THP
Teaching for High Potential
Quality Classroom Practice *for* High-Abillity Students
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Ungifting the Gifted Underachiever

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Much to her parents' delight, Rebecca was identified as gifted in reading and math at the end of second grade. Throughout elementary school, she made excellent grades and never had an issue keeping up with her schoolwork; she was the "typical" gifted student, not only meeting, but also exceeding her teachers' expectations. Yet, in sixth grade her parents noticed a change. Rebecca began earning C's in Language Arts, her favorite class. When they asked Rebecca to explain her below-average grades, she just shrugged her shoulders and muttered inaudibly under her breath. Frustrated, but still hopeful, Rebecca's parents met with her Language Arts teacher and were told it was probably just "a phase." The next year, however, the pattern continued and extended into other classes. Rebecca's parents scheduled a meeting with all of her teachers. This time they were told they should consider exiting their daughter from the gifted program. The gifted label was no longer appropriate for Rebecca.

This scenario begs the consideration of an important question: Should only academic "achievers" be considered gifted? Passow (1981) posed this question as he pondered the nature of giftedness and talent. And although the answer to this question should not be followed by a simple "yes," many educators, especially those without gifted and talented training, would not hesitate to answer this way. If asked, their explanation might have something to do with how their school district defines giftedness, perhaps a focus on achievement and performance. Or, their explanation might concern the needs of other students. For example, if Rebecca were not going to take advantage of gifted programming, a high achieving student without the gifted label would benefit from taking her place. Another plausible explanation might concern how educators perceive the "typical" gifted student who may be viewed as highly motivated to do well in school. Although, on the surface, these appear to be valid explanations for why only "achievers" should be considered gifted, they each are flawed in some way.

Giftedness = Academic Achievement

There is no fixed definition of giftedness; it is continuously evolving. Although Terman (1925) most famously defined giftedness as the top 1% of general intelligence (g) measured by an IQ test, in more recent decades, researchers have proposed broader definitions. These definitions recognize other attributes in addition to intellectual ability. For example, Passow et al. (1955) defined giftedness as the *potential* for superior achievement in any area of study

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from the EDITOR

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A Continuous Journey

The efforts of educators never cease to amaze me! From the bottom up or top down, the trials and tribulations faced on every level, and over time, are enough to frazzle even the strongest of resolves. The kindergartner with the oversized backpack becomes the hopeful college freshman. A first-year teacher, lesson plans in hand, blooms into a mentor, guide, and expert educator. Administrators, glassy-eyed and tired amidst mountains of paperwork and decision-making, find a way to manage and lead. Advocates press on amidst pushback and resistance, and writers and researchers alike offer the products of years of thought and study. Each situation presents a continuous journey, for all involved play a part in this giant perpetual educational engine. The key to a successful expedition lies in continual commitment, understanding, communication, and an endless pursuit of knowledge.

I am delighted to present this issue of THP; it represents a milestone on its journey. A few folks have gotten off and some new passengers were picked up. While it is hard to let go of the things you count on the most, excellent writers and individuals and new styles and perspectives fill the void left in the rearview. I am pleased to welcome THP's new associate editor C. Matthew Fugate. Matt takes the position vacated by Elizabeth Fogarty, who held the post for the past 8 years. Her dedication and contributions are greatly appreciated.

Now, on to the issue. In *Ungifting the Gifted Underachiever*, Jennifer Ritchotte journeys to the heart of what it means to be a gifted underachiever and offers instruction and support for educators. Kathryn Fishman-Weaver educates the readership on the benefits of taking a group of students on a journey to their state capital in *Three Reasons to Plan an Advocacy Field Trip*. We have bid our farewells to THP's departing columnists in past issues; you will be introduced to four new writers in this issue. As a result, some of the column names have changed. A new column, *The Curriculum Corner,* illustrates the importance of Essential Questions when writing curricula. *Buried Under Books: A Reader on Reading*, another debut, looks at math and science orientated picture books. In the technological realm, *The Digital Ecosystem*, another new column, brings together a variety of subject areas and skills needed to complete a classroom project. *iMathination*, (same column name, different author) tells us "there is no textbook!" He sets up a mathematical theme for future installments. *The Primary Place* introduces "mentor texts," which seek to increase the visual vocabulary of young writers. *Scientifically Speaking* urges science teachers to utilize the past and present to shape the future by using biographies and mentorships. *A Secondary Look* ponders narcissism in a "selfie-oriented" world. Lastly, *School Spotlight* highlights the GATE program at a middle school in New Mexico, where the population is over 90 percent culturally and linguistically diverse. Join me in welcoming Bronwyn MacFarlane, Susannah Richards, Kevin Besnoy, and Scott Chamberlin to these pages.

I hope you enjoy this issue of THP, for it should be quite the trip. As always, I welcome your comments, suggestions, and ideas.

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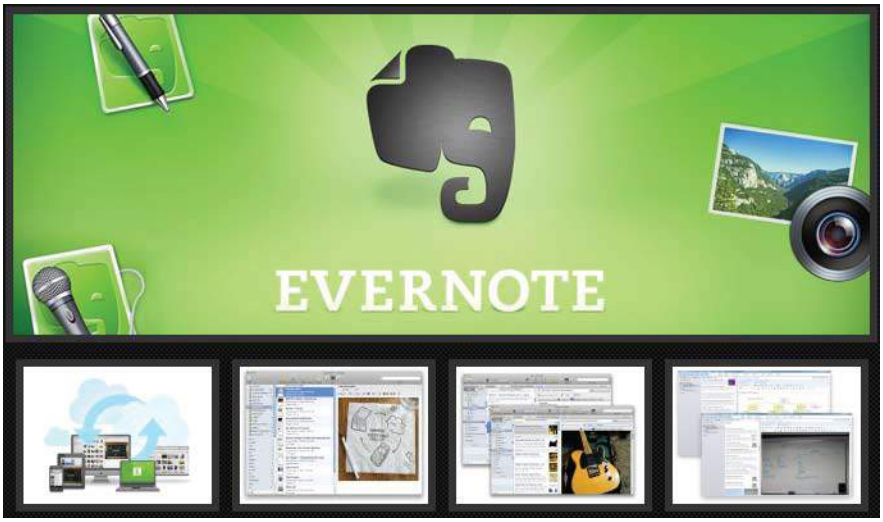
Creating a Public Service Announcement

Certain environmental conditions must exist before teachers of the gifted will integrate technology into their classrooms. Similar to any ecosystem found in nature, a classroom is a system that develops from the interactions among all living and non-living things. As such, teachers of the gifted must develop a classroom digital ecosystem that allows for the confluence of student potential and eventual marketplace demands, keeping in mind the conditions that promote a sustainable classroom digital ecosystem. We have so much to explore together.

Our first exploration together is to create a Public Service Announcement (PSA), which is a great way to sustain a classroom-based digital ecosystem. PSAs are digital messages designed to educate and persuade the public conscious about social issues. Typically PSAs are related to health and safety issues and are part of a larger public awareness campaign, which are disseminated through traditional and nontraditional media outlets (e.g., television, radio, Internet, social media, podcasts).

