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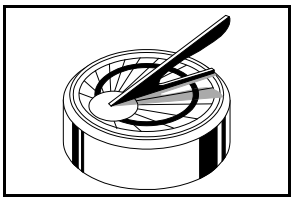

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As a response to the Bush Administration's new education initiatives, our field should develop a "No Gifted Child Left Behind" bill that includes all of the necessary components for maximizing the education and learning of gifted children. At a minimum, it should have provisions for: ● Early identification and education of young gifted children. The emphasis here is on training preschool, kindergarten and primary level teachers to recognize children who are potentially gifted and to provide them with a stimulating early start in school. ● Advanced differentiated instruction and learning in the humanities, mathematics and the sciences. There are numerous program and curriculum innovations currently available, but school districts need more funds and teachers require more extensive training to implement them. ● Emphasis on multiple intelligences. Different types of abilities should be addressed, not just the verbal and mathematical abilities. ● Emphasis on multi-ethnic identification and participation. It is inconceivable that we must include this program provision, but apparently minority children are still discriminated against, either intentionally or through ignorance. (White middle-class gifted programs must be placed in the bone yard of educational dinosaurs.) ● Innovation, creativity and the development of students' maximum sensibility levels. Beginning at a young age, children must be given opportunities to use unique problem solving approaches. Viewing problems from a different angle "off the beaten path" should be continued through the middle and high school levels. ● Evaluations with standardized instruments for determining student progress. Although current instruments might be considered superficial in gifted programs, it is important to show progress through the most rigorous psychometric procedures currently available. What are your ideas for a "No Gifted Child Left Behind" education law? Please let us know because we would like to include them in a future issue of ***GEPQ***.

Dr. John Feldhusen has written an excellent article for this issue that summarizes his concerns for clearly defining giftedness and related terms, and for educating students with different kinds of talents. His illustrious career has involved such achievements as Distinguished Professor at Purdue University, President of the National Association for Gifted Children, and Editor of the Gifted Child Quarterly. Teresa Masiello presents a detailed discussion of reading programs based on her review of the literature and her work with gifted children. She has been teaching for 16 years, the last 10 years with gifted students, and is currently a resource teacher in the Frederick County Schools (Virginia). Ms. Masiello has been conducting workshops and presentations in area schools that relate to differentiation and the education of gifted students. Dr. Michael Walters concludes this issue with a tribute to the Astronauts lost in the Columbia Space Shuttle tragedy.

Maurice D. Fisher, Ph.D., Publisher

Gifted? Talented? How Do We Know? What Do We Do?

By John F. Feldhusen
Purdue University

The field of gifted education maintains a professional stance that implies that giftedness is a well defined and accurately measurable psychological construct. It also practices a diagnostic procedure called "identification" in which it assesses and then classifies children as "gifted" or "nongifted" and thereafter offers educational programs or services to the "gifted" few to further enhance their "giftedness" and withholds those services from the vast majority of children classified as "nongifted." Given the uncertainty of the "gifted" construct itself, the process is of questionable validity and there is little psychological evidence to support the accuracy of assessment or efficacy of services.

Furthermore explicit identification of some children as "gifted" using intelligence and achievement tests and rating scales, asserting that they have unique educational needs, and calling for a "differentiated" curriculum may also be contributors to the ill repute the field of gifted education "enjoys" in the eyes of some critics (Berliner, 1986), and the discomfort some youth feel being labeled "gifted" (Robinson, 1990). There is no evidence that some human beings are genetically, dichotomously, and categorically different from all the rest except as relatively high scorers on tests of ability. The term "gifted" also implies total hereditary or genetic transmission of abilities, but we know well how critical the role of nurturance is in the development of human skills, competencies, and talents; of course, we also know that the development of abilities is influenced by genetically transmitted potentials (Plomin, 1994; Bouchard, 1994).

The assertion of unique characteristics of the "gifted" further exacerbates the frequent elitist view of gifted education. The list of those unique characteristics is usually a collection of the most desirable qualities a child can possess: has excellent memory, uses good logic, learns rapidly, keenly interested in newly experienced phenomenon, self motivated, able to deal with complex ideas, good at problem solving, keenly interested in concepts and issues, etc. (Feldhusen & Jarwan, 2000). However, these are all characteristics that exist on a continuum from low to high and characterize all youth at some level but are often posited as uniquely present in the "gifted" few and absent in others.

