

Equity Vs. Excellence

To illustrate the history of recent educational changes in education, I went to a personal source of mine, my father. He had a 30 year career in education at the superintendent level, most recently as superintendent of Creighton school district. This was very interesting to me because while I talk with my dad all the time about many different subjects, I realize I have never really interviewed by dad or discussed these topics I study and were his career. This is a summary of the highlights of the discussion:

Re: Homogeneous grouping – in the 60's the Madisen district tried to put the gifted kids together, and it worked academically (improved performance), but he said that those kids “got big heads”, and therefore the experiment was deemed a failure. This may seem like it supports keeping the smart kids in a regular classroom, but actually he said this supports acceleration. “You don't want to hold the smarter kids back, but this way they aren't singled out as a group.” (i.e. the smart kid in a average but older group may stand out, but the smart group may support each others “I'm better than you” attitude).

Re: His opinion of what should be done in schools: Acceleration is generally better than special classes. In the 50's they had the kids manage themselves to go to the next grade's math class, for example (there was no teacher or helper to take kids to other classes). In his opinion the social problems with acceleration are minimal to negligible. If schools scheduled their curriculum (9 to 10 is reading, 10 to 11 is math, or something) then the kids could be sent to the grade level that's appropriate for their abilities.

Re: Were some schools better than other in handling gifted kids? In the past Brophy was the best at working with gifted kids, but this was because it had more of them since it is a private school.