

Cutting NOVA is a step backward

I just can't believe that this district would consider cutting NOVA. To some children, "gifted" seems more like a curse that separates them from peers, alienates them from some teachers, and causes no end of arguments with exasperated parents. This can put them "at risk." To address the recent article:

1. Pullout programs are always inadequate, especially in a large district. Even with doubling that 30 minutes every six days, classroom modifications are perceived as extra work for both the overworked teacher and the student. School seems like slow motion to the profoundly gifted. Would you respond to that by seeking out extra work? Some will lead and tutor others in groups, but few children know how to do that diplomatically. Most resent having to do all the work. Are children to be responsible for others' learning, or are we to be responsible for theirs?

2. Of course all NOVA students would not be valedictorians. (Wow, 27 valedictorians per year??) There are outstanding opportunities at Stevens Point Area Senior High, but course selection and attitude are significant factors. Not all children at any level will choose to work at peak capacity.

3. Some parents hesitate. Late identification can mean fears about changing schools. One child I know was given only one week to decide to change before fifth grade. With two years per classroom there is also an increase in concern about teacher interaction. Parents who are making this decision need more support and encouragement.

4. I've seen what would have been for these kids. I knew several children at the NOVA program inception who experienced significant positive changes when moved to the magnet program. I also know way too many GT children who have had severe problems in regular classrooms.

5. Spreading these children around cannot maintain adequate academic services and be cost effective. Can we afford to underdevelop, even waste, our nation's intellectual resources right now?

From my training and experiences as teacher, sister and mother of the gifted, I can state with confidence that ignoring their needs is dangerous academic neglect. Please don't go backward.

Virginia Wurtzel
Plover