



Featuring

Between the Lines

Dorothy Knopper

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Differentiating for Young, Curious and Imaginative Learners

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Differentiating Teacher Professional Development with Design

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Differentiation: Transparent or Opaque?

Steven Schroeder-Davis

Differentiation and the Twice-Exceptional Student

Cheryl Franklin-Rohr

Connections that Count

Lou Lloyd-Zannini

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Differentiation

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Between the Lines

Dorothy Knopper

Differentiation is not a new educational concept. It stands for matching curriculum practices with specific abilities....and teachers having the foresight and the courage to try something different, something outside the box of standard curriculum, personalized curriculum for unique needs.

The above quote is from this column in the Fall 2002 issue of *Understanding Our Gifted*, focusing on differentiation. The current issue revisits the topic and emphasizes its importance for all children.

Tomlinson described differentiation in 1999 as “a teacher’s response to a learner’s needs guided by general principles of differentiation such as respectful tasks, flexible grouping, and ongoing assessment and adjustment” (*Differentiated Classroom*, p.15, ASCD).

In 2007, Robinson, Shore, and Enersen emphasize the importance of each child being “seen and planned for as an individual, and that sometimes the best plan involves being with others needing the same intervention” (*Best Practices in Gifted Education*, p. 218, Prufrock).

Differentiation is what I call “common sense” education for all students, including the gifted.

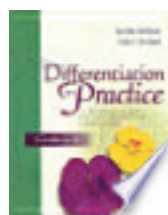
Let us know how differentiation works for you. Is it happening in the regular classroom? Is technology making an impact on differentiation? Share success stories about techniques that work for your students and your own children. Email kristin@our-gifted.com and your story may be shared on www.our-gifted.com or in the next journal.

Dorothy Knopper is the mother of three grown and successful gifted children and an ardent gifted supporter. She is the founder of the *Beyond Giftedness* conference, now in its 19th year, and the developer of the current *Understanding Our Gifted Journal* which will begin its 25th year this fall.

Making Connections

Listed below are links to websites featuring information on differentiation or other gifted education information. We hope you find them informative.

- If you're a late owl, the University of California-Irvine Extension has several free webinars on gifted education topics, all from 8:00–9:00 p.m. PST. More information at this link: <http://unex.uci.edu/services/events/>
- Google Books offers previews on books of many topics, including differentiation. While you can't always read the entire book, their previews are quite extensive. To find books, simply go to www.google.com, click on More in the menu bar at the top of the page and Books from the drop down menu. Here are a couple of examples to get you started:



Differentiation in Practice by Carol Ann Tomlinson and Cindy A. Strickland

<http://books.google.com/books?id=OiKfhxJ-np8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=differentiation&hl=en#v=onepage&q=differentiation&f=false>

Making Differentiation a Habit

by Diane Heacox, Ed.D. <http://books.google.com/books?id=rZmlensw3TgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=differentiation&hl=en#v=onepage&q=differentiation&f=false>



- An article on the Davidson Institute's website, by Joyce VanTassel-Baska, lists 122 curriculum ideas for gifted children organized by subject. http://www.davidsongifted.org/db/Articles_id_10272.aspx
- Bright Hub Education features some basic ideas for differentiation. There are also links to other articles on the site, again with basic information, but some good ideas on teaching and parenting. Start here: <http://www.brighthouseeducation.com/teaching-gifted-students/65181-differentiation-techniques-and-activities-in-the-classroom-for-gifted-students/>

Differentiating for Young, Curious, and Imaginative Learners

Joan Franklin Smutny

is founder and director of the Center for Gifted at National-Louis University and a winner of the NAGC Distinguished Service Award. She directs programs for gifted children, teaches gifted education to graduate students, presents at seminars nationwide, counsels parents and educators, edits and advises for published books, texts and periodicals, and is author or editor of thirteen books on gifted education and parenting.

Joan Franklin Smutny

To meet the needs of young gifted and talented learners, teachers need the flexibility to respond to individual needs without the stress of extra planning and preparation.

Certainly, some planning comes into play. Engaging the gifts and interests of these students in a way that is also reasonable presents a unique challenge. How do we find the time and resources to support talent development given the constraints on our time? How do we nurture Jose’s passion for the hooded chameleon or Gina’s poetic scribbling in the margins of her notebook?

One of the most practical tools in differentiation—the focus on content, process, and products—can simplify how we accommodate young gifted learners. Creating new learning experiences in this structured way can be freeing for teachers who want to do more but can’t afford the time. Simple changes can turn a reading assignment into an adventure in poetry or storytelling. A fairly routine math problem can become a baffling puzzle that eludes all known solutions.

Content	Process	Products
Higher level and faster paced	Engagement of intelligences (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, etc.)	Advanced-level
Interdisciplinary, creative, multimedia	Higher-level thinking (applying, analyzing, evaluating, synthesizing, innovating)	In-depth
Connections to interests; multiple modalities	Creative exploration (fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration, transformation, evaluation)	Inquiry-based
	Grouping (based on ability, interest, learning style, media)	Interdisciplinary
		Multimedia

One of the first needs of young advanced students is the freedom to learn at their own pace and level. In response, teachers can make small changes—for example, offering more difficult media or asking that they apply what they've learned to a different phenomenon. Even strategies such as compacting or tiered instruction that may seem time-consuming are open to variation. A creative interpretation of historic events can be as challenging as an accelerated program in math or science. The most important question to consider is how we can make learning more lively to young gifted students who want to feel curious, baffled, inspired, and even amused.

Compacting

As many teachers know, compacting identifies content and skills that children have already mastered and frees them from repetitive instruction. Compacting involves a three-step process:

1. Assess student mastery
2. Skip content mastered
3. Design alternatives

Note that the first step does not say how you assess students. In many cases, observation serves as well as a test. Trust your instincts and do what makes sense for you. When designing other options for young gifted children, use their talents as a guide.

Tiered Instruction

In similar fashion, tiered instruction accommodates pace of learning and higher

level thinking, but again, it need not involve elaborate planning.

- Teacher designs tiered levels of instruction within one unit.
- Advanced students do a higher-level version of an assignment.
- Any student can advance to a higher tier if they prove able to do so.

Tiered activities work particularly well when you're presenting big ideas or concepts that all students need to learn. Two variations of an assignment are usually sufficient. Raising the level of thinking involved and increasing the number and/or kind of sources used can energize and inspire gifted students who would otherwise be bored.

Where the pace and level of learning address the degree of challenge and speed at which young gifted students progress, the depth of study (sustained inquiry) as well as breadth of learning (in resources, media, and fields of knowledge) open a world of discovery. They can explore interests in ways that are multi-dimensional and even out of the ordinary. Depth and breadth:

- involve and enhance student interests.
- present problems or issues that demand in-depth inquiry.
- provide a broader range of sources to consult.
- encourage creative thinking and use of the arts.
- allow more choices in how students present, produce, or express their findings.