When designing a technology rich learning experience, remember it's not the technology that produces creative-productive students; it's the design of the lesson. In each step, you provide the digital tools in a way that focuses students on the process of learning rather than the development of the product.



Step 1: Identify Issues for the PSA Focus

For younger children, identify local issues and survey locally; older students may widen to a more global perspective, with access to national data. Numerous websites provide great sources of information that present a wide array of issues from which to choose. For instance, the Environmental Protection Agency website has a portal that allows visitors to research local environmental data (www.epa.gov/myenvironment). While each state has a public health department, the Centers for Disease Control's Tracking Program gathers and disseminates community health data for 23 states (http://ephtracking.cdc.gov/showStateTracking). The United Nations Global Issues page addresses the most pressing issues that transcend national borders (www.un.org/en/globalissues/).

Step 2: Conduct Research

Students must be familiar with the research process in order to formulate logical and persuasive arguments. Since erroneous information can be posted easily to the Internet, it is critical that gifted students develop the ability to differentiate fact from fiction. One strategy involves the idea of triangulation, whereby students verify facts from three independent sources such as primary documents, secondary research documents, public records, interviews, and photographs in order to develop a complete understanding of the issue or event.

There are numerous graphic organizers that can help students document the facts they discover; however, *ReadingQuest.org* (www.readingquest.org/strat/home.html) has several created for this process. Keeping up with all these sources can be difficult, but one tool is particularly useful for this process. *Evernote* (www.evernote.com) allows users to organize and store multiple resources in one place. One viewing of *How to use Evernote to Manage Research Articles* tutorial (http://youtu.be/fyrE6SpTNSA) has you going like a pro.

In addition, since PSAs are designed to persuade public opinion, students must gather data to determine current behavior or attitudes before moving forward. This is an important step, requiring students to utilize thinking and planning skills, remaining neutral during this process. Once a reviewed list of questions is proposed and drafted, students can create their survey. A simple tool to use is *SurveyMonkey* (www.surveymonkey.com), which

allows users to easily create and distribute polls. Results are automatically organized into a simple to read spreadsheet, thus allowing for easy data analysis. As students progress through the PSA creation process, results from the polling can highlight the specific aspects of public behavior or attitudes that can be targeted in the PSA message.

Step 3: Create a Storyboard

The key to this step is for students to synthesize their research and to organize their ideas into a logical, well-informed, and persuasive argument. Not only do they need to think about the words they will use, but they must also decide on images (moving and still) and music or other sound effects that will grab the audience's attention. Rather than writing formalized scripts, many students prefer to use storyboards to organize their PSA. One great resource is a web-based site called *StoryboardThat* (www.storyboardthat.com), which allows users to collaboratively design storyboards.

Step 4: Produce the PSA

Students can video record themselves and then use editing software to edit a final version. Additionally, students can use photographs and captions to convey their message. Most computers come with either *Windows Movie Maker* (for Microsoft Windows based computer—(http://youtu.be/3ZZij3NNyVg) or *iMovie* preinstalled (Apple computers—http://youtu.be/kCq2ncg7Mqg). Additionally, students can use *PowToon* (www.powtoon.com) or *RawShorts* (www.rawshorts.com) to create PSAs without having to record their own video footage.

Step 5: Publish the PSA

Publishing the PSA to a video sharing site or entering it into a PSA contest adds an element of authenticity. There are several video-sharing sites such as *YouTube* (www.youtube.com/), *Flickr* (www.flickr.com/), and *Vimeo* (https://vimeo.com/). Additional outlets include recurring PSA contests such as *Project Yellow Light* (www.projectyellowlight.com/), *Rock Your World* (http://rock-your-world.org/), *Drive2Life* (www.scholastic.com/drive2life), and *PSAid* (www.psaid.org).

Guiding students through the production of a PSA is only one way to integrate technology into existing curriculum. A healthy digital ecosystem utilizes technology to develop creative and critical-thinking skills rather than simply using technology tools in a haphazard manner. Digital technology tools are constantly changing, as are the products that students can create with them. The only constants are the continued focus on the learning process and the skills required to be successful digital citizens. Our journey begins here. **THP**

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Is There an Ideal Curriculum for Gifted Mathematicians?

Many years ago, one of my most admired methods teachers (the late Dr. Sandy Abell. Purdue University) came into class on the first day of the semester and asked us how we might teach science to students. After a series of typical responses, she said, "the first thing that needs to happen is this," and she proceeded to take the science textbook and throw it into the garbage can. Similarly, I once heard a speaker at a national convention state that, "no true mathematical problem solving activities exist in textbooks." It is true that gifted and talented students can be served perfectly well with a mathematics textbook, but unless teachers are willing to adapt the curricula extensively, the tasks, concepts, and principles outlined in the textbook will rarely scratch the surface of understanding.

What to Do?

Teachers can start by accessing a conceptually based textbook or curriculum. Arguably the most well-respected math curriculum out there for young gifted and talented students is the researched-based Project M^3 and Project M^2 (Gavin et al., 2009). The hallmark of this curricula is that it places a priority on deep investigations of one or two problems per class session, rather than teaching 4-5 disparate topics.

To put this into perspective, I recently visited a classroom where a teacher taught a 90-minute lesson and covered adding fractions with unlike denominators and long division (both number sense and operations), classification of triangles (geometry), and mutually exclusive events (probability) in the same lesson. I, the "mathematics expert" in the room for observation, couldn't even follow the teacher. Imagine this approach compared to one in which learners are instructed to complete one to two problems a class, discuss possible solutions, and work to develop an understanding of the root of the concept.

Consider the following class prompt: "Sum the numbers one through 93." This problem requires time to complete and enables learners to refine basic facts, offer multiple solutions (but one answer), and could be extended to include mathematical modeling, the fourth mathematical practice in the Common Core State Standards-Mathematics.

The Value of the Single Problem Approach

Thirty-five years ago, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (1980) and the National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics (1979) defined problem solving as the very essence of doing mathematics. That is still true today. The best mathematicians at the professional level are the problem solvers. It must be said that the value of understanding basic facts should not to be underestimated. That is to say, when solving problems, learners rarely do so without engaging in the exercise of computing basic facts. Problems arise when teachers of mathematics assume that a knowledge of basic facts allow all students to successfully problem solve.

I offer two tips for those that teach mathematics to gifted and talented students that should be revisited every day. First, define mathematics concepts and problems as problem-solving exercises, intended for discussion and debate. Secondly, invest significant time identifying problem-solving tasks that can be used with each day's assignment. Students have to start somewhere, and presenting a problem to be solved is a perfect place to begin.

I look forward to future columns of *iMathination* that will offer tools and strategies for addressing concepts covered in the majority of mathematics classrooms, with an emphasis on what an ideal classroom looks like. **THP**

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Scientists of the Past Informing the Scientists of the Future

How might we look to the past in order to construct the future? There are many strategies to accomplish this but two of my favorites are biographies and mentorships. Biographies present a terrific way for gifted students to learn about the lives of eminent scientists. Mentorships, when properly managed, can be an effective way to engage them in the annuals of science. Both help gifted students to better understand the lives of scientists by recognizing the challenges they faced. In particular, good biographies typically demonstrate to gifted students that hard work is essential to their success.

