
Talent in School: What Helps Gifted Students³

A Systematic Review of the Effectiveness and Impacts of Programs Supporting Gifted Students in the Economics Literature

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Summary

- **This study provides a systematic overview of economics literature focused on evaluation of programs for gifted students.** It supplements existing pedagogical and psychological knowledge with a perspective based on causal reasoning and measurable impacts of interventions. It is a useful resource for **education policymakers and school administrators** who need to allocate public funds effectively and to design effective support programs. It offers **education and economic researchers** an overview of modern evaluation methods and summarizes key empirical findings on various types of support, from early universal identification to the impacts of acceleration and specialized schools. The study's conclusions are particularly relevant for **reducing educational inequalities**, as they show that the positive effects of well-designed programs are most pronounced among gifted students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The key to supporting gifted students is early identification. Traditional approaches based on nomination by teachers or parents are often inaccurate and can overlook gifted students from disadvantaged groups. **Comprehensive screening at an early age, supplemented by complex diagnostics, has proven to be a more effective**

³ This study represents only the author's opinion and not the official position of the Economic Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences or the Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education at Charles University (CERGE). The study complements other Talent project publications, and builds on a broader overview of economic literature dealing with talent (Federičová and Protivínský, 2024). The author would like to thank two reviewers, Jana Fikrlová (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University) and Martin Guzi (Faculty of Economics and Administration, Masaryk University), for their valuable comments and advice. Štěpán Jurajda (CERGE-EI), Václav Korbel (PAQ Research), Jana Pleskotová, and members of the Talent project at IDEA at CERGE-EI (Daniel Münich, Alena Bičáková, Miroslava Federičová, and Jaroslav Groero), as well as members of the RSJ Foundation team (Anton Tyutin, Hana Křepelková, Lenka Eckertová, and others). Any inaccuracies or errors are the responsibility of the author. The study was created as part of Talent, a joint project of the IDEA think tank at CERGE-EI and the RSJ Foundation.

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approach that can identify significantly more gifted students, especially among girls and students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The definition of giftedness should be based on modern psychological concepts, and identification should be based on standardized, reliable, and psychometrically validated diagnostic tools.

- **Within schools, gifted students can be taught in an integrated manner, i.e., in the same schools and classes together with other students, or they can be educated in separate, segregated groups (in selective classes or schools). In addition to integration and segregation, inclusive teaching based on differentiation is also increasingly popular; this allows teachers to work with students according to their individual needs and levels.** In this model, gifted and other students all remain in a regular classroom, with the teacher adapting the content, pace, and depth of the curriculum so that everyone can develop their potential. In fully inclusive and differentiated teaching, the role of identifying gifted students is less important if the teacher is able to recognize and meet the needs of all students. This approach places high demands on teaching skills and the organization of teaching, but at the same time promotes diversity and mutual enrichment among students.
- **Acceleration, i.e., adjusting the curriculum in such a way as to shorten the usual length of schooling, is a popular and well-researched form of support for gifted students, especially in the US environment.** Czech legislation allows gifted students to be moved to a higher grade.⁴ Educational literature also offers many other acceleration methods. For acceleration to be truly beneficial, it must only include students who are ready for more challenging material. Otherwise, it can have a negative impact.
- **Despite the popularity of elite, selective schools, evaluation literature generally finds no or only very weak positive impact of these schools and of other specialized programs for gifted students.** Although students selected for elite schools generally achieve better academic results, in many cases they would achieve comparably good results in regular schools thanks to their talent. The positive impact of these programs is most evident among students from disadvantaged backgrounds, for whom extra support can be crucial for development of their potential. **Combined with widespread identification, well-designed programs to support gifted students can reduce inequalities in education.**
- Grouping students according to ability can be beneficial because it allows for more targeted teaching. However, dividing students into different schools at an early age can lead to poorer results for weaker students and exacerbate inequalities in education, especially if it is not easy to transfer between different types of schools later on. **Alternative measures include classes for gifted students in their original schools or pull-outs, where gifted students remain in their original classes but receive separate specialized instruction for part of the week.**
- The overall quality and readiness of the education system is crucial for successful support of gifted students. It is therefore necessary to systematically integrate the topic of gifted education into teacher training and continuing education. **Differences in teacher quality between schools are significant, and the impact of good and bad teachers on students can be enormous. The education system must be able to recognize and reward high-quality teachers.**

⁴ Act No. 561/2004 Coll. on preschool, primary, secondary, higher professional, and other education (the Education Act), as amended on March 1, 2025. The education of gifted pupils is regulated by Section 17. Available at [🔗](#)