The Arts

The arts offer the most diverse resources, linking the world of sensibility and imagination to inquiry, reason, and higher-level thinking. They're also highly flexible--embracing everything from a short simulation to spark a discussion to a mural project as the culmination of a two-week study project. Most important to the time-constrained teacher, the arts benefit all students. Consider how you can use the arts to support your units:

- Teacher aligns art process to specific learning goals.
- Teacher uses alternative arts activities for gifted visual and kinesthetic learners.
- Teacher integrates the arts for different purposes:
 - As catalysts for introducing new information, concepts, or skills.
 - As an alternative resource or process that stimulates creative and higher level thinking and appeals to students with different learning styles.
 - As part of a final project that expresses student learning.

Integrating the arts gives everyone something to think about, learn, and give, and they can take many different forms. Among the many creative processes scholars have explored, perhaps the most widely known are those identified by Guilford (1968), and Torrance (1974, 1979).

- Fluency (generating many ideas).
- Flexibility (creating divergent and alternative ideas).

- Originality (producing unique, innovative ideas).
- Elaboration (extending, embellishing, and implementing ideas).
- Transformation (changing or adapting an idea or solution into a different one).
- Evaluation (assessing the viability and usefulness of an idea).

It is significant that the revision of Bloom's taxonomy (remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating) ranks creativity as the highest mental process, suggesting that it can stimulate significant learning in the classroom.

Certainly, for any process to work, it needs to assist young gifted students in reaching (or exceeding) specific learning goals. These are questions worth considering before you proceed:

- How can the arts support the learning goals I have established in different subjects?
- What fundamental knowledge, concept, and skill do students need to learn as a result of this unit? Where would the arts add depth and breadth and where not?
- Which of the arts would best serve the learning goal?
- When should the arts be used—as a catalyst in the beginning, as a process throughout the assignment, or as a final project?
- How can I apply this process in a way that doesn't take too much planning time or detract from the primary goal of the lesson?

Adjustments for Young Gifted Learners

Change Sources Used	Change Thinking Process
Texts- a chapter book or poetic verse; instruments for measuring, weighing, calculating.	From learning a concept to applying it: <i>Students apply what they've learned about history to the family "history" they tell, write and draw.</i>
Technology- new, more challenging web sites; software for more advanced students.	From understanding what an idea means to comparing how it operates in one case vs. another: <i>Students compare two "points of view" in a story and dramatize (or talk and write) how perspective changes the telling of a story.</i>
Hands-on- construction materials and art supplies to explore math concepts; samples of plant life, rocks, microscopes, insects.	From analyzing a phenomenon to evaluating what it does to living and non-living things: <i>In a philosophy unit, students think about two scenarios involving bullying and propose actions that a friend of the "victim" could take as well as the consequences of these actions.</i>
Interdisciplinary- sources from related fields (text, video footage, maps, recordings, sketchbooks); a wide range of materials (binoculars, compass, microscope, journal, camera, field guides, sketch pad).	From observing and identifying a thing to analyzing the qualities that make it different from other things: <i>Students apply their experience with colors, shapes, angles, and proportions to analyze how they appear in specific plants or animals.</i>
Interest-based- materials and sources related to interests: personal art supplies; software and web sites focused on writing; video camera; costumes and props; theater improvisation books; math games; recording equipment.	From studying a topic/issue/phenomenon to creating an artistic response (in any medium): <i>Students draw/paint/dramatize what they've learned and how they feel about an interest they have (guitar, soccer, geometry, rocks, wolves, cooking).</i>
Visual Arts- paints, paintbrushes, markers, colored pencils and paper, fabric, scissors, glue, paste, and tape, photographs, posters, camera and film, art books, web sites.	From understanding a topic/situation/phenomenon to imagining it: <i>Students read/listen to/watch videos about a famous person's life and imagine that they are with this person; they report—through writing, painting, dramatizing, etc.—what they saw and felt in this other world.</i>
Performing Arts- simulation games, poems, stories, theater and improvisation books, costumes, props, construction materials (for sets).	From learning a new concept to analyzing how it relates to another concept: <i>Students learn the parts of a flower and analyze through diagrams and text how each part plays a special role in the flower's survival.</i>

Final Thoughts

Prepare your classroom ahead of time. There are ways to arrange the classroom that make it easier to accommodate the different learning needs of young gifted children. Resources from the real world will inspire curiosity and interest. Bird nests, bark, and feathers do far more for the imagination, as do specimens of different rocks, shells, or insects. Think about how your young gifted students can benefit from the sources you have whether it's technology, construction materials, science instruments, art supplies, or poetry. Have learning centers with multi-level materials and files of interest-based activities for advanced students.

Focus only on adjustments you can reasonably make. Remember that doing what you can is better than doing nothing! In any given topic, ask yourself what the most pressing needs of your students are. When you're short on time, you can at least provide choices in the way they find information and what they do with it. Teachers can get frustrated when they try to make elaborate changes in lessons that already involve significant preparation. If you're unsure about how a tiered assignment, an independent study, or an arts project might work, try it first in a unit you know well.

Draw on the interests of advanced students in creating alternatives. Advanced students, even very young ones, often bring clearly defined interests to the classroom. The more you involve them in creating alternative assignments, the more independent they

become. Over time, they learn how to stay focused on their goals, prioritize tasks, monitor their progress, and pace themselves.

You don't have to be an artist to use the arts! The arts are not the domain of an elite group who train and practice for years. When aligned with curriculum standards, the arts offer the most effective way for all students to achieve and extend learning goals in the regular classroom. Begin by using an idea presented here and do it on a small scale. If you still feel uncertain or need moral support, consult with an art teacher, a musician, or a theater friend. Many teachers find that the enthusiasm, motivation, and interest of young students are well worth the effort.

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Differentiating Teacher Professional Development with Design

Bronwyn MacFarlane

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With professional experiences as a classroom teacher, teacher of gifted students, administrator of gifted programs, professional development consultant, and university faculty responsibilities, Dr. MacFarlane is actively involved with new research initiatives, reviewing school programs, working with diverse stakeholder groups, and developing curriculum.

She has received numerous professional development grants and several awards.

As a university graduate school faculty member, I regularly hear classroom teachers express frustration with the in-school professional development activities in which they are required to participate. Their frustrations stem from sitting through time-intensive workshop sessions that review content which they either already know as experienced teachers or do not substantively assist them as veteran educators in developing skills in sustained instructional practice. This kind of format provides teachers with little opportunity to exercise “constructivist best practices” during bureaucratic professional imperatives (Kesson & Henderson, 2010).