Biographies

The biographies of many eminent scientists are fascinating. Take these brief accounts of the lives of Tesla and Galton as examples.

Nikola Tesla, who held around 300 patents, had competing reputations as both a debonair New York gentleman and a mad scientist. He was an early champion of AC current, which beat out Edison's DC current. He also held wild ideas, including the possibility for wireless technology—which was hard for most to imagine more than a century ago. He lived in hotels for most of his life and died relatively unknown.

Sir Francis Galton had well over 300 books and published papers by the end of his life. He was a foundational thinker in statistics, forensic science, heredity, psychometrics, and anthropology, to name only a few. Galton was reading at age two, knew Latin and Greek by age 5, and read Shakespeare for pleasure as a six-year-old.

Completing a biographical study of scientists can be accomplished in English and social studies classes, allowing for many opportunities for cross-disciplinary study. While not limited to scientists, Gardner's (2011) book, *Creating Minds: An Anatomy of Creativity Seen through the Lives of Freud, Einstein, Picasso, Stravinsky, Eliot, Graham, and Ghandi* provides fascinating insight into the lives of these other eminent individuals. It makes for a great discussion book for middle and high school students. There are also many suitable books and websites for biographies at all levels (for example, www.strangescience.net/bios.htm has an extensive list of biographies for elementary students). It is important for students to see themselves as potential future scientists, recognizing motivational traits and scientific passion, not falling for the common stereotype of the generic, cartoonish scientist. Biographies are an easy way to accomplish this; mentorships are more challenging to arrange, but can be very effective.

Mentorships

Developing a mentorship requires connecting students with living, working scientists who can potentially work with the student at a time available to both. With a mentor, students can work on real projects in their area of talent. Thus, a mentorship can be considered a form of subject-level acceleration. Mentorship has a powerful effect on student learning according to Rogers' (2007) meta-analysis. With an academic effect size of .57 (*that is a good number*), students working with mentors over the course of a year make additional gains in a particular subject area equivalent to three-fifths of a year. It is the ideal "Advanced Placement." There are meaningful social and emotional gains for students as well—the strongest in Rogers' study—with positive effect sizes .47 and .42 respectively. Again, great numbers for researchers. All you need to know is that mentorships work.

Mentorships provide a very real-world aspect to the sciences. Doctoral programs in the sciences are predicated on the concept, with graduate students learning the ropes by working with practicing scientists. Mentorships are usually done during the last few years of high school or college, but can and should be done earlier. At the elementary level, I connected a gifted fourth-grade student fascinated and very knowledgeable about insects with a former entomology professor. The student and mentor corresponded through e-mail. The student sent pictures of unusual insects, and the professor helped the student work to identify them. The pair enjoyed the relationship—the professor noted that the student was more excited and engaged than most of his undergraduate students. As an added bonus the student even found a large moth caterpillar that was not known to live in that area. A true scientific discovery.

In order to connect the scientists of the past and present to those of the future, incorporating biographical study and mentorship are effective methods of engagement and learning, providing real and tangible models in which students can imagine themselves. **THP**

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Teaching What is Essential: Asking the Essential Questions

Determining what is essential for high-ability students to learn in a gifted program curriculum is one of the most important aspects of curriculum design work. If curriculum is a set of written decisions for what students will learn, know, and be able to do, then the use of *Essential Questions* in curricular planning and delivery can help students learn independently and also provide the connective tissue between what matters at the heart of the curriculum and assessment of what students have learned.

Curricular Planning with EQs

Essential Questions (EQs) are written by teachers as an overarching articulation of what is important in the curriculum content. When planning curriculum, carefully developed Essential Questions can increase the quality of a unit of study because EQs not only provide organization and a clear conceptual commitment, they also provide opportunities for creative choice and an articulation of skills to be encouraged in students. Essential Questions should be written to be complex and abstract and can lend themselves to making connections and understanding about universal truths.

Related to *Essential Understandings* (EU), which are broad, abstract, timeless, and universal statements that show the relationships between concepts, *Essential Questions* provide a question form of an EU statement. EQs should also tie to the unit's universal concept or theme but differ from general scaffolded questions, which are more basic for purposes of defining terminology, making abstract ideas concrete, or bringing concepts to a personal level. EQs provide both teachers and students with information about what is essential to understand in the unit of study and when embedded into delivering the curriculum, students can learn to recognize, appreciate, and generate EQs of their own for further inquiry.

In a graduate course that I teach focused on differentiated curriculum and instruction for gifted learners, teacher candidates begin designing curriculum units by first determining "what is essential" related to their selected curricular topic. Prior to writing lessons and unit assessments, every curriculum writer must first determine the Goals, Outcomes, and Essential Questions to guide the curriculum unit design. When drafting and revising robust EQs, educators should reference the following criteria:

1. EQs should be written at the appropriate grade level and/or cognitive level for students to understand.
2. The language of the questions should be written in broad, organizational terms.
3. The questions should reflect conceptual priorities.
4. Each question should be distinct and substantial.
5. Questions should not be repetitive.
6. The questions should be realistic given the amount of time allocated for the unit or course.
7. There should be a logical sequence to a set of essential questions.
8. The questions should be posted in the classroom.

EQs in Classroom Instruction and Assessment

EQs should not be isolated in the written curriculum but should be actively integrated into the classroom during instructional and assessment activities. In general, 5-8 EQs are adequate to stimulate formative and summative assessment checks for student understanding at different points of the unit. Teachers should post the EQs for students to reference throughout the unit of study. By integrating references to EQs during discussions and lesson activities, the EQs can be referenced as a guide for students to independently discover related topics of study and to make additional connections.

When assessing student learning, Essential Questions should be used to demonstrate what students know, understand, and are able to do. The questioning process is the cornerstone of inquiry and assessment and EQs can be used to lead students through predictive discussions, problem-finding group activities, as well as formative and summative assessment activities in which the EQs provide a cornerstone to measuring student understanding.

Determining what is essential and what is the essence of a subject is critically important for gifted curriculum. Carefully planned Essential Questions support students with opportunities for differentiated learning experiences by examining essential understandings and developing the thinking and project-based skills that are the foundation for advanced learning. By integrating EQs throughout the curriculum plan, instructional delivery process, and assessment activities, students can explore a well-articulated set of essential understandings through a series of questions in a specific unit of study. **THP**

Resource

For more information about *Essential Questions*, access Carol Fertig's article on the Prufrock Press information blog (http://resources.prufrock.com).

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Empathy in the "Me" Generation

A previous column focused on incorporating lessons that directly use empathy in a curriculum for secondary gifted students. The ability to consider situations from multiple points of view is a trait can increase decision making, problem solving, and overall positive attitude in gifted students. I have another reason why I believe teaching empathy is essential: narcissism.

Narcissism is defined as extreme selfishness, with a grandiose view of one's own talents and a craving for admiration, as characterizing a personality type. Narcissism can be conceptualized as a self-regulating system, where self-esteem and enhancement are sought through a variety of social means but with little regard for the consequences borne by others (Campbell et al., 2006). I recently had the opportunity to hear a presentation on narcissism as applied to today's college students (Dungan, 2014). Since we depict gifted students as asynchronous in their development, this information about college students seems relevant to our population.