Schools, parents and teachers may earnestly seek to enhance learning for "gifted" children, but is the current methodology serving them well? The approach in school is often the ubiquitous pullout enrichment program which offers two or three hours a week of thinking skills, projects, and creativity curricula. Critics of such programs have complained that the instructional experiences are not uniquely appropriate for the "gifted" or children of high ability but would be interesting and worthwhile experiences for nearly all children.

We are also told that the gifted need a "differentiated curriculum" and that term suggests biased instruction as well as uniqueness of the "gifted." Does it mean a uniquely different curriculum from that offered to other students? Will it stress thinking skills and metacognition for the "gifted" while stressing rote learning, drill, and memory for the "nongifted"? Furthermore, if the "gifted" possess all the characteristics listed earlier, and if they were or had been enrolled in "regular" school classrooms, how can we argue for a new and possibly untested regimen that may not be as good as that which they have been experiencing and which seemingly led to their great precocity?

We must acknowledge, however, that research does indicate that high ability students achieve at higher academic levels when they are in special classes for high ability students and experience fast-paced and more advanced curriculum than if they are enrolled in regular classrooms (Kulik & Kulik, 1997). However, we have little or no evidence to suggest that opening those same classes to less able students who are motivated to enroll would not yield academic achievement gains for the latter.

Surely a major problem with the "gifted" concept is its narrow academic focus in school programs. In spite of major policy assertions by the U.S. Office of Education in 1972 and 1993 that were echoed in most state department of education policies, that giftedness really represents diverse talents, schools have for the most part ignored those policy statements and have directed all their educational efforts to intellectual abilities and academic achievement. While several researchers have focused on talent and talent development (Bloom, 1985; Gagné, 1985; Taylor, 1968; Gardner, 1983; Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993), application in schools is still limited or almost non existent. School programs continue to search for and identify the general, all purpose, categorically distinct "gifted" children and provide unique curricula and instructional programs for them. Surely such practices must be questioned and new directions sought.

One might expect that the assessment procedure would lead to an evaluation of aptitudes or talent strengths in all children, and a correlated effort to provide talent or aptitude enhancement for all children. Of course, those who are found to have very high levels of aptitude or talent would be offered appropriately high, differentiated and challenging levels of educational services. However, professionals in the

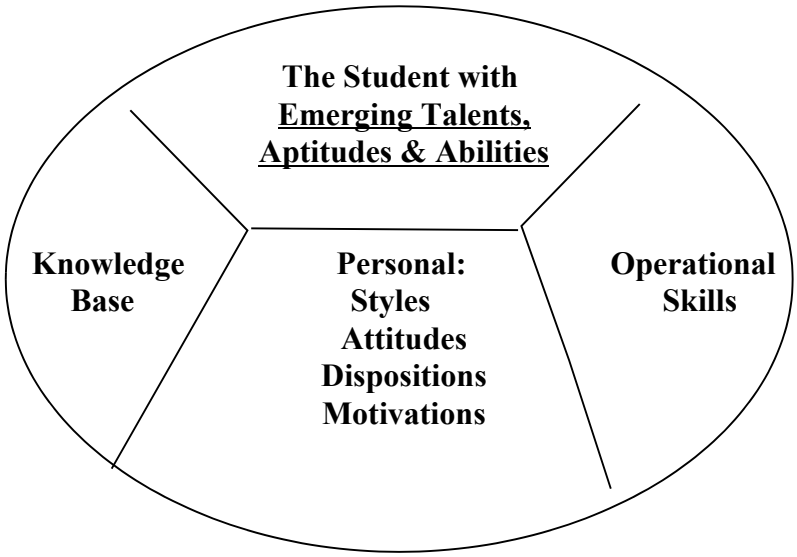
field of gifted education seem to believe that only those children who have high levels of giftedness, talent, or aptitude need special educational services related to their special, high level, aptitude. Seemingly the rest require only instruction in basic skills. Yet it seems to be the case that aptitudes or talents are continuous variables, and that many youth who are not classified as "gifted" may possess aptitudes or talents at varying levels, even just below cutoffs that are within the range of the standard error of measurement.