Much research supports the benefits that quality professional development plays in impacting teacher quality (Stronge, 2002; Darling-Hammond & Loewenberg Ball, 1997; Joyce & Showers, 1995). Experiences in professional development can affect a teacher’s growth, the application of varied instructional techniques, and increase student learning (Joyce & Showers, 1995). When professional development is well-planned, it can provide purpose, collaboration, commitment, and community among educators (Langer, 2000) because there is a positive relationship between student achievement and how recently an experienced teacher participated in a professional development learning experience (Stronge, 2002).

But what are the costs associated with low-quality professional development? Just as boredom and lack of meaningful challenge with an ineffective teacher has been shown to negatively impact students with regression in achievement scores over multiple years (Sanders & Horn, 1998), educational leaders must consider the impact of

unresponsive professional development on teachers and students. Boredom, underachievement, inciting frustration, low morale, or even unprofessionalism in response to not receiving training that is respectful to their learning needs are not consequences that any school leader or educational reformer would want to perpetuate.

Students who do not receive adequate challenge may become at-risk for developing underachievement over the course of several years of being in a learning environment that is not an optimal match. For a teacher who has participated in repeated professional development experiences that are not matched to their learning and performance needs, the impacts on career performance and student achievement could be negative. Every educator would want to avoid the mismatch of professional development that could incite frustration with learning and transfer to the classroom. To do so, teachers need learning opportunities for targeted content-based professional development that is differentiated to their readiness level.

Differentiated content-based professional development

The most critical things for educators to continually learn revolve around content knowledge and the student learning trajectories specific to that knowledge (Carpenter, Blanton, Cobb, Franke, Kaput, & McClain, 2004). Even the applied use of classroom technology must be differentiated in tiered learning activities for teachers with varying degrees of technological

skills. Studying a content area in depth, learning specific content, and learning how students learn that content should be central to professional development efforts (Carpenter, Blanton, Cobb, Franke, Kaput, & McClain, 2004). For teachers to maintain expertise in their discipline, school culture must be supportive of this kind of improved practice and growth (Dettmer & Landrum, 1998). Since staff development offerings exist in most school districts, there is usually at least one administrator assigned to oversee professional growth activities (Dillon-Peterson, 1991). This individual must be skilled in differentiated learning as applied to designing a scope and sequence of professional development options that are tiered for teachers' learning needs.

Parameters for the delivery of professional development in schools are quite wide and variable dependent upon the contextual setting. However, guidelines for designing differentiated professional development can be mapped from the guidelines set forth on developing differentiated curriculum for students across the K–12 scope and sequence. Differentiated instruction includes adaptations in content, process, product, affect, and learning environment in response to learner readiness, interests, and learning profile (Tomlinson, 1999; 2008). Spending time in heterogeneous professional development activities does not meet the needs of content-based differentiation that teachers need to serve their students. There is a saying in the United States Navy, “You get what you inspect not what you expect.” Likewise, in education, this understanding

takes the angle of “That which gets measured, gets done.” Inspecting the delivery of differentiated practices both in professional learning and classroom learning is necessary. Intense differentiation in the content area must include (1) experiences for immersion as a professional in the discipline; (2) targeted discussions supporting the application of pedagogical strategies in the content area; (3) time for curricular remodeling with built in cycles of checks for integrated differentiation delivery in the classroom.

Apply differentiated design to professional development for teachers

The Integrated Curriculum Model (VanTassel-Baska, 1986) provides a guide for the design of curriculum and instruction that is differentiated to meet the educational needs of the advanced learner. The three components of the ICM are to provide a constellation of dimensions that are appropriate for the advanced learner with exposure to (1) advanced content, (2) high-level process and product work, and (3) cross disciplinary concept development/ understanding (VanTassel-Baska, 2003). Since experienced teachers have acquired advanced degrees in education and years of teaching experience in the content area, it would be advantageous to apply this curriculum model for advanced learners in advanced professional development design.

Furthermore, there are five elements of differentiating education for learners; acceleration, depth, challenge, complexity, and creativity (VanTassel-Baska, 2011).

Professional learning activities should provide opportunities for teachers to develop their talents through these five differentiated elements. Learning opportunities should also accommodate for differing cultural, ability, and interest levels through multiple teaching methods and opportunities for choice of activities and products. VanTassel-Baska (2003) recommended using resources for high ability learners which are “interdisciplinary and idea-based,” and materials that identify additional resources, providing “multiple options for reading or doing activities.” By modeling these best practices for high-level teaching and instruction during professional development time, educators can have their professional learning needs met on dual levels as a learner and a teacher.

Design Professional Development with Essential Understandings

Essential Understandings and Essential Questions

All professional development programs must have goals and objectives for the participants to learn and expect them to implement a plan to share their learning with others when returning home. Educators should select programs that share corresponding goals and objectives with what they teach that will most directly benefit teaching students, colleagues, and community members. The use of Essential Understandings and related Essential Questions guides the learning experience by providing clear direction to the heart and core of the curriculum. Essential Understandings and the related Essential Questions provides organization

and articulation of what is the fundamental essence to be learned across theory and applied skills. Teachers who participate in professional development experiences that are connected across a set of essential understandings and questions have the opportunity to see how they can be applied to their classroom curriculum. VanTassel-Baska suggested that when writing essential understandings, the language should be written in broad, organizational terms that reflect the conceptual priorities. Each of the essential understandings should be distinct to cultivate deeper learning and logically sequential and realistic for the amount of time allotted. The development of essential questions should be related to the essential understandings and should progress through Bloom's Taxonomy to cultivate high level thinking, model high level questioning, and stimulate extended questioning.

Applying Tiers in Professional Development Design

Coil (2007) described tiered learning opportunities as multiple versions of assignments and activities that permit the learner to work at their appropriate level. The use of tiering allows the learner to build on prior knowledge and skills and the learner objectives being developed are similar for all learners but are reached in different ways (Coil, 2007). The designer of the professional development must choose which of the following will be tiered... the content, the process, or the product? A professional development designer should also ask which of the following is best to tier; ability level/ learner readiness, topic interest, or learning

style. Professional development designers must also consider assessment questions and if all of the tiers are equally engaging and challenging for learners in the tier.

Five steps to guide the process of design and delivery of differentiated professional development activities

1. Consider professional goals and teaching assignments of attendees; when selecting dates, consider potential conflicts.
2. Use Backward Design in determining the Essential Understandings and writing the related Essential Questions.
3. Gather possible resources and craft content-specific tiered professional development learning experiences.
4. Deliver content-specific tiered learning activities followed by debriefing and implementation.
5. Check for implementation of content and differentiation, supplemented with measurement of change. Cycle repeats.

Differentiated Design Coordination and Benefits

In planning for differentiated professional development, it is helpful to extend upon the use of a professional growth plan. Aligned teamwork between administration and faculty will not only improve the quality use of professional development time spent but also provide the communication venue for administrative approval. Associated expenses and funding sources should also be discussed with supervisors for planning purposes.