We do have reason to be concerned about narcissism in gifted students and how we react to its manifestations as we interact with them in classes and in extracurricular activities. Consider the popular advice that students hear frequently: *Believe in yourself and anything is possible; You must love yourself before you can love someone else; Just be yourself; You can be anything you want to be; Never give up on your dreams; You are special*. These are nice phrases, but what if the student has intense physical or emotional limitations or social and emotional problems that prevent him/her from being anything he/she wants to be"? Or what if "Just being yourself" is really what will prevent the gifted student from reaching his/her potential?

Indeed, it is difficult to teach "Generation Me." The use of social media on a steady basis, accompanied with the constant need to be connected via smartphone, tablet, or other method provides instant gratification. It is only logical to see how the "me" focus—however misplaced—may be detrimental to the ultimate growth and education of students. If they happen to be gifted, then the messages they have heard of how important they are to the future of society may have elevated their sense of importance. Students not only take "selfies," but they also are in a time when self-importance and entitlement seem, increasingly, to be a way of life.

Janie Crawford, the protagonist of Hurston's, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, summed up her philosophy when she stated to her friend, Phoeby,…"It is a Well-known fact that you have tuh go there tuh know there," which is a great argument for incorporating empathy into an existing curriculum with gifted students. Students have to experience empathy through situations that depict the need for it in order to understand the multiple perspectives that are manifested in life situations of all sorts. The earlier they are exposed to this, the better.

Educators of gifted secondary students need to infuse lessons that center on specific ways to care for others and cope with their own individual concerns about their relational skills with others. Problem-based and service learning can place them in authentic situations to help others lead better lives and cope with complex issues. Teachers must infuse these types of lessons regularly to prevent narcissistic thinking from becoming central to the way they behave.

Suggestions for teachers to use when working with narcissistic thinking include the following:

1. Be ready to challenge narcissistic thinking and behavior. Directly confront it and ask for alternative ways of framing situations.
2. Help students see other perspectives and clarify or enlarge their own ideas.
3. Model respect for ideas and other ways of thinking while holding to a standard that should be met. Introduce this standard and measure other ways of thinking against it to create an evaluative method of dealing with situations regularly.

The inclusion of affective curriculum for gifted learners at the secondary level is not innate to most secondary educators (VanTassel-Baska el al., 2014). Yet, it is essential to focus on the needs of others and to help gifted students understand how their gifts and talents can make a positive impact on the lives of others. To do that, educators must help our students diffuse the "Me" focus, converting it to a "We" focus. **THP**

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Three Reasons to Plan an Advocacy Field Trip

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A young man in a black suit and red tie raises the heavy gavel. As it strikes, the sound reverberates across the Senate. Instinctively everyone looks up. No, the young man is not the speaker pro tem, at least not yet. For now, he is still one of my high school students.

I recently took a group of eight high school students to our state capital to advocate for gifted education. Student advocacy provided us with several powerful learning opportunities including: personal affective growth, authentic learning, and civic action.

I believe this field trip could be replicated in any secondary program, in any district within driving distance of its state's capital. I planned our field trip in conjunction with the state gifted association's education day. There are many such educational associations to partner with for a similar field trip although you could also create your own advocacy day. For more information about what your state is doing, visit NAGC's *Gifted by State* web page.

Preparation

My students and I spent two months preparing for advocacy day. We held regular before-school practices to perfect our education "elevator" speeches —very brief statements explaining our purpose in being at the capitol building. At one of our practices we met with a lobbyist for additional coaching. I began trying to schedule meetings with legislators seven weeks before our visits and received a great response. Our preparation was rewarded with an empowering field experience at the state capitol building. There are at least three key advantages that this type of advocacy experience provides students. They learn that their voice matters, they see the political process in action, and they learn that they can be powerful advocates for education.

Students Learn Their Voice Matters

> *A poised young woman speaks passionately (and concisely) about the role service learning has played in her own experiences and development as a learner. The representative she is speaking with is fully engaged, nodding as my student makes her key points. After my student's short speech, the representative affirms her with a genuine "well said" and a follow up question on service learning.*

Researchers have found that a majority of teachers of the gifted ranked the teaching of processing skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, and research as a priority in their classrooms. However, fewer of these teachers placed a priority on communication skills and personal growth and human relations (Rash & Miller, 2000). As an educator, teaching my students that their voices matter may be the most important benefit of student advocacy. As with all authentic learning opportunities, on advocacy day my students saw that their preparation and efforts mattered. Students were in real legislative meetings, sharing and defending their opinions. In the classroom I teach public speaking, critical thinking, and synthesis. However, when my students can apply those skills in real-world environments, these lessons take on a significance I can't replicate in the traditional classroom. On advocacy day my students were asked tough questions by their legislators about current events and educational issues. My students took pride in wanting to be heard. Because their voices were valued, they were thoughtful and articulate in their responses. Formulating and defending tight arguments is a skill that cuts across content areas and it is one my students had to employ several times throughout our advocacy field trip. One representative shared that our students were the most eloquent speakers he had heard all day, in-

cluding while he was in session. This compliment was visibly empowering to our team.

Students Can See the Political Process in Action

The students are seated at a long bench behind the senate research team. Senators are debating a bill on proactive planning for school districts that are unable to fiscally complete the school year. My students are literally on the edge of their seats straining to read the books and notes that researchers pass to senators while in the midst of debate.

McNall (2011) stated that, "service learning, as opposed to just service, deepens disciplinary knowledge" (p. 62). Many of my students had toured the capitol building in elementary school, but they hadn't seen a legislative session in action. On advocacy day we spent time in both the Senate and the House. We were fortunate to have a relationship with a senator who has championed gifted education. He offered to introduce my students on the floor. In addition to the pomp and circumstance of yet again being validated as important guests, my students enjoyed a front row seat to the political process.

The contrast between the civil debate in the Senate and the flurry of activity in the House of Representatives was stark. In the House, my students' eyes darted back and forth trying to make sense of the scene before them. Several representatives came off the floor to visit with us. A representative from our district talked to my group for a long time, patiently answering my students' questions about the real-time political activity going on behind us.

As we were walking to lunch afterward, a student shared that a recent AP Government open essay question asked her to describe the differences between the House and the Senate. She told me enthusiastically, "I have so much evidence for this question, now!"

Students Are Powerful Advocates for Education

A high school freshmen shares how in elementary school she was treated like a "done student" meaning she finished her work quickly and teachers didn't have a plan for her once she was done. However, she smiles, in her gifted classes she was never treated as though she was finished learning. The representative we are speaking with starts nodding. He tells us he is from a rural area with no gifted programing. He shares that although he hadn't thought of it that way, he was also a "done student" and he remembers getting into trouble when he finished his work. He asks my students for their ideas for rural gifted programs. He asks for more information about our program. He tells my students this is the first time he feels like he truly understands gifted education and then he promises us his support.

"Student advocacy provided us with several powerful learning opportunities including: personal affective growth, authentic learning, and civic action."

