class more flexible, student-oriented and just enjoyable. The reason: the teacher. Look at the gifted electives note the trend of classes that will help students succeed. Teachers try to make classes that will benefit future students from the ideas of present ones. The other day, the teachers questioned how create a fine arts class in the program so students can receive a fine arts credit without dropping gifted. Also, the teachers seem to have a great understanding of the numerous activities we participate in and allow late homework and even delay due dates, lessening stress.

There are numerous reasons in which I could state my devotion to the gifted program. May I provide another example? How about the teachers. Some of my most hysterical, kind, and favorite teachers were my gifted teachers. It also helps that they love their job as much as I enjoy attending class. There are just so many reasons. How about the analyzation skills I have gained or the reading skills? I just cannot possible go into depth about every reason why I adore the gifted program without filling up a book.

Taylor Gecan, Age 17
Las Cruces, NM
Mayfield High School

My name is Taylor Gecan, I attend Mayfield High School, and i am thankful for Gifted Education for many reasons. Gifted Education allows me, as a student, to grow and also challenge myself academically. I am encouraged to take Honors and Advanced Placement courses for each semester and even though sometimes that challenge seems overwhelming, at the end of each semester i realize i have learned much more than expected and i am one step closer to being the well-rounded, well educated student i desire to be. Gifted Education also opens up many doors of opportunity for me. For example, because i am a gifted student and work diligently at everything i do, i was nominated and recognized as a Las Cruces Mayors Top Teen and a University of New Mexico Star Scholar for the 2009 school year. I was very honored to receive that award and many others, but i always remember that Gifted Education is what got me each recognition. Gifted Education constantly allows me to stretch my mind and creativity to new levels. In Gifted Education, i get the chance to meet other gifted students which allows me to feel more comfortable in the stressful school environment. Furthermore, the teachers which are apart of the Gifted Education program are, in my opinion, what make the program so special. I have gone through almost all of my high school journey and have not yet met one teacher who was not genuinely concerned for my future and current state in my education. I can name numerous members of the faculty of Gifted Education that have greatly inspired me to press harder, think broader, and explore new ways of learning and those people and their lessons will remain with me forever. I am thankful for Gifted Education because even though i am still young and in high school the program recognizes my hard work and achievements and not only that, but the program prepares me to succeed in college and all my future aspirations.
