

## John Dryden – response to Cando questions

Instead of addressing each individual question, I thought I would make a few remarks that will give you some idea where I am on your overall concerns about gifted education. First, let me say that “gifted” means many different things to many different people and that every gifted student has his or her own individual needs. This is what twenty –one years in the classroom has taught me. The individual education plan for each child should be addressing, to the best of our ability, the needs of every specific child. If it isn’t then it needs to be modified. Parents and teachers need to be in close communication on the IEP.

An important element of the teacher evaluation rubric is how well they are differentiating for the needs of all students. Teachers take this very seriously. If a child is “gifted” and requires daily enrichment it can be done. Again, parents and teachers need to be in close communication as the student’s school year progresses.

To be frank, I know little about gifted programs in the elementary schools and whether they are effective or not. I welcome your enlightenment on the issue. If you have articles or research that you want to send me, I will be more than happy to read them. I do know that at the high school we have added a whole slew of AP courses. I don’t think much of them; they are not appropriate for the block schedule and they are more geared to “cram and slam” than actually enhancing critical thinking. I do know that many of the teachers work very hard at enriching their content for the students that want to run with it.

I’m not a big fan of “tracking” students. When we separate kids out by ability into different classes and sections we lose a lot of potential peer to peer instruction and collaboration. Kids who are not high achievers need the role model of those who are. The whole tone of the classroom changes when we have all level of achievers in the same classroom. We have an obligation to make sure the “gifted” students are challenged at all times. We also have an obligation to those who are less motivated to surround them with positive role models.

All that being said, know this. I will not support a charter school for “gifted students”, nor will I support a magnet school for the next four years. The State of Illinois has been consistently behind on its payments to the district and that was with a %5 tax rate. Now that the tax rate has been lowered there is no reason to think that the State will find it easier to pay its bills. We will have a better idea where we are in a couple of years and then we can think about what programs we can expand.

I hope this response satisfies. It might not win me any votes, but I will trust that you prefer an honest statement to political hyperbole. Cheers