Who better to speak on K-12 education than K-12 students? My students were able to offer their rich and current perspectives on educational programs. Theirs was a fresh perspective in our adult-centered capital. By seeing themselves as agents of change who had the courage to take a stand on gifted education in our state, these students became what Kronick, Cunningham, and Gourley (2011) called "transformational leaders" (p. 121). I am confident that we indeed gained at least one new supporter for gifted programming. This support is the direct result of my students' testimony. Students are inside experts on K-12 education. Their lived experiences speak directly to the ef-

fectiveness (and shortcomings) of educational policies, practices, and programs. This firsthand perspective is valuable to our educational leaders and policy makers.

Conclusion

The energy in my car on the drive back to school is charged. Students are buzzing with the things they have learned and seen. On their own, each of the students offers ways they can get involved in public service/policy. One young woman wants to be an attorney general; another shares her ideas about health care policy. A third student asks me to point her to more information about social welfare.

In the six hours we spent at the capitol my students were empowered with the important knowledge that even at a young age they could impact change. They saw how their voices mattered. The confidence to be able to speak to those in power will serve my students indefinitely. They saw firsthand the complexity of the political process and were able to participate actively in that process, including engagement in a debate on health care reform that afternoon. During our legislative meetings students advocated passionately for education in general, and gifted education in particular. Their stories did not fall on deaf ears. All of the learning that occurred on advocacy day was applied, social, and high level.

Check your calendars, form a student team, and try making the state capitol building your classroom for a day. With some work, you will see learning come alive. For more information on advocating for gifted and talented students, visit NAGC's advocacy web pages. **THP**

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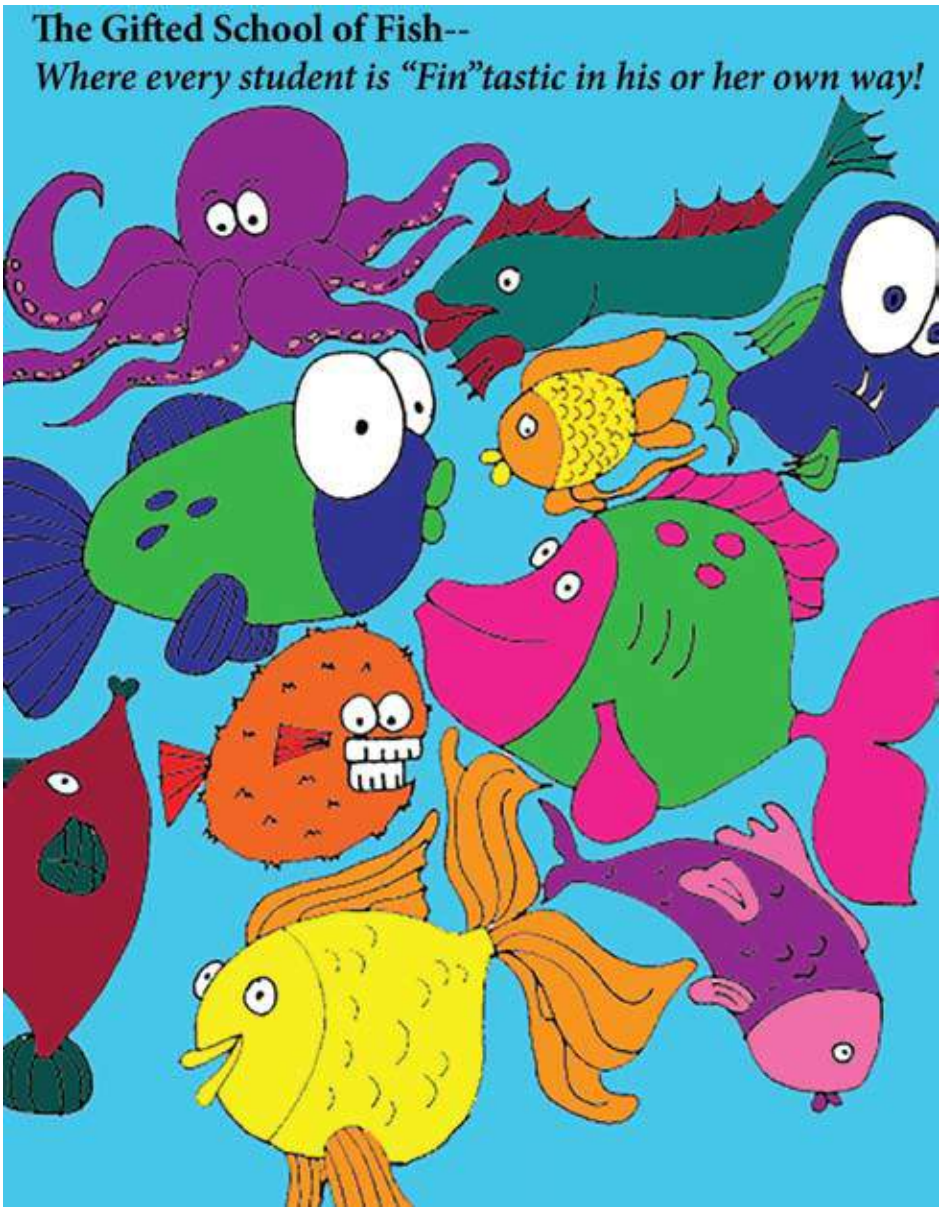
SMART cookies

By Bess Wilson



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Hail to the Chief

Chief Manuelito Middle School (Grades 6-8 GATE Program)
Gallup, NM
http://cmm.gmcs.k12.nm.us

Geoffrey Moon: Gifted Coordinator for Gallup-McKinley County Schools
Patricia Largo & Ron Schali: Gifted Education Teachers

Chief Manuelito Middle School's gifted program serves a high number of traditionally underserved students. This is due in part to the school's overall demographics: 79% of students are Navajo Indians; 16% are Hispanic. Chief Manelito's students have a wide range of abilities, language acquisition levels, and socioeconomic status, therefore the Gifted and Talented Education, or GATE program is essential. Students who may be above average intelligence but achieve below average in language acquisition skills and academic expectations can still be exposed to higher order thinking skills, STEM activities, and college prep expectations.

New Mexico includes gifted education as part of Special Education with funding per student determined by a student's level of service. The school uses a streamlined version of the Frasier Talent Assessment Profile (FTAP) to identify students. The FTAP has been approved for New Mexico Public Schools for evaluating students who have been determined to have socioeconomic disadvantages, disabilities, cultural differences, or language barriers that would interfere with their ability to perform on individually administered tests.

The GATE program ensures high achieving students are challenged at Chief Manuelito. GATE provides mentoring and enrichment opportunities for students, consistently motivating them to reach their potential. Students are encouraged to explore their areas of giftedness and look beyond their current grade level, considering what skills they will need to acquire in order to achieve their future goals. Throughout the school day, identified students are grouped together for advanced core curriculum classes. This selection is based on a yearly IEP, constructed from electronic portfolios focusing on creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking and include information on local and state testing, and teacher and parent observations.