Professional development activities can be further enhanced by expecting teachers to implement learning in a variety of ways. A few expectations for implementation plans may include: (a) writing lesson plans for class use or for other teachers' use; (b) developing community educational programs for building awareness; (c) presenting learning experiences in a memorable format such as a portfolio presentation or video montage; or (d) spreading awareness by writing and publishing articles about the program and learning experience in area newspapers, association newsletters, field magazines/journals.

Not only do teachers expand professional expertise and understanding through content-based training and differentiated professional development, but students, colleagues, and community members also benefit when teachers participate in targeted activities and then share their learning with others. Tiered learning activities afford educators with unique quality learning experiences and exposure to using strategies for increased application with students. Modeling is paramount to improving practical skills. By providing teachers with one-size-fits-all professional development learning scenarios, this model of instruction can be expected to be replicated in the classroom. A differentiated design approach to content-based training for teachers that is embedded with delivery through differentiated learning activities benefits teachers through deep content exploration and application of differentiation in the targeted subject area. Designing professional

development focused on these elements will enhance the teacher-as-learner experiences offered in staff training and increase the value of the professional development.

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Differentiation: Transparent or Opaque?

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While differentiation continues to enjoy a robust impact on educational practice, I have found very little in the literature that addresses a question I am frequently asked by teachers at workshops: “What can I do to make differentiation invisible?” In my experience, when concerns about camouflaging differentiation occur, they tend to center around issues related to fear of stigmatizing students who are working ahead of (or behind) their age-peers. These fears often manifest in specific concerns about grouping arrangements, as well as the issues of fairness, grading, and confusion regarding the difference between making student work more difficult rather than more complex. In this article, I would like to focus on the camouflage issue primarily as it pertains to gifted students and my belief that a classroom environment that fosters a growth mindset is key to resolving, or more accurately, dissolving many of the concerns teachers, students, and parents have presented to me.

Carole Ann Tomlinson (2003) delineates four ways in which teachers can differentiate:

1. Interest, which refers to topics or pursuits that evoke curiosity and passion in a learner,
2. Learning profile, which refers to how students learn best, influenced by learning style, intelligence preference, culture, and gender,
3. Readiness, which refers to a student's baseline knowledge, understanding, and skill related to a particular sequence of learning,
4. Affect, which has to do with how students feel about themselves, their work, and the classroom as a whole.

Tomlinson (2003) goes on to say that student affect is the gateway to helping each student become more fully engaged and successful in learning, as she considers student affect to be the foundation upon which all other differentiation efforts are based.

Student Groups and Stigma

I have rarely encountered a stigma issue related to the first two methods of differentiation—student interest or learning profile—except perhaps age-peer reactions to the occasional “exotic” interests displayed by gifted students. However, when readiness (ability) is the focus of differentiation efforts, concerns emerge regarding tracking, fairness, elitism, and grouping. Compared to the terms ability and aptitude, I believe readiness is more accurate, democratic, and aspirational, and simultaneously less stigmatizing. When asked about how to camouflage differentiation, I would thus suggest:

1. Eliminate the language “ability grouping” from the school lexicon. Readiness is a perfect alternative and requires no camouflage when presented by a teacher adept at establishing a growth mindset in the classroom (more on Mindset subsequently).
2. In the interest of classroom community and good pedagogy, be sure grouping methods are truly flexible and include grouping by readiness, interest, learning profile, student choice, and random assignments. Tomlinson and Imbeau (2011) recommend pre-assigned “standing groups” that embed various groupings seamlessly

within the fabric of the classroom. The following table offers examples of standing groups:

Pre-Assigned Standing Groups

<p>Text Teams Similar readiness; reading pairs.</p>	<p>Think Tanks Mixed readiness; writing generator; groups of four or five.</p>
<p>Synthesis Squads Sets of four with varied learning style preferences: visual, performance, writing, auditory, etc.</p>	<p>Dip Sticks Groups of six with varied profiles used by the teachers to do “dip stick” cross section checks of progress and understanding.</p>
<p>Teacher Talkers Groups of five to seven with similar learning needs with whom the teachers will meet to extend and support growth.</p>	<p>Peer Partners Student selected groups of three to four.</p>

Gregory and Kuzmic (2004) also offer a grouping strategy, employing the acronym TAPS (Total group, Alone, Pairs, and Small groups) as a mnemonic for creating and embedding flexible grouping (*see page 17*).

Regardless of what specific configurations are selected, artful grouping can camouflage differentiation, but better still can make

TAPS: Flexible Grouping Strategies

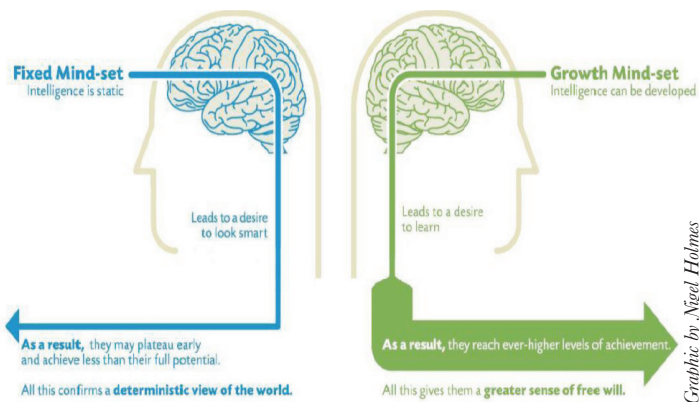
Adapted from Heacox's Differentiating Instruction in the Regular Classroom and Gregory's Differentiated Strategies for Student Growth and Achievement

Grouping	Strategy and Suggestions		
Total			
Whole class instruction for general information or introducing new skills and content	<i>Options for visual learners:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Graphic organizers •Note-taking •Model or demonstrate skill 	<i>Options for auditory learners:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Video clips •Lecture •Read aloud •Thick/thin questions 	<i>Options for kinesthetic learners:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Find someone who •Agreement circle •Line up
Alone			
Practicing and processing new information. Prepares students for standardized tests and real life situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •RAFT •Cubing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Journal entry •Silent reading •Contract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ticket out of class •Note-taking •Summarizing
Partners			
Random, student or teacher selected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Checking homework •Reviewing •Practicing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Peer editing •Peer evaluation •Think/pair/share 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Processing and practicing new learning •Researching
Small groups			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Carousel brainstorming •Group projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Jigsaw reading •Round-robin reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Talking chips •Roundtable •Socratic seminars

camouflage unnecessary as students become accustomed to working with many classmates. Utilizing truly flexible grouping can minimize, perhaps even eliminate, concerns about who is in the smart (or slow) group, because there are no smart or slow groups; there are many different groups, and group membership changes frequently.

