

Quick Information Guides for Educators

SNAPshot No 4

What I would have liked my teachers to know and do.



Things I would have liked my teacher to know/do

Hindsight is a wonderful thing ! However, there is much we can learn by talking to adults who are highly able and have been through «the school system ». They can now reflect on their time there and consider what, for them, would have made a difference to their time at school.

Based on my experience, here are ten things that would have made a difference to me in school. Teachers who will work with highly able pupils and who want to support them as much as possible might like to think about the following :

- * Information
- * Recognition
- * Validation
- * Transmission
- * Attention
- * Inclusion
- * Adaptation
- * Stimulation
- * Consideration
- * Evolution

Information

It would have been really helpful to me if my teachers had known about “high ability” and the characteristics of highly able pupils. It seems to me that if they had understood more about how I learned, they might have thought more about the learning experiences I was offered. Much of time I already knew what I was being taught and so there was very little challenge for me in the class activities. Teachers need to know where they can learn about highly able learners!

Recognition

Having found out about high ability and highly able learners it would have been great if my teachers had then acknowledged that such a “thing” existed. Sometimes it felt as though they pretended it did not exist and it seemed like they did not want to “read the signs” that were there in front of them when they gave me activities to do that were too easy.

Validation

Having found out about and recognised the signs of potential high ability it would have been really nice if my teachers had then accepted it and been open and humble enough to talk about it without feeling threatened. It wasn't my fault I seemed to know more than they did about some things.

Transmission

It would have been really helpful if my teachers had talked to my parents about my high ability. Meeting with them and talking about the things I could do would have meant my parents and my teachers could have better understood what school was like for me and they could have shared information.

Attention

I would have liked my teachers to notice me and not exclude me or shine too bright a light on me. But this is when the teacher has to be careful about **alienation**: he/she must beware of putting me on a pedestal in front of others and making me feel different from the other pupils. I already feel I'm not the same and I already suffer from it as my peers don't always appreciate my knowledge about things.

Inclusion

Simply being in the classroom does not mean you are included. If my teachers had kept an eye on my inclusion in the group it might have helped me feel included. They might have been able to check that I was not being laughed at too much for my knowledge or picked on for what my peers thought was weird behaviour.

Adaptation

If my teachers had planned my curriculum taking into account what I could do, it would have meant that I would not “finish first” and end up being told to wait for another 15mins (that usually turned out to be 20 minutes) or being given « more of the same » to complete.

Stimulation

If my teachers had given me more challenging stuff to work on it would have been great! I wanted to progress in my learning, just like the other pupils were. Having challenging learning opportunities would have made such a difference to me in school!

Consideration

When I did do extra activities, it would have been really helpful if they had corrected my extra work making comments on it and telling me how to improve in this or that area. It would have been wonderful if they had answered my questions or told me that they didn't know but that together we could find the answer.

Evolution

If learning is about building on prior knowledge then sharing my progress and at the end of the school year with my future teachers would have been good. They could have told them about my « profile » so that he/she will have the right attitude during my following school year.

In Summary

Teachers need to:

- * find out about high ability
- * share information with parents and teachers
- * acknowledge that highly able pupils may be able to do things or know about things other pupils do not
- * plan challenging learning activities
- * try to understand highly able pupils and want to include us in the class

✿ accept highly able pupils for who they are