The exception is Math, where acceleration is used. Math classes are purposefully scheduled at the same time as the high school. Based on the Iowa Algebra Readiness Assessment, state test scores, and teacher recommendations, students are placed in the most appropriate math class. This allows for students to take either Pre-Algebra, Algebra, or Geometry at the appropriate time. Both Algebra and Geometry are high school credit classes. Algebra is offered for one class during the 8th grade year, and students walk over to the high school for Geometry. In the other courses, teachers are expected to differentiate their instruction for the gifted students. Eighth-grade students take an unofficial pre-AP language arts course where they read books such as *The Inferno*, *The Odyssey*, *The Doll House, White Fang*, and *The Color Purple*.

All identified students in grades 6-8 are also enrolled in a year-long GATE Mentoring Class. Patricia Largo and Ron Schali, core teachers, co-teach this class, which is designed as a high school and college readiness program. It is in this environment where students receive advanced level content. Apart from academic enrichment, students are presented with leadership and organizational skill training. Students may explore Greek and Latin roots, science methods, further reading and writing instruction, and receive information intended to help them understand their giftedness. Students use College of William & Mary curriculum for science and language arts during GATE Mentoring.

At Chief Manuelito, students are recognized both for their talents and for their individual needs. For example, students in 8th grade who are qualified to take the ACT as eighth graders participate in ACT prep courses. In addition, during each quarter, all GATE students participate in a "My Own Project" or MOP where they research and create a project based on an area of interest. Students have studied topics ranging from a handmade traditional Navajo dress for a doll, a murder mystery short story, a five foot collage of a mermaid, handmade furniture, and a range of other projects. Currently, students are proud of the dinosaur exhibit they created for the public library to teach young children about dinosaurs. Students have also built greenhouses, cared for earth worms, and started a recycling club. After school, students are able to participate in programs that include robotics, building and designing hydrogen or solar-powered cars, and other STEM-related activities. In addition, students can participate in book club or Destination Imagination.

Chief Manuelito's GATE program successfully provides students with a safe place to express their intelligence. The average gifted student in the program performs at about the 95th percentile compared to his or her local peers in math and reading. Students learn to become thinkers and doers, developing the healthy self-confidence crucial for continued success. Students achieve because their teachers consistently promote growth in school subject achievement, creative accomplishment, and successful post-secondary transition. **THP**

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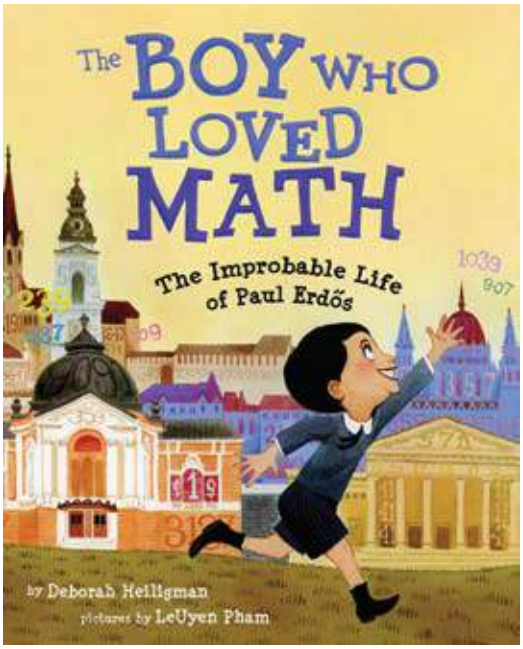
Exploring Between the Pages

Four years ago, the *New York Times* (October 7, 2010) stirred up a lot of attention for picture books in the article, *Picture Books No Longer a Staple for Children* by Julie Bosman (www.nytimes.com/2010/10/08/us/08picture.html?pagewanted=all). The response was varied. It sparked a renewed discussion about the role of picture books in the development of a child. Picture books are an important part of childhood and have enormous potential to help young learners explore the world around them.

Recently my attention has been captured by the wonderful mathematical and scientific stories that help to ignite my curiosity about mathematicians and scientists. For years, I have paid attention to the lists of great science books on the list of Outstanding Science Trade Books for K-12 published annually by the National Science Teachers Association (www.nsta.org/publications/ostb/), but now I am also thinking about the books that may meet the criteria for the Bank Street College of Education Cook Prize (http://bankstreet.edu/center-childrens-literature/cook-prize/), which honors the best science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) picture book published for children aged 8 to 10.



From THE BOY WHO LOVED MATH: THE IMPROBABLE LIFE OF PAUL ERDOS © © 2013 by Deborah Heiligman. Illustrations © LeUyen Pham Reprinted by permission of Roaring Brook Press. All Rights Reserved.

In thinking about the picture books from the perspective of the Cook Prize, I am fixated on one of the 2014 winners—*The Boy Who Loved Math: The Improbable Life of Paul Erdös* as well as a few other picture books that have STEM potential. These picture books:

- Extend mathematical and scientific thinking
- Jump start an interest in math and science
- Stimulate curiosity by making the topic intriguing and accessible
- Enrich vocabulary by using the terminology of the discipline
- Model that there are many different ways to share science

The following books are examples of seemingly simple but delightfully complex picture books that deliver information and ignite curiosity. These books can jump start a lesson, engage a child who already has an interest, and expose kids to new ideas. *The Boy Who Loved Math: The Improbable Life of Paul Erdös* by Deborah Heiligman is an exceptional informational book about one of the world's most beloved mathematicians. The book is a great read-aloud with quirky lines about Erdös' thinking (one time when a visitor told Paul when her birthday was and the time she was born, he quickly replied that she had lived for 1,009,152,358 seconds). The story is a textual and visual delight. The detailed text paired with LeUyen Pham's energetic illustrations really show a man who, though a brilliant mathematician who wrote elegant proofs, only saw the world through mathematical eyes and needed help with daily mundane details like cooking, laundry, and paying bills.

Not all picture books provide as much information as *The Boy Who Loved Math*. In *Circle, Square, Moose*, the companion book to *Z is for Moose*, Kelly Bingham and Paul O. Zelinsky play with shapes even though Moose, once again, is determined to be the center of attention. Young children will appreciate the zany antics of Moose while exploring the characteristics of circles, triangles, rectangles, and other shapes. Even older children will appreciate the metafictional format that permits Moose to take over the story.

Math is not the only focus for today's sophisticated picture books. Science is also well-represented. Three current favorites for gifted kids are *Gravity* by Jason Chin, *Some Bugs* by Angela DiTerlizzi, illustrated by Brendan Wenzel, and *Tiny Creatures: The World of Microbes* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Emily Sutton. For children who want to know what would happen without gravity, Chin weaves a visual story that explores the concept of gravity that serves as an introduction to the concept and/or a model for how students might demonstrate what they know about gravity. *Some Bugs* explores the world of bugs that may be closer

than children think through the rhythmical text and exuberant illustrations. The quick paced, short text will capture young readers before it has a chance to sting. DiTerlizzi sets the stage, using the familiar backyard territory to help young entomologists spy on the comings and goings of the insect world. Wenzel flies with it, capturing imaginations with images of not only bugs but also the other living creatures with whom they share their world. The focus on the bugs in action "Stinging, biting, stinking, fighting, hopping, gliding, swimming, hiding, building, making, hunting, taking" supports the notion that bugs may be small, but are hugely fascinating.