Establishing the Climate for Differentiation

Recall that Tomlinson considers the foundation for differentiation to be affect, which has to do with how students feel about themselves, their work, and the classroom as a whole. Tomlinson (2003) suggests student affect is the entrance point for helping each student become more fully engaged and successful in learning, the key enabling all other instructional efforts to yield fruitful outcomes. The remainder of this column is devoted primarily to Dweck’s (2006) concept of mindset and its crucial importance for student affect and the environment for differentiation, specifically as mindset impacts gifted students.



The figure above represents a simplified overview of Dweck’s (2006) concept of “mindset” and its influence on approaches

to intelligence and learning. According to Dweck’s research, one’s fundamental orientation, fixed or growth, can establish either adaptive or maladaptive orientations toward several crucial issues relating to achievement. The table below presents these crucial issues and the orientations or outcomes to which each mindset leads:

Orientation Toward:	Fixed Mindset:	Growth Mindset:
Challenges	Avoid challenges	Embrace/seek challenges
Obstacles	Gives up easily	Persists despite difficulties and “failure”
Effort	Suggest inability/weakness	Sees effort as necessary, desirable, and the route to mastery
Criticism	Resents/ignores feedback	Seeks and utilizes feedback as a means to improve
Success of others	Threatening	Inspiring
Ultimately:	Student may not reach full potential	Best chance to reach full potential

In essence, the table shows that a growth mindset leads to a virtuous cycle of wanting to learn, which leads to increased learning, thereby affirming the original orientation. In contrast, a fixed mindset represents a vicious cycle of merely wanting to look smart, which leads to diminished learning, again affirming the original orientation. Without a growth mindset, many gifted students will be reluctant to embrace the challenges inherent in differentiation, as

taking up such challenges may require real effort and persistence, and may not lead to an inevitable “A.”

Summary of Dr. Dweck’s Research

Dweck’s mindset theory evolved from a series of experiences that began while she was a graduate student at Yale, reading about the phenomenon learned helplessness.

Later, while teaching in the early 1970s, Dweck noticed a similar form of student helplessness evidenced by learners who attributed their difficulties with math to a lack of ability. These students subsequently became less motivated in math.

In sharp contrast were students who attributed their difficulties to insufficient effort, and subsequently persisted in their attempts, solving many of the problems they first considered too difficult.

Years later, Dweck theorized that her “helpless” students differed from her effort-oriented students in both their attribution orientation and in their views of intelligence: Helpless students viewed intelligence as fixed, while the mastery-oriented students viewed intelligence as malleable and therefore susceptible to development through effort and education. Dweck formed the hypothesis that students with a growth mindset would experience greater academic success than would students with a fixed mindset, an expectation confirmed in multiple subsequent experiments with adults and children.

Developing a Growth Mindset in the Classroom

Fortunately, mindsets themselves are not fixed and can be developed in several ways. One of the most powerful means of establishing a growth mindset or of countering a fixed mindset is the carefully judicious use of praise. Praise, it turns out, is powerful feedback, and it may not always lead to the outcomes the praiser intends. In a series of experiments conducted in the 1990s, Mueller and Dweck (1998) explored the effects of praising students for their intelligence or for their effort in the classroom and discovered that compliments differentially affected students’ orientations toward learning tasks. McElwee (2010) provides the following highly simplified summary of findings:

Praise and Its Effects

Correlates	Intelligence praise	Effort/strategy praise
Student’s goal	Look smart	Learn
What does failure mean?	Low intelligence/ aptitude	Low effort, poor strategy
Enjoyment after difficulty	Low	High
Persistence after difficulty	Low	High
Deception about performance	High	Low
Performance after difficulty	Impaired	Improved

Before going further, I would ask that readers envision two gifted children you know who could represent the two mindsets, and impose their behavior relative to challenging tasks on the chart above. Does your image tend to validate Dweck's research? Do students who merely want to look smart tend to avoid the challenges you offer, and do students who are concerned with growth rather than appearance embrace those same challenges? In my experience, the descriptors above are extremely accurate, though not as dichotomous as the chart would suggest, as the terms "fixed" and "growth" refer to an orientation rather than absolute, unvarying behavior.

Using Praise to Encourage a Growth Mindset

Praise should focus on effort and persistence, which can be maintained, and strategies, which can be altered. "Growth praise" allows students to make multiple attempts, request support, and take the time needed to complete a task while removing the debilitating thoughts (I'm stupid, People will see me as less than perfect, Effort is embarrassing) a person with a fixed mindset must endure. Dweck (2007-2008) offers several examples for giving "proper praise":

"I like the way you tried several strategies before you finally solved that problem."

"You stayed at your desk and maintained concentration, that's great!"

"It's cool that you took on that challenging science project. It will take a lot of work, but you are going to learn great things!"

While proper praise is vital to developing and maintaining a growth mindset, there are several other strategies I have found useful but that unfortunately often run counter to the way we "do school" and thus can be very challenging to employ. Nonetheless, they may be useful for some and so are presented here.

Earlier I suggested flexible grouping is an effective way to camouflage differentiation by readiness. While true, I don't think camouflage should be the fundamental purpose of flexible grouping. In fact, I don't think teachers should have to go through any additional contortions to offer differentiation to their students, as successful differentiation is difficult enough. Instead of attempting to camouflage differentiation as a means of addressing concerns such as stigma, fairness, and difficulty vs. complexity (the three issues I referenced at the beginning of the article), I would instead suggest several strategies that can encourage a growth mindset for students, thereby obviating the need to cloak the fact that students differ.

One method I use to facilitate a classroom environment in which it is OK for students to be doing different things in different ways is to address the issue directly through use of an analogy to dispel the idea that always providing everyone with exactly the same assignment, homework, allotment of time, and so on is as absurd as prescribing the same medication to every patient in a clinic. I have even performed a clinic simulation with graduate students, offering them a slip of paper with an ailment or injury

(headache, strep throat, broken leg, high blood pressure, . . . you get the idea) written on it as they enter class and then providing each of them with a pretend prescription for a dose of penicillin.

The students report that five of them would be helped by the prescription, and the remainder of the class would remain as ill or injured as when they arrived. This analogy is so intuitively obvious that students (even those in middle school, ground zero for fitting in and making comparisons) understand and respond to it. My district has elected to substitute the acronym WIN (What I Need) for the potentially more stigmatizing strategic and intensive interventions within RtI as a way to codify the concept that fairness is providing all students what they need to thrive. I want my entire community to understand that prescribing the same learning treatments is as ineffective, and potentially dangerous, as treating all illnesses and ailments with penicillin.

Another strategy for helping learners and adults understand that fair does not necessarily mean identical involves a related exercise, in which I ask students to stand up if they are good at something (they all stand), then ask them to sit down if they are good at everything (they remain standing), and finally ask them to sit if they struggle with some things (they all sit). Next, I ask for volunteers to share some of their strengths and challenges. Finally, I point out that everyone in the room, myself included, is the same in that we have strengths

and weaknesses, and different in that, fortunately, we have different strengths and weaknesses—which will subsequently be the basis of our standing, pre-assigned groups.