TALENT DEVELOPMENT AS THE SINE QUA NON OF EDUCATION

Our major interests in the field of study that focuses on gifted or talented children should probably be on "talent" and "talent development." A talent orientation leads us to seek ways to find integration among the concepts of talents, aptitudes, abilities, and intelligence as they relate to giftedness. We synthesize our conceptions of emerging human abilities in Figure 1. At the center of our model is the human learner and surrounding are the major influences with which the learner interacts and constructs his/her emerging self. The human learner has personal and motivational characteristics which activate, stimulate, and facilitate the quest to understand, master, and control self and the surrounding world (Schunk, 1996). They are styles, dispositions, self regulatory skills, attitudes, and goal orientation as well as felt needs, all of which generate particular interactions with the learner's world in school, family, and the social milieu.

Figure 1

EMERGING HUMAN ABILITIES

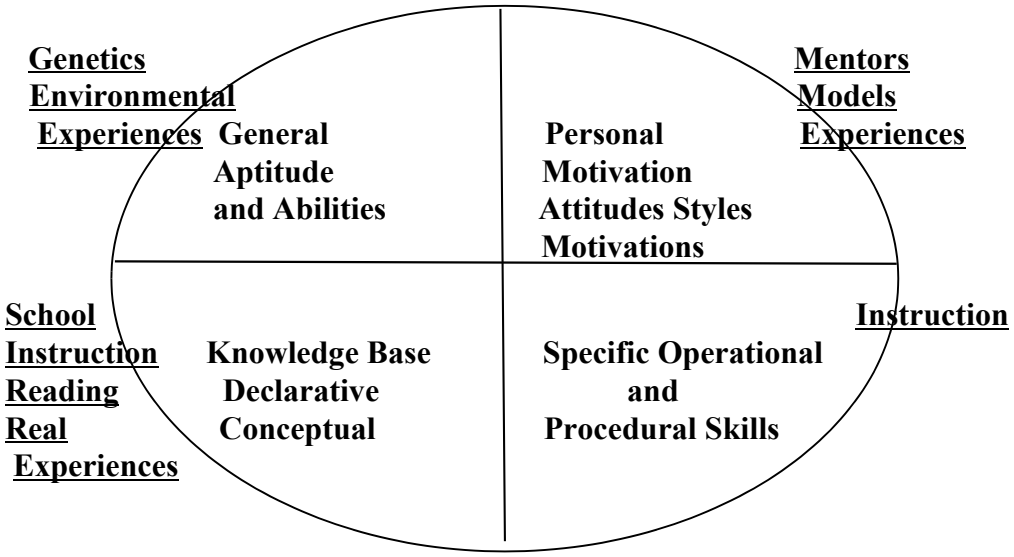


Inseparable from and highly interactive with the personal and motivational characteristics are the learner's cognitions --abilities to think creatively, to make decisions, to solve problems, to understand abstract and complex intellectual phenomena, or to think critically. Our own model of thinking processes is detailed in Figure 2 (p. 4). We include in the model some of the underlying personal and motivational characteristics that relate to cognition.

Figure 2, as well as Figure 1, includes a knowledge base, content, subject matter, and/or expertise as bearing a fundamental relationship to the composite picture of the talented individual. There is both declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge implied in this part of our model. That is, we know many aspects of the world around us conceptually (declarative knowledge) but we also know cognitive routines or skills which we use to operate in the world around, to solve problems, and/or to make decisions, and these are procedural knowledge. So we learn information and skills which can be used to solve both specifically comparable and similar or related problems (transfer).

Figure 2

TALENT



The educational alternative at the elementary, middle, and high school levels is to abandon the "gifted" pretense and to design special classes, curricula, and programs for students who are fast learners (high IQ); precocious in their academic achievements or artistic talents; possess other vocational, technical, or social skills; and are self regulatory at a relatively high level (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994). These special classes can be offered on an elective basis (Birch, 1984) with counselors assisting students to make wise selections based on their past achievements and current levels of maturation. Special classes should be characterized by their advanced curriculum levels, fast pace, abstract material, and depth of analysis (VanTassel-Baska, 2000). The College Board Advanced Placement courses fit this model very well.

Above all it is crucial for precocious youth to discover their talent strength and to begin orienting their educational goals toward fostering their development. Talents are special skills and aptitudes that are linked to specific career-related domains of activity. They emerge through the interaction of genetic potentials and nurturing conditions (Gagné, 1997). Research by Feldhusen, Wood, and Dai (1997) indicates that the following are major domains of talent and that the typical precocious student has three to four areas of talent strength: Academic, artistic, cognitive, creative, communication, athletic-physical games, language arts, personal-social, and technical. Hopefully these areas include all or most of what Witty (1951) intended in his definition of giftedness as superior ability in any worthwhile line of human endeavor.

