

Excuses . . . Excuses

Excuse us. In the previous sentence, we are using *excuse* as a transitive verb and a pretext for our examination of the variety of excuses or justifications that often are presented as reasons for not doing a certain kind of assessment or for not using specialized curriculum and programming for mathematically talented students. In this chapter, we present some common excuses that we have heard over the years that negatively impact the development of math talent (see Table 1.1). You will see that some of the excuses are diametrically opposed to each other. This inconsistency in reasoning about mathematically talented students is one reason why having a rational response for each excuse is so important. Our goal is to provide the information and research to back up well-informed, balanced responses to any one of these “excuses” for not implementing appropriate programming for mathematically talented students. The responses to these excuses set the stage for the subsequent chapters.

Excuse 1: At the elementary level, the school’s gifted program already meets the needs of *all* mathematically talented students.

Response: The names of many elementary gifted programs (e.g., ELP, or Extended Learning Programs) reveal their emphasis, which generally is on gifted behaviors and higher order thinking skills. These programs tend to be referred to as pull-out or resource programs because students will leave their regular classroom a couple of times a week for a period of time (45 to 60 minutes is typical) to participate in a preestablished enrichment curriculum. This enrichment can take a variety of forms, including activities unrelated to mathematics, problem-solving activities, or mathematically oriented enrichment activities (Lupkowski & Assouline, 1992). Unfortunately, it is a frequent practice in this country for gifted students to participate in pull-out programs where the topics they study are explicitly designed to be unrelated to the regular curriculum. For example, a mathematically talented student in a gifted program might be studying Shakespeare, growing plants for a science project, or participating in a community service