Third, the way to “set the classroom climate table” for differentiation is to overtly and consistently make the connection between effort and expertise. The “10,000 hour rule” (mastery results from 10,000 hours of strategic practice) has received considerable attention. Teachers could certainly assign older students to read any of several articles devoted to the concept, but I have found having learners read biographies and stories to be more effective and would suggest the following YouTube links as starting points for helping students connect effort to expertise:

[Michael Jordan Nike Commercial](#)

[Famous Failures](#)

[More Famous Failures](#)

[Malcolm Gladwell explaining the 10,000 hour rule](#)

Thus far I have addressed grouping, the basis for and fairness of differentiation, and the relationship between effort and expertise, which together help establish a classroom climate that will allow differentiation to be transparent to the point where many students and teachers view differentiation as simply the way the class operates. There remains, however, the necessity of fostering or perhaps maintaining a growth mindset in individual (gifted) students, and while I can't claim to have succeeded with every gifted student I have taught, the considerations and strategies below have helped considerably.

Extensions, Tiering, and “Fairness”

First, a word about perfectionism, which I consider to be so prevalent a “spectrum disorder” for our gifted population, it merits special mention here. Perfectionism is the antithesis of a growth mindset, as growth requires the willingness to be a novice, make and learn from mistakes, take risks, and focus on improvement rather than maintaining (the illusion of) perfection. Dealing with hard-core perfectionists is beyond the scope of this article, but for students with perfectionistic tendencies (which is to say, many, if not most of the gifted students I know) the YouTube links listed above will reinforce the importance of maintaining a growth mindset, especially when gifted students face obstacles. Dr. Dweck and her colleagues have developed the Brainology® program to help all students gain confidence and motivation to learn by teaching them about the brain, how to strengthen it, and how to apply brain-friendly study skills (<http://www.brainology.us/>).

A Growth Mindset within Response to Intervention

The following discussion is not exclusive to Response to Intervention (RtI), but since RtI is so prevalent and has the potential to provide support for gifted students, I will use it as a framework to illustrate some final points. As many readers are aware, RtI consists of three tiers that correspond to increasing levels of service for struggling students, which initially meant struggling to meet grade level, but due to the work of gifted advocates now includes our population

of gifted students struggling to learn something new.

Initially, the RtI model was designed as a remedy for the discrepancy model used in special education. The discrepancy model demanded students fall two years below grade level before being allowed to qualify for special education services. The RtI model advocates instead for real time remediation (or, for gifted students, extensions) as a more effective means of supporting students, and while RtI continues to focus on compensatory instruction, there are several sources now available for those wishing to utilize RtI to support gifted services (google RtI and gifted). Within RtI, Tier 1 instruction is designed to meet the needs of approximately 80% of the students within the regular education classroom, primarily through good teaching practices, with an emphasis on differentiation. The examples that follow from Bruce Campbell (2004) are tiered assignments differentiated by Bloom’s taxonomy (complexity) as suggested by the verb stems in each sentence.

Tiers for the book *Animal Farm*:

1. Describe the novel’s basic symbolism.
2. Explain direct correlations between the book and communism.
3. Discuss examples of current human behavior reflected in the book.

Tiers for a social studies unit on Ancient Greece:

1. Identify the major dates, battles, and figures in the Peloponnesian Wars.

2. Explain important strategies used in the wars and the resulting effects.
3. Describe the impact the wars had on ancient Greek history.
4. Compare the Peloponnesian Wars with events in world history today.

In my classroom, gifted students would be expected to respond to prompt three for *Animal Farm*, and prompt four for “Ancient Greece.” If I have successfully embedded a growth mindset within my classroom, it doesn’t matter if the differentiation is camouflaged (i.e., students are unaware of the stratified questions) or transparent, as my gifted students should by now be embracing the challenge of the more complex questions, and all the students in the class are used to and comfortable with the idea that different students work on different things. Gifted students in my room with a fixed mindset would soon discover that, in the words of the Star Trek villains, the Borg, “Resistance is futile.”

For gifted students whose needs are not met via differentiation within Tier 1, RtI suggests extensions within Tiers 2 and 3. Teachers of gifted students will need to look beyond the traditional RtI cannon to find anything of substance regarding extensions, since, for example, the current best selling RtI text does not include the word in its glossary. In addition to the virtual absence of gifted pedagogy within RtI is the consistent assumption among the speakers I have heard that students will uniformly embrace extensions, mistaking high achievers for gifted students. High achievers will in fact

dutifully engage with extensions that are less than stellar, but gifted students will need extensions that are more artfully designed, and teachers should start by avoiding three practices guaranteed to alienate gifted students, especially if they have a growth mindset:

- Extensions that are merely more of the original content (“Students finishing early may read additional chapters . . .”),
- Filler (homework for other classes, free reading, and other busywork unrelated to the standard being studied),
- The gifted students’ curse of being expected to teach other students.

All of these function as disincentives for gifted students, discouraging them from revealing they have mastered work before their age-peers. For extensions to be both educational and inviting, they should meet the criteria for a good anchoring activity, which is essentially what they are. An effective extension should:

- Involve complexity rather than difficulty
- Provide students with options, including those suggested by students
- Relate to the standards being studied
- Foster autonomy
- Offer opportunities for self-assessment

In closing, I hope I have offered readers a formula for establishing a classroom environment that maximizes the likelihood gifted students will respond to differentiated

opportunities. In oversimplified form, the formula is: focus on student affect as a “gateway strategy” to support differentiation ⇨ reinforce student acceptance of differences via flexible grouping ⇨ support classroom environment further by introducing and teaching about mindset and the 10,000 rule ⇨ trouble shoot to maintain growth mindset by artful construction of differentiation and extensions.

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Differentiation and the Twice-Exceptional Student

Cheryl Franklin-Rohr

In the last column I talked about the three tiers of instruction in the RtI (Response to Intervention) framework. As you may remember, the first level of instruction, Tier 1, is designed to meet the needs of 80% of students within the regular classroom. The only way to accomplish this goal is to use differentiation.

Differentiation is not a singular process; it is rather a complicated process of adapting instructional strategies so that ALL students can be successful. This term has been around since the 60s, but it really wasn't successfully brought to teachers' awareness until Carol Ann Tomlinson introduced her ideas about this concept in 1995. Now, differentiation is an essential cornerstone of successful teaching

Differentiation requires that teachers' adjust their content (what they teach), process (activities that help students understand the content), product (how the students demonstrate their acquisition of the knowledge) and the learning environment according to students' readiness (where they are in the continuum of learning), learning styles (how the students learn best), or interests. With the continued focus of Common Core Standards, adjusting the content may be difficult for a teacher to accomplish. Therefore, teachers may want to concentrate their efforts in differentiation in the process, product, learning styles and learning environment.