SUMMARY: SEARCHING FOR DEFINITIONS

There is very little effort in the worlds of "gifted education" to define the terms used to specify the nature of human abilities. A host of terms are used without effort at definition. These include giftedness, talents, aptitudes, factors, skills, abilities, achievements and intelligence, but the latter is the most likely to be defined in discussions of human abilities. We searched through basic measurement texts and found all the terms used frequently but rarely defined, specified, or characterized. Perhaps we are naïve in that there may be so much common understanding of the ability terms that definitions can be assumed and are not needed. Conversely, they may be so variously defined that efforts to that end are avoided. Political correctness may also lead to avoidance or even denial of the terms lest some constituency be offended. Finally, it may be the case that users of the terms would define each as what is measured by tests of the construct or term.

For researchers, theorists, and practitioners in the fields of talent development and gifted education, both assessment and educational services might be carried out more effectively and usefully to youth if there were better understanding and some agreement among professionals regarding meanings and applicability of the terms. While we may often be assured about their accuracy or reliability as

measured, their validity surely involves specification of what the constructs are, what they are correlated with, what they predict, what they cause or are caused by, and/or what are their parts or components.

CONCLUSION

The term "gifted" carries strong genetic assumptions and has surplus meaning (Gallagher, 1991). All human abilities emerge with nurture (Wachs, 1992); they are not genetically determined as such. Terms and conceptions such as "giftedness" and "innate abilities" may be counterproductive in imputing excessive causality to genetic endowment and lead us to neglect the significant roles of tutelage and motivation in human learning (Ericsson, 1996). The problem is particularly acute with highly precocious youth, so often identified as gifted, and the strong assumption that the precocity is attributable to genetic endowment.

However, we acknowledge that genetic predispositions covary, convary, and interact with nurturing conditions at home, in school, and society, to influence the pace, level, and nature of emerging, growing human abilities. Because the term "gifted" connotes genetic transmission, the applied field of gifted education is frequently ostracized, as are students selected for the programs, as being unfair, elitist, and undemocratic (Oakes, 1990). Other problems also arise from the term such as the social undesirability of implying, by use of the term, that a majority of the population are devoid of ability; use of the gifted label evoking negative peer reactions and pressure; and inculcating an entity (Dweck, 1986) conception of abilities that leads to unproductive learning behavior in the classroom.

It may be unfairness of nature and genetic transmission that some youth are born with superior intellectual potentials and predispositions, and that they are most often born to homes, families, and educational environments that nurture their abilities more rapidly and to far higher levels than others. However, it is also clear that society needs those very highly talented people to provide the professional expertise, leadership, and artistic productions that are needed to sustain the operations of a complex society and enable millions of people with lower levels of talents to live secure, fulfilling, and productive lives.

It is also a problem that while the field of gifted education often uses the terms "gifted" and "talented" the definition extends only to academic talents. Witty's definition (1951) of giftedness as superior ability in any worthwhile line of human endeavor seems much more appropriate in addressing the broader range of human abilities. Both the Marland Report (1972) and the U.S. Office of Education report, Educational Excellence: Developing America"s Talent (1993) called for a broader view of abilities in the arts, leadership, and specific academic talents.

While we no longer believe that any human abilities or performances are purely genetically determined, psychologists are likely to accept the concepts of ability denoted by "intelligence" as having an hereditary base as well as strong environmental influence in its development (Snyderman & Rothman, 1990). While it is certainly of value to know and understand the origins of human ability and even the potential of
DNA modification to enhance learning, our major goal as educators and psychologists should be to understand as fully as possible all the ways that we can influence and/or enhance the learning and development of human beings so that we can devise facilitative learning experiences.

Inside the field of gifted education and its research, there is failure to question the basic constructs of "gifts," "giftedness," "gifted child," and "gifted education." Recent research and theoretical developments in psychology, education, child development, and psychometrics clearly call for a paradigm shift.