"These books can jump start a lesson, engage a child who already had an incident, and expose kids to new ideas."

Zoologist Nicola Davies knows how to communicate science by hooking the reader immediately in *Tiny Creatures: The World of Microbes*. She immediately gets down to the small details, giving readers the perspective on microbes. Did you know that there are as many a billion microbes in a teaspoon of soil? She tells a story about tiniest microbes while sharing enormous amounts of information about them—where they live, what they eat and how they impact the world around us. Her tone is engaging and the thoughtful visual illustrations set the stage for seeing microbes here, there, and everywhere.

With these great STEM titles, consider picture books as read alouds or for literacy instruction as well as to supplement content area instruction. These are sure to ignite, delight, and cultivate the mathematician and scientist in many young learners. **THP**

Recommended Book List

Bingham, K. (2014). *Circle, Square, Moose*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Chin, J. (2014). *Gravity*. New York, NY: Roaring Brook Press.

Davies, N. (2014). *Tiny creatures: The world of microbes*. Somerville, MA: Candlwick.

DiTerlizzi, A. (2014). *Some bugs*. San Diego, CA: Beach Lane Books.

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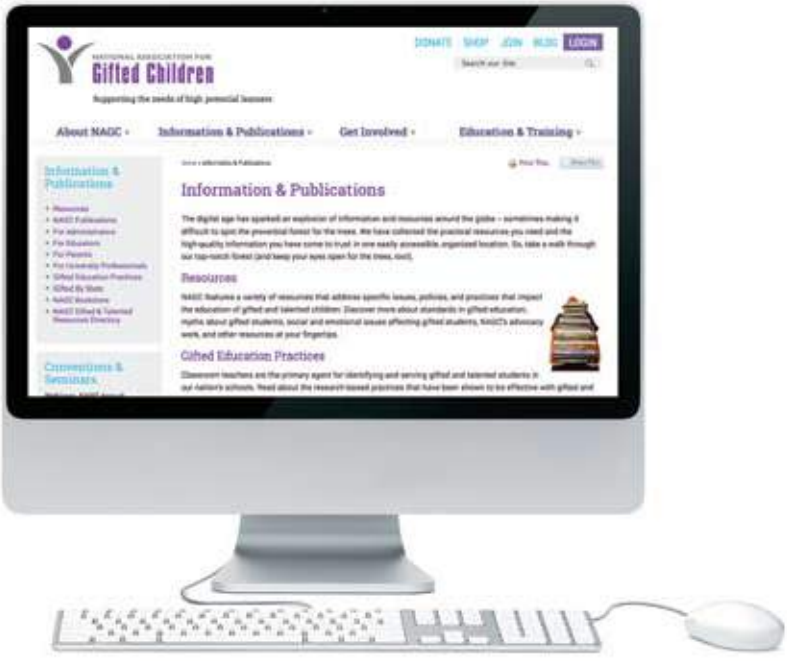
ONLINE BOX

A New & Improved NAGC Website

The National Association for Gifted Children is pleased to announce the launch of our redesigned website www.nagc.org. The site was created with a broad audience in mind: educators, parents, administrators, college and university faculty, elected officials, and media. Beyond enhanced design and navigation, we trust you'll find the information you need today… and keep coming back for more!



the Gifted Underachiever

continued from page 1

that is valuable to society. The federal definition (NCLB, 2002) also includes students with *potential* to perform at high levels of accomplishment. Renzulli (1978) contended that gifted students are *capable* of developing such traits as task commitment, above-average ability, and creativity. Further, Sternberg (1999) posited that "successful intelligence" means "the ability to balance the needs to adapt to, shape and select environments in order to attain success" (p. 438). Educators can *nurture* a student's successful intelligence by capitalizing on the student's strengths and finding ways to compensate for his/her weaknesses (Sternberg et al., 1998). Gifted underachievers most likely have the potential for superior achievement, but that is not where the story ends. They may require extra help from teachers to develop other aspects of giftedness like task commitment and the components of successful intelligence.

Making Room for "High Achievers"

If Rebecca were not going to take advantage of gifted programming, a high achieving student without the gifted label would benefit from taking her place. The issue with this statement has to do with the gifted label itself. Once a student is labeled "gifted," can or should that label ever be taken away? If the answer is "yes," what are we saying about giftedness? Is giftedness episodic, meaning you may be gifted now, but no longer gifted at a different stage of your life? It should be noted that many prominent researchers have argued that gifted programming options should be made available to high achieving students and students who demonstrate potential for high achievement (e.g., Callahan, 1982; Peters et al., 2014; Renzulli, 1978). Can high achievers recieve gifted programming options without displacing gifted students who need extra help achieving at a level commensurate with their ability? The answer is "yes." There do not need to be winners and losers in gifted education. Rather, the focus of gifted education should be on whether or not children's needs are being met by the general curriculum, and ensuring that enrichment and special programming are available to those who need them. If students are underachieving due to boredom, lack of appropriate challenge or interest—only a few of the factors that may contribute to a gifted student's underachievement—these factors might be mitigated through modifying special programming to make it more engaging and challenging.

The "Typical" Gifted Student

The "typical" gifted student does not exist. Although useful lists of the traits and characteristics of gifted students have been compiled, educators should not believe that an individual student should embody all or even the majority of these traits and characteristics. Gifted students are unique. For example, they may or may not be motivated to achieve in school or their imagination and creativity may not be highly original. They may have heightened sensitivity, or their reaction to emotional stimuli may not be very strong. The characteristics of a gifted child depend on the gifted child. Davis et al., (2011) cautioned that not all gifted students display the same characteristics, and stated that "sometimes teachers make the mistake of assuming that gifted chil-

dren who are not self-directed, persevering, and motivated should not be considered gifted" (p. 43). A by-product of this mindset is that "underachieving or troublesome gifted students are too easily eliminated from gifted programming" (p. 43). Instead of eliminating gifted students who underachieve from gifted programming, efforts should be made to target the source(s) of the students' underachievement and develop individualized interventions based on this information (Rubenstein et al., 2012).

Thoughts from Gifted Students

Before educators make the recommendation that an underachieving student should be removed from gifted programming, they should read what gifted students themselves have to say concerning this topic. The following comments were compiled from gifted students who will graduate from high school this year.