For twice-exceptional students, teachers need to get to know their students from multiple perspectives. We need to use our pre-assessment data to identify areas in the curriculum where students may be above grade level as well as to identify areas where students may have holes in skill sets. We can also get to know our students better by using information from Multiple

Intelligence assessments, learning styles and interest inventories, or surveys on other factors that impact student learning. We need to know that “Mark” needs a quiet environment to think, that “José” needs more time to process information, that “Linda” can’t copy notes from a PowerPoint and listen to the teacher at the same time.

Many teachers give pre-assessments, learning style or multiple intelligence surveys, and interest inventories, but few of us adjust our instruction based on this information. I have seen too many teachers give pre-assessments and then teach everyone in the same way. If a student knows the information already, they don’t need additional repetition to improve their skills. In fact, a student who is required to continue to practice basic math skills may become sloppy in their work and make silly mistakes.

So how should this work for ALL students, including twice-exceptional students? In the classroom, after the teacher gives a pre-assessment for the unit or for a specific skill, he or she should identify where each student in the class is along a continuum of this specific skill. Then, the teacher should create small ability groups so that all students can work at the level where they are learning new information. For students who are at the top, this should include options for extensions and enrichment opportunities. This is where all the information about multiple intelligences, learning style and interest inventories will help the teacher create options that are still connected to the curriculum. Students who have already

demonstrated that they know the skill could also work on independent studies. There are many examples of ways to structure independent studies for students of all grade levels.

What if the data shows that our twice-exceptional student doesn’t know the skill or the information in the unit? The teacher still needs to use the information from the pre-assessment to identify any holes that the student may have in the skill, or to determine ways in which the learning environment can be structured to ensure success for students. A teacher can give a copy of the PowerPoint to that one student who can’t copy down information and listen at the same time. A teacher can provide information at different reading levels so that ALL students acquire the same information. A teacher can have different activities in the classroom that help all students to process and demonstrate the learning in different ways.

Teachers are also confused about the role of homework in the differentiated classroom. If the purpose of homework is to practice and become more proficient in specific learning concepts, yet a student is doing well on the assessment, the homework was probably unnecessary. Most twice-exceptional students are uninterested in unnecessary “busy work” and won’t complete it. In many of these situations the students have failing grades in these classes because they won’t “play the homework game.” Teachers can differentiate homework assignments to give students the practice that they need in order to grow.

Differentiation might be difficult for teachers to learn how to do, but it is a required skill for teachers to use effectively if they want their students to show growth in their learning. Once a teacher learns how to differentiate, it becomes the only way to plan instruction.

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Write for Understanding Our Gifted

Understanding Our Gifted is published quarterly as an online publication. The schedule and themes for upcoming issues are:

Issue	Publication Date	Article/Column Deadline	Theme
Spring 2012	Apr 15	Mar 15	Bullying and the Gifted
Summer 2012	Jul 15	Jun 15	Home Schooling
Fall 2012	Oct 15	Sep 15	STEM Science Technology Engineering Mathematics
Winter 2013	Jan 15	Dec 15	Twice Exceptional

Have something to say about any of the above topics? UOG always welcomes submissions for consideration. Writers' Guidelines can be found [here](#). For more information, contact Acquisitions Editor, Sandra Berger, at sandraberger@erols.com or publisher, Kristin Ludwig, at kristin@our-gifted.com.

Connections that Count

Lou Lloyd-Zannini

This isn't a complaint, honest. But I've got to tell you that January is just a little too short for me. Especially this year.

Somehow this year, my head is still spinning from the holidays that descended upon me, roughed me up, and then swiftly left me – with less money and more weight than when they arrived! And February is just around the corner. Late that month, I'll be in Denver/Arvada at the Beyond Giftedness XIX conference sponsored by this journal's parent company, where I'll be making three presentations. So there is a lot going on.

What's interesting, though, as I contemplate how exactly I want to present my primary session – something I call “Critical Connections or Hokey Hook-ups?” – is that so much of what I experienced over the holidays, this year, and in years past, is present in my thoughts. In fact, it's really at the foundation of what I hope to share. Let me explain – without giving away too much, of course. (You'll have to join us there to get the rest of it!)

Many tell me that I'm blessed or lucky – whichever fits their sensibility – because I have a large extended family which gets together at all major holidays during the year. Some of us travel hundreds of miles to gather, share food and company, reminisce about holidays from years past, and think and talk about what lies ahead for us and for our kids and grandkids.

Often, three generations of cousins, along with the matriarch and patriarch of the family – that's my mom, now 97, and her “baby brother,” a relative youngster at only 89 – shoehorn ourselves into one of our far-too-small homes, where we talk and laugh and eat and eat and eat (Yes, we're Italian-Americans, and food is a big part of the celebrations.) until even the heartiest of souls is worn out and ready to head home – always with smiles on our faces. So somehow the

madness of getting ready for the holidays, that insanity of shopping and decorating and gift buying and traveling, seems to fall away as unimportant when we finally do get together.

“But what has all this got to do with our gifted children?” you may be asking. My response is this: Absolutely nothing, and positively everything.

I say “absolutely nothing” because what my family does on holidays really has nothing to do with being gifted – though a number of members of the family are, and if we can convince Gardner that “culinary intelligence” is real, we probably will all qualify! So in that sense, there’s no connection.

On the other hand, I say “positively everything” because what drives my family to do what it does over holidays is also a critical drive in the lives of gifted kids: establishing meaningful connections, learning from those connections who we are and where we come from, and building from those connections the scaffolding for success in the years to come.

My first exposure to this phenomenon was back in 1995 when I had the joy of co-directing the Virginia Residential [Summer] Governor’s School for Math, Science and Technology. There, gifted kids from across our commonwealth came together for four to six weeks of discovery, taking courses in biology, chemistry, geology, astronomy, and



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advanced math and computer sciences from William & Mary professors, and working alongside scientists at NASA and the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences. They lived together in college dorms, met a couple of hundred of new friends, and shared a summer that none of us will ever forget.

Interestingly, as revealed through the extensive journaling process in place that summer, was that what made the Governor's School experience unforgettable wasn't so much the advanced academics that these incredibly talented kids were part of (though it didn't hurt!), as it was the opportunity to be with others like them, to establish connections that ran deeper than intelligence and gender and demographics, with others who could understand and grow with them, who could challenge them and spur them on to greater things, and perhaps more than anything else, help them feel "normal." This was just as true for the teens who came from large cities with "real" gifted programs as it was for those from tiny towns with only a few gifted learners in their entire small high school. It was absolutely consistent: The connections were critical.

So what can we do as parents and educators of gifted kids to help them build the connections that will allow them to thrive? I'd like to suggest just a few practical and simple things that we might want to consider as we live and work with them day by day. I'll break those suggestions out into two short sets, one for parents, and the other for teachers. Ready?