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Learning to Use Appropriately Selected Trade Books with Gifted Readers in the Regular Classroom: A Sequential Approach to Guiding Gifted Readers

By Teresa Smith Masiello Frederick County Public Schools (Virginia)

I began my teaching career 16 years ago with a diverse population of kindergarten students. During this year, I quickly realized that what I learned in college would only address the needs of those considered to be working "on grade level." I struggled with the concept of "pacing" students as I taught them how to read through the use of a basal text program. After assessing my students, I divided them into three different reading groups based on their ability levels. However, my plan for reading instruction remained the same for each group. All students read the stories, participated in activities and took tests to show understanding of the material presented. Day after day, my students would come to my "reading table" with bright eyes and eager smiles. But, this enthusiasm began to fade as I focused instruction on letter and basic sight word recognition. I spent many hours trying to locate materials that would help my youngsters who were already reading fluently and comprehending what they had read. Moving these students through the basal text proved to be ineffective. I gave this group of students opportunities to write their own stories and expand on literature pieces that were found in the basal text. Again, this was not enough. My frustration level was escalating just as the attitudes of my advanced readers were declining. It all became clear to me one day when one of my students said, "Miss Smith, when are we going to read real stories?" I was not sure what this young scholar was asking. So, she asked again. "When are we going to read real stories, you know, like the ones on the shelves?" It was at that point that my beliefs in teaching changed, enabling me to change my thinking about gifted readers. Since that day, my mission has been to provide gifted readers with experiences that are not only challenging, but meaningful as well. Educators today strive to meet the needs of a varied population. Many continue to express concerns relating to reading programs and gifted readers. How do we develop a reading program that is enlightening and allows proficient readers opportunities to grow academically as well as emotionally?

In an effort to support educational equity, teachers need strategies that help meet the needs of gifted readers. Reading instruction must be evaluated and modified in order to reach all individuals. After my young student posed such an intriguing question, I realized I held the power to help children learn to love reading through the use of appropriately selected trade books. The use of quality literature and humanities can enhance students' learning and teachers' instruction. Using literature in combination with the basal text is not a new teaching strategy; educators have always realized that there is a definite need for the integration of trade books within the classroom. However, just as Laura Robb states (1992, p. 6), "it isn't enough to offer children the finest literature. Putting the right book in children's hands does not guarantee the child will engage in it." She also suggests that to bring children and books together successfully, children have to experience the pleasures of reading. They have to hear stories, make predictions, visualize characters and emotionally respond to characters. Robb's advice leads us to the belief that it is our responsibility to ensure that all students have books available that have been selected based on individual needs. This includes the population of gifted readers.

As teachers continue to strive to provide gifted readers with opportunities to reach their full potential, they must comprehend that these students possess specific characteristics that enable them to learn material at a faster pace. The basal text typically keeps all students on the same "track" making it undesirable amongst gifted students. This article delineates specific steps that educators can take to ensure that the needs of gifted readers are being met and the eager smiles they had in kindergarten will remain throughout their school years. I was fortunate to have a student establish a mission for me early in my teaching career. The belief that trade books can enhance a reading program has remained as an educational thrust throughout my years of teaching. We are not alone; authors have done an excellent job providing various pieces of quality literature that are intended to be used in the classroom. Our role is to take these books and turn them into instructional tools, which not only makes reading meaningful, but "keeps the fire burning" within our proficient readers. I applaud those who are taking the time to read this material. You have just opened the door to learn more about gifted students that, in turn, will open many doors for your advanced readers.

UNDERSTANDING THE GIFTED READER

The first step to understanding the gifted reader is to identify the characteristics that these students possess. Teachers are given the task of providing reading instruction to students who differ significantly in reading readiness, reading experiences, and reading abilities. According to H. Katz (2000), some high ability students may come to school fluent in reading, but others may not yet be reading on their own. Children who have exceptional ability in reading and working with text information are considered to be gifted readers (Mason & Au, 1990). Gifted readers often perform above their grade levels and possess given characteristics that enable them to move quickly through their regular classroom curriculum. Judith Halsted (1990) states that gifted readers often read earlier and usually independently. She writes that gifted students read better, requiring less drill and practice to master specific techniques of the reading process. She also notes that gifted students read longer and often read a variety of literature. Susan Winebrenner (2001) helps educators identify gifted readers by stating that these students learn new materials faster and remember what has been learned. Winebrenner also suggests that

gifted students are able to deal with concepts that are too complex and abstract for age peers. Understanding these characteristics can help us develop curriculum in reading for gifted readers. Collins and Aiex (1995) provide us with a strong statement that helps us shift our focus on basal texts to the use of quality pieces of literature. These authors found that gifted readers need instruction that is different from a regular classroom program and they need to focus on developing higher level comprehension skills. It is my belief that this can be accomplished through the direct use of trade books during reading instruction.

