



YES, MY CHILD IS GIFTED. NO, I'M NOT BRAGGING

ANONYMOUS HELIOS PARENT

My child is gifted. I don't want to write that or repeat it. Why? Because "gifted" is too often misunderstood. Giftedness is not synonymous with "smart." Gifted is not the best student in the class. I hesitate when people ask what school my child attends - wondering what they think when I say Helios and if they've heard of it. Will they think I'm bragging because Helios is a school for gifted children? Will they judge me and think I'm just trying to get my child ahead? Because I'm most definitely not, I'm just trying to find where my child will fit in and thrive.

My child taught themselves to read at the age of 3. When people noticed them reading at such a young age, I often felt a mix of pride and worry. Pride, because well, it's a 3-year-old reading! Worry, because living in the Bay Area, we seem to be surrounded by people in a race to succeed and be the best, and this might paint me as one of those people. It is common for parents in the area to push or encourage kids to read and do general math before starting Kindergarten. My kid reading at three must mean I'm pushing them, right? No.

To prevent people from jumping to conclusions, when asked how my child learned to read and I uncomfortably responded "on their own," I would quickly add in the criticism, "but you should see them throw a ball... hahaha!" I would put down my child in one aspect to avoid being judged by their strength.

When we were looking at schools for Kindergarten, we asked an administrator at one school - "How do you support gifted children - one that is already reading chapter books?". My question was met with a patronizing response of "It's the Bay Area; most children here are gifted." I felt judged. They seem to liken me to Rick Moranis' character in the movie Parenthood - going to absurd lengths to raise my child as a genius. (Psst..see the movie if you haven't!)

Giftedness is often defined as asynchronous development. For us, that meant that my child could read and do general arithmetic at three, but the handwriting was challenging, and they were behind their peers in social skills. While they were generally well-liked in preschool and had "friends," my child didn't form any strong bonds with other children. It wouldn't be strange to see them alone or in their thoughts, mainly because they likely couldn't find anyone interested in the same things they were. I'm not sure this bugged them, but it certainly bugged me.

Gifted kids learn quickly and feel deeply - a complicated combo when they can read well above grade level and understand certain adult concepts but not others.

Gifted children often have very high expectations, presenting as perfectionism or a very defined sense of justice. My child wants to please others, follow the rules and be the "good kid." While lovely, it often comes with intense anxiety. If my child is offered too many choices, they are frozen in decision - wondering, "what's the absolute best choice?".

My child's fear of displeasing others, along with their introverted personality, makes it difficult for them to advocate for themselves. Saying no is hard for them. It is practically impossible for them to tell a peer or classmate to stop doing something upsetting them, leading to confusing social interactions and missed cues.

Discipline in our house is often met with a reaction far beyond what I would expect. A mere mention of telling them they went over on their screen time can result in a response of literally throwing away their iPad and vowing never to use it again. Or, while struggling through a song during violin practice, my child is in tears because "they should already KNOW how to play it." even if it's only their second time trying.



Raising gifted children is beautiful and complicated and, like many parenting duties - challenging. Outside assumptions and judgments make it all the more difficult.

Thankfully, we found Helios. It's a community dedicated to gifted children. One that celebrates my child's strengths and supports their challenges. It's also taught us that there is no one definition of a gifted child. This community is diverse, generous, and genuine. We are all just trying to figure out what's best for our kids. Some of our very best friendships have been made at Helios, and I know these are lifelong friends.

As for my child - they are thriving at Helios. They are learning among peers how to have a voice, make friends, and make mistakes, along with being appropriately challenged academically and supported emotionally. As for my child throwing a ball these days? They have a very accurate and pretty hard throw - ask the palm of my hand!