For Parents:

- **Be family.** Perhaps the most grossly undervalued commodity in our country today is family time. With all the busyness of life, especially when we're living with gifted high achievers, it's really difficult to find time to sit down and just spend time together. But that time together is the foundation for the most critical connection of all.

While many encourage regular family meals together (Obviously, my family does!), family time doesn't have to be food-centered. Perhaps a regular family game night works better for your clan. Maybe it's a weekly parent-child night out or afternoon away. Perhaps it's a few quiet moments before bedtime, or when you first get up. Some families gather for daily devotional times.

Whatever your family does, be sure that you build time to keep the sense of family identity firm. Though your kids will individuate and become their own persons, they will never lose that piece of their identity that comes from their family. So even if your family is more like the Osbornes than the Nelsons, make time to be together. Besides, "fun" is right in the middle of dysfunctional...

- **Be available.** Whether or not s/he wants to admit it, your gifted child really wants access to you, and really does value your input – though s/he may show it in some unusual ways by the time s/he's in middle or high school. Don't allow the "attitude"

or the moodiness that you may encounter from time to time to discourage you from keeping lines of communication open, and being available to your daughter or son.

Even if your job requires you to work long or unusual hours, with today's communications systems, you can be nanoseconds from your gifted kid if needed. Many kids from late elementary school and up are carrying phones now, and most of those phones are "smart" enough to handle text messages (the teen's favorite means of communication), to hit social media sites, to Skype or Facetime, and to e-mail. So encourage your child to keep you in the loop of what's happening. And don't be afraid to stop for thirty seconds to send a quick text of encouragement, especially when you know it's a rough day for your child. You'll be amazed at how your accessibility will positively impact your child.

- Be an encourager. Society willingly provides enough discouragement for your gifted child. A cursory flip through the channels, or a fast survey of the favorite teen magazines will immediately tell your kid that s/he's too tall or too short, too fat or too skinny, or that s/he's not wearing the "right" jeans or shoes or accessories. After all, what you just bought was so thirty seconds ago. It's not now.

Worse yet, there's a strong possibility that kids in your neighborhood, or in school, or in any of a myriad of activities your child may participate in, have probably told your son or daughter that s/he is

"weird" because s/he's "smart" or "does strange stuff" (like going off to a summer enrichment program). And society itself seems to think that all gifted people are emotionally ill-balanced, and way closer to the lunatic fringe than to normalcy – whatever that is.

So be an encourager for your child. Don't try to pump him or her up with false praise, or overdone cheerleading, because s/he will immediately read it as fake. But do offer words of encouragement regularly, small heartfelt messages that tell your kid that s/he's okay, that s/he's appreciated, and that it's okay to be different – to have higher dreams and ambitions, to do things others won't even try. It will make a world of difference.

For Educators:

- Be gatherers. One of the first things that we teach novice fire-builders is that the best way to restart a smoldering fire is to gather the glowing embers together and then fan them a bit. It's not so different with our gifted kids. As educators, perhaps the most important thing we can do for highly able learners is to make sure that they're working with others like themselves. So gather your glowing embers, and make sure that your gifted kids have regular and long access to others at their cognitive and affective levels. Remember, too, that giftedness isn't necessarily monolithic. It can be very domain-specific, and can vary in ability from moderate to profound. So you may need to even consider subgrouping within your gifted cluster

to truly help your kids connect with like learners.

It goes without saying that once you've pulled your gifted learners together, you'll need to sufficiently differentiate their learning tasks and activities to allow them to take the lead in their own learning, and to stay engaged and interested in the matter at hand. It's a lot of work, but the results are well worth it.

- **Be coaches.** You, more than anyone else, knows what your gifted charges are interested in, and what they're capable of. So if you really want to help them connect, help them connect with their passion.

Encourage your gifted learners to try new things, as well as to master things they're already familiar with. Give them new challenges that allow them to explore beyond what they may think is possible. And give them room to succeed and to fail. They'll need to do plenty of both before they finally know what it is that truly lights their fire.

- **Be liaisons.** One of the most positive connections that gifted kids make in terms of their future is the connection with a mentor whose interest and strength parallel the gifted learner's. Countless stories have been told concerning the incredibly huge impact that a mentorship in middle or high school has had on the growth and development of gifted kids.

As educators, we have a unique opportunity to do something that even

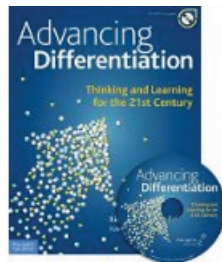
parents might find difficult in terms of helping their gifted child get connected: Because we have exposure to experts and leaders in our disciplines, we have the ability to introduce our gifted learners to those who have already followed a path similar to the one they're considering. We can bring them face-to-face with those who know what they will be up against, and can advise them on what to do and what to avoid along the way to their goals. It's a connection that can make all the difference in the world.

Are there other critical connections that we can help our gifted children make? Absolutely! And there are a whole bunch we should probably help them avoid as well! If you want to hear more about them, I look forward to seeing you in Colorado in February for Beyond Giftedness XIX. It's a great chance to meet some fantastic folks, and to beef up our own skills and abilities for working with gifted kids. Besides, the weather is always wonderful, and the mountains are only a half hour away! So don't miss it!

Lou Lloyd-Zannini is a former teacher of language arts, former associate professor at Regent University in Virginia Beach, and parent of a gifted child. He currently is an associate professor at Rhode Island College and head of the Henry Barnard Laboratory School, where he leads a vibrant and creative faculty which serves a population of which a great number are gifted.

Teachers Blog Lists Books on Differentiation

Tamara Fisher, in her blog in Education Week, lists the following books, amongst others, on differentiation. To see the blog in its entirety, visit http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/unwrapping_the_gifted/2011/10/gift_a_teacher.html.

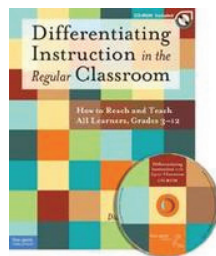


Advancing Differentiation: Thinking and Learning for the 21st Century, by Richard Cash. Along with the enclosed CD-ROM, this handbook is an excellent resource for those teachers who are ready to take their differentiation strategies to the next level.

Differentiating Content for Gifted Learners in Grades 6-12: A CD-ROM of Customizable Extensions Menus and Study Guides, by Susan Winebrenner.



This CD provides detailed information about how to differentiate content for gifted and high-ability learners in the middle and high school grades. It includes more than 140 customizable forms and templates.



Differentiating Instruction in the Regular Classroom: How to Reach and Teach All Learners, Grades 3-12, by Diane Heacox. Together with the included CD-ROM of customizable forms, this handbook outlines the principles behind differentiation along with multiple strategies for classroom implementation.

Making Differentiation a Habit, by Diane Heacox. Together with a CD-ROM of customizable forms, this teacher-friendly handbook offers a plethora of tools and strategies to help teachers make differentiation a habit in their classrooms.