NEEDS OF THE GIFTED READER

Katz (2000) warns that because gifted children read well at an early age, they may lose interest because the pace of the instruction is slow as well as simplified. This point became obvious to me when my young student expressed an interest in reading "real books." Gifted readers may lose interest because teachers focus their attention on readers who may need extra reinforcement. Teachers continue to struggle to locate information as well as activities that help foster higher-level learning with gifted students. However, this becomes very time consuming and often frustrating due to the needs associated with these students. Barbara Clark (1983, p. 214) documents cognitive needs of gifted readers that distinguish them from the other students in the classroom. Clark's list includes:

- To be exposed to new and challenging information about the environment and the culture.
- To be exposed to varied subjects and concerns.
- To be allowed to pursue ideas as far as their interest takes them.
- To encounter and use increasingly difficult vocabulary and concepts.
- To be exposed to ideas at rates appropriate to the individuals pace of learning.
- To pursue inquiries beyond allotted time spans.

WHY USE TRADE BOOKS WITH GIFTED READERS?

Known by many educators, trade books and original stories can enhance reading programs. However, I believe that a few points need to be revisited. Establishing the need to use books in the classroom became easier for me as I applied what I had learned about gifted readers to the information provided by experts within the field. I quickly realized that using trade books in my classroom helped students maintain a positive relationship with reading. The books chosen also helped me plan lessons that promoted higher level learning with advanced readers. Judith Halsted (1990, p. 2) establishes the need for using books in the classroom when she states that, "Teachers working with groups of gifted children can promote intellectual development by using literature as a supplement to the reading in basal texts." This statement is powerful because it helps others realize the there is a need for additional materials to be used with gifted readers.

Many have written about the benefits of using books and subjects to help gifted readers reach their full potential. Richards (2002) discusses using "books as hooks for grabbing gifted readers." She explains that books for gifted readers help to provide interest exploration as well as provide times to apply creative thinking and assess knowledge.

This quote adds to my enthusiasm for teaching gifted readers. It is my opinion that as others realize the importance of selecting appropriate books for gifted students, they will begin to understand how their learning can truly be enhanced. Often, educators believe that gifted readers will continue to grow academically because they already have the skills necessary to do so. However, this belief is dangerous because gifted readers' intellectual and emotional development can suffer if their needs are not met. The use of trade books can certainly help teachers integrate a variety of subjects as well as skills into their curriculum.

Establishing the need for trade books in the classroom is very important. As one makes the commitment to properly locate books, they should consider the issue of critical reading. This is an area that is extremely important as teachers select trade books to use within their reading programs. Collins and Aiex (1995, p. 2) state, "Critical reading goes beyond the level of comprehension -- it requires the reader to evaluate material and ascertain its worthiness, reasonableness, and usefulness. Through critical engagement with text, gifted readers are encouraged to view reading as a thinking process, as well as a language process." The authors also suggest that creative reading is the epitome of higher-level reading. Going beyond critical reading, creative reading invites an imaginative interaction with print. Teachers of gifted readers can help them interact with texts in ways that promote critical and creative reading. The selection of quality titles integrated into the reading program can help the gifted reader understand that reading is for learning new concepts and ideas, but it is also for enjoyment. Halsted (1990, p. 3) states, "Many bright and gifted people suppress awareness of their need to learn. Teaching these children to use books is one way of demonstrating that learning is important to them and that books can be a significant part of their life."

SELECTING TRADE BOOKS FOR GIFTED READERS

Judith Halsted gives an excellent account of many different titles that address issues facing the gifted reader in her book ***Some of My Best Friends are Books*** (2002). She discusses that a good practice is to anticipate and meet the needs of the gifted reader before these needs escalate and become problems. The goal is to help people move through life's predictable stages by providing information about what to expect and examples of how other people have dealt with the same developmental challenges (p. 108). This helps to focus on some of the emotional issues gifted students face as well as intellectual issues that seem to follow gifted students as they progress through their school years. It is clear that most children have a wealth of books at their fingertips whether it is at home or at school. However, are these books appropriate for gifted readers? Are gifted readers making the right choices as they enter a library or peruse through the classroom "book corner?" Halsted (1990) states that selecting books for children and helping them select their own reading requires thought and effort. Furthermore, teachers who guide the development of children have the responsibility of supplying them with the most meaningful material available.