> If gifted students are not achieving to [his or her] potential, be encouraging. Do not disown them and say, "If at first you don't succeed, give up." To take away the gifted label is to teach that giving up is acceptable. —Katie

> Natural aptitude or appreciation is not something that can be given or taken away. Why then, can a gifted label be slapped on a student like a sticker and just as easily ripped off? —Gracie

> By taking away students' gifted label, you are not helping them reach their true potential, you are hindering their growth. —Andrew

> I was removed from the gifted math program in eighth grade because my end of the year exam score did not meet a certain cut-off point. That year I was forced to take pre-algebra, which was essentially the same class I had taken in seventh grade. Taking away my gifted label only delayed my progress in math and made me feel frustrated. —Alayna

> It takes a great deal of effort to achieve in a gifted environment, and even a student who may not be achieving will be forced to work harder and, due to the nature of the class, be encouraged by his peers. When the gifted label is removed, this is lost. —Bryan

> Removing a student with gifted potential from the gifted programming on the grounds that he/she is not achieving would imply that his/her success in the program is impossible. —Elizabeth

Strategies for Combatting Underachievement

Underachievement is a complex phenomenon. One factor or a combination of factors may contribute to a student's underachievement in school. For example, poor self-efficacy (i.e., belief in one's ability), negative environmental perceptions, low task meaningfulness (i.e., not finding value in the task at hand), and poor self-regulation (e.g., thinking about thinking, planning, studying, evaluating one's progress) are just a few of the factors that may cause academic underachievement (Siegle & McCoach, 2005). Because there are many reasons a student may underachieve, there is no single cure for reversing underachievement (Reis & McCoach, 2000). Educators working with students exhibiting one or more factors contributing to their individual underachievement might find success with them by utilizing some of the strategies listed below.

Helping Rebecca and Those Like Her

Remember Rebecca? Rebecca should not be "ungifted" because she does not fit the mold of the "typical" gifted achiever. Like any child struggling with underachievement, she needs teachers who will help her to develop her gifts and compensate for her areas of weakness and believe in her potential. She also needs teachers

For Students Struggling with Poor Self-Efficacy

- Emphasize a growth mindset over a fixed mindset (learning over performance).
- Provide feedback specific to effort as opposed to just the finished product.
- Embed small projects/assigments into larger projects/assignments so students have the opportunity to experience success.

For Students with Negative Environmental Perceptions

- If appropriate, modify curricula, the classroom environment, and increase teacher feedback.
- Encourage students to take ownership for the choices they make.
- Be consistent with advice and feedback.
- Stress the importance of effort over a final grade.
- Provide time for self-reflection.

For Students with a Lack of Motivation

- Assign projects that address real-world problems or have a real-world application.
- Provide an authentic audience for student presentations.
- Explore connections to other content areas.
- Pre-assess and compact the curriculum when appropriate.
- Connect class content to individual interest and goal setting.

For Students with Poor Self-Regulation

- Introduce different study methods to determine what works (e.g., flashcards, peer tutoring, participating in study groups).
- Schedule one-on-one conferences to discuss organization.
- Guide the writing of long and short-term goals.
- Create a system for monitoring the progress of goals.

who take the time to understand the reason(s) behind her underachieving behaviors and who are willing to put forth the effort to help her attain success in school.

A single teacher can make all the difference in the life of a student like Rebecca. Instead of "ungifting" the underachiever, educators should work to identify the root cause(s) of a student's underachievement and select appropriate interventions for them. **THP**

Resources

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Using Mentor Texts to Improve Primary Gifted Students' Writing

What is a primary teacher to do with a first grade student who is already writing seven word sentences with correct punctuation, when other students are still learning sight words?

Strong writers, at any age, need tools and strategies to maintain continuous improvement. One way to hone in on these important skills is by modeling the structure of writing itself. Books that are used to model the many aspects of writing are known as anchor books, or mentor texts. In the book *Mentor Texts*, authors Dorfman and Cappelli suggest that writers should use a metaphor of a magnifying lens to show students how to "focus in on something small to make it big and bring out all the details" (p. 70).

To begin the activity, ask students to look quickly at an object, like a shell or a rock, and share words that describe it. Later, have the object available for students to look at using a magnifying glass and then have them write or tell details about what they see. As you compare the descriptions, help the students realize that details and elaboration will improve their writing and make it engaging to readers. "Specificity is what makes it interesting for the writer to write, and it's also what moves the reader" (Dorfman, p. 71).

For the next step, model how students would use their reading magnifying lens to study a strong mentor text such as *The Seashore Book* by Charlotte Zolotow. As you read the story aloud, help students identify how the authors use special words to anchor images in the minds of the readers. This activity will lead to great discussions as students are encouraged to close their eyes and visualize the sun as a "huge orange ball," for example (Zolotow, p. 21). Teachers and writers can use a chart, similar to the one featured here, organized by the five senses to name special phrases.

Sensory Statement	Image-creating Words/Phrases
I see	• setting sun as a huge orange ball • shifts from gray to dark white • prints like pencil lines in the sand
I hear	• ocean is bursting with waves • DING, DING, DING • swishswashing song
I feel	• stone washed smooth • the shell closed • like peppermint • warm as a big soft cat
I smell	• salty ocean spray • peanut butter • dusty sand
I taste	• our sandwiches • purple

From here, students can begin to write an original story and use a chart to develop their ideas in more detail. Try starting with just one of the aspects of the chart. For example, have them focus on "I see" and brainstorm a list of what they visualize in their minds using the "magnifying lens." After a few of those assignments, change to "I hear," for their next story, and so on.

Another suggestion is for the class to create a Word Wall with sensory words for reference when they are taking part in a writing activity. Words like "yummy" and "super salty" could be added to the wall labeled "Taste," for example.

In addition, access to books like *The Seashore Book* help primary writers add details by using rich descriptions of people, places, and things. Other excellent mentor texts for this purpose are:

- Bunting, E. (1996). *One green apple*, New York, NY: Clarion.
- Henkes, K. (1996). *Lily's purple plastic purse*. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books.
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By offering the opportunity for students to explore their senses and write creatively, you will not only find that you have many budding "authors" but you will also satisfy the needs of those that need a little more. **THP**

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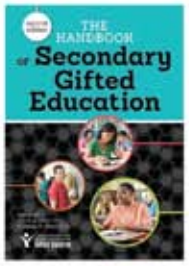
New Books from NAGC

www.nagc.org

A Teacher's Guide to Using the Next Generation Science Standards with Gifted and Advanced Learners
Cheryll M. Adams, Alicia Cotabish, and Debbie Dailey

The Handbook of Secondary Gifted Education (2nd ed.)
Felicia A. Dixon and Sidney M. Moon



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR
Gifted Children

NAGC Select E-Books

This series of concise, informative booklets on topics and issues in education is intended as a service to practicing educators and/or families. They are designed for the non-researcher who needs to know the basics of a particular topic in education.

Rigor for Gifted Learners: Modifying Curriculum with Intellectual Integrity
Bertie Kingore
Explains continuous learning needs of high-ability learners and offers strategies, modifications, assessments, and social emotional interventions to enhance the success of gifted students.

Psychological Foundations of the Arts: Understanding and Encouraging Artistic Expression in the Early Grades
Erin Morris Miller and Rachael Sloan
An introduction for classroom teachers to the psychological study of the arts and how using the arts can benefit classrooms and students.

Early Entrance to College as an Option for Highly Gifted Adolescents:
Alexander Pagnani
The history of early entrance to college and how it can be beneficial for gifted students. Includes questions to ask when considering this option.

The Social and Emotional Characteristics of Gifted Students
Tracy Missett
Provides research showing overall picture of positive social and emotional health for many gifted students, addresses social and emotional characteristics and some factors that contribute to poor psychosocial health. Discover curricula and instructional strategies to support the well-being of gifted students.

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