Books chosen to help promote reading instruction for gifted readers should allow the students to do many things. Students must have the opportunity to identify with given characters that display creativity and achievement. Teachers should make an effort to choose literature that contains gifted characters. Trade books should also give students opportunities to identify with characters that experience feelings of aloneness, perfectionism, and sensitivity to moral issues. Bertie Kingore (2001) suggests the following titles for use in regular classrooms. *Bud, Not Buddy* by C. P. Curtis, *The Great Brain* by J.D. Fitzgerald, *My Side of the Mountain* by J.C. George, *Frederick* by L. Lionni, *The Giver* by L. Lowery and *The Westing Game* by E. Raskin. This is not a complete list of titles that Kingore recommends. However, these titles give a sampling of some of the great pieces of literature that can be incorporated into most reading programs. Kingore notes that the listed titles exemplify multiple kinds of intelligences including academic, intellectual, performing arts, creativity, leadership, and psychomotor. Kingore also documents that characters within the selected books demonstrate combinations of advanced language, complex analyzing, and problem-solving strategies. Rita Soltan (2001, p. 2) contributes to the trade book selection process by stating that teachers and librarians should incorporate some of the following criteria for selecting literature for gifted readers:

- Language should be rich, varied, precise, complex and exciting.
- Story should be open-ended and inspire contemplative behavior.
- Books should leave the reader with as many questions as answers.
- Fiction should be complex enough to allow interpretive and evaluative behavior.
- Non-fiction should help students build problem-solving skills and develop methods of productive thinking.

Soltan (2001) suggests that books which portray characters that are intelligent, talented, resourceful, and/or inventive within a well developed plot sequence will be more intriguing to the child. Soltan provides information that biographies of people with the same interests and who were considered gifted before and during their accomplished lives are also good suggestions for those selecting books for gifted readers.

Gifted readers display characteristics that affect their reading abilities and needs. Teachers work hard incorporating differentiated activities as well as the integration of literary titles within their basal reading series. However, is this enough? As Lavende states (1999, p. 4), "Equity demands that the exceptionality of gifted readers be recognized and that appropriate programs be designed to meet their unique needs." Once gifted readers are identified and special programs are implemented with the use of trade books, the students' attachment to reading and ability to use literacy broadens to a deeper level.

DESIGNING INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES TO USE WITH GIFTED READERS

My current position as a gifted and talented resource specialist affords me the opportunity to travel from school to school, meeting with teachers at various grade levels. I absolutely love learning new strategies that have been proven effective in reading programs for gifted readers. The following gives examples of strategies that can be implemented in most reading programs to help teachers instruct gifted readers while meeting the needs of all students and the ability levels they bring to the classroom. Many of these strategies can be used to introduce a book, to promote a book, to extend a book after reading, and to evaluate student understanding.

To begin, teachers need to examine their current reading programs in order to establish a central focus of ***specific skills and areas*** that need to be presented to all students. After this review, teachers can begin to record students' strengths and weaknesses in reading. They will then have a clear understanding of the basic needs of the classroom. The evaluation process should be ongoing and include items such as portfolios, running records, standardized test scores, rubrics, writing samples, anecdotal records, observations, checklists created based on specific standards, decision-making task activity sheets, and pre-tests from chapters found in the basal reading text.

Because teachers understand the characteristics associated with gifted readers, they will be able to properly identify these students. This helps to ensure that instruction is presented that will meet the individual needs of students demonstrating mastery in specific areas of the reading program. The use of the Kingore Observation Inventory (2001) is helpful as teachers identify gifted students. This observation inventory allows the teacher to take notes and look for characteristics over a 6-week time span. The data collected provide teachers with important information. Once teachers have identified students as being gifted in reading, the search for quality literature begins. Teachers need to review bibliographies that contain titles of appropriately selected trade books, upon review; they can begin implementing differentiated reading strategies within the classroom.

Susan Winebrenner (2001) provides detailed information about reading strategies and programs for gifted readers. Again, because gifted readers have already mastered the vocabulary and skills associated with most basal texts, Winebrenner suggests giving gifted readers opportunities to "demonstrate their competencies, and to replace work they do not need to do with meaningful reading experiences." She discusses the use of ***pre-testing and compacting*** for all skill and vocabulary work. Compacting allows teachers to determine what competencies certain students have and gives them full credit for what they already know. If gifted readers have mastered the vocabulary and skills for the upcoming reading chapter, allow them to "compact" out of this chapter by reading books that have been previously selected based on individual needs. Winebrenner (2001, p. 32) offers these suggestions when using the concept of compacting for reading instruction:

- Identify the learning objectives and standards all students must learn.
- Offer pre-test opportunity.
- Plan and offer curriculum extensions.
- Keep accurate records of students compacting activities.

I have personally used compacting at all grade levels. An example includes a 2nd grade classroom that had been studying sequencing. The gifted readers documented mastery of this skill through the use of a pre-test. I then moved them on to a project that included reading *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* by Numeroff. The gifted readers read the story and briefly discussed the chain of events that created the circular effect of the story. They were then given instructions to write a new story called, "If you give a dog a bone." The gifted readers had to follow a sequential format, just as the original story. Throughout the week, this group of students completed graphic organizers, created illustrations and worked on the computer. Lastly, these students shared their stories with the class. I enjoy using compacting in the classroom, because it allows proficient readers opportunities to move forward after proving their abilities in given areas.

The use of ***learning contracts*** with gifted readers is an excellent instructional strategy that helps promote opportunities to read, discuss, analyze, and write with literature that they find challenging. As gifted readers demonstrate mastery in specific skills areas, they will complete a learning contract with the help of the classroom teacher. The learning contact will document the book and activities the student will complete while the other students work on projects assigned by the teacher. The learning contract will include assignments, and extension activities, as well as working conditions. The gifted reader and the teacher must sign the learning contract, indicating that they are both in agreement. Some examples of extension activities include author studies using the Internet, novel units, literature discussion groups, and projects based on student choice. I have found that gifted readers appreciate using learning contracts because they take ownership in their own learning.

Another instructional strategy that educators have found beneficial with gifted readers is the utilization of ***discussion groups***. Judith Halsted (2002) suggests using discussion groups with students who have read the same book and are generally around the same age. These groups can often debate issues found within a story line and evaluate characters and the traits they may possess. Teachers often ask if this strategy can be used with students who are not considered gifted in reading. The answer is, absolutely. All students should be given the opportunity to read a book and discuss this book in depth with other students. The key to the success of this strategy with gifted readers is the grouping strategy that is implemented. Gifted readers should be grouped homogeneously in order to facilitate optimum learning. When placing gifted readers in groups for reading instruction, Sakiey (1980) suggests that gifted readers should be grouped together so they can feel safe in verbalizing and sharing their insights. Students grouped by abilities for reading instruction were found to have increased understanding and appreciation for literature. Teachers need to keep this in mind when examining group work within their classrooms. Wood, Roser, and Martinez (2001) provide information relating to the use of collaborative book talks among students. They suggest this approach can help students learn many of life's important lessons. An example of this strategy is "making the community connection" through the reading of *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson. This is a wonderful story that tells about a young white girl and a young African American girl who work together to overcome racial tension and become friends. I used collaborative book talk with my gifted readers as they read this story. These students posed some thought-provoking questions during their time together. I have recorded some of the dialog between the students to demonstrate how they responded to this piece of literature.

Teacher: Why were the girls not allowed to cross over the fence?
Student: "Because their parents did not like each other."

Teacher: Why do you believe this way, what in the story made you feel this way?
Student: "Because their moms said they could not go over the fence to play. I am not sure why, maybe because they were a different color."
Teacher: Do you believe the girls should have listened to their moms?
Student: "I believe yes, but I feel they did the right thing because they wanted to be friends regardless of their race. I think that is the way people should treat each other."
Student: "I believe the girls should not have sat upon the fence. It went against their mother's wishes."
Teacher: Do you believe the fence represented something else in the story?
Student: "Yes, the fence was a barrier."
Student: "Yes, the fence was actually a symbol."
Teacher: Do you believe the girls changed their community?
Student: "Yes, the girls helped the community learn to like all people."

The students reached a deeper level of learning through reading the story. After discussing the issues, they enjoyed watching the tape, depicting conversations between the groups. They were able to evaluate their responses, and gained insight into how other opinions and views can be valuable. Isn't this a wonderful life skill to teach!

Questioning should be used in programs for gifted readers for a variety of reasons. The use of ***higher-level questioning*** increases students' awareness, fosters logical thinking, and promotes decision-making through evaluation methods. Questioning is a critical strategy that helps readers make meaning of literature. Gifted students usually enjoy answering questions that are open-ended and require more thought-provoking responses. As teachers design a variety of questions relating to given trade books, they should begin by evaluating questions that are found within the classroom basal text. These questions can be used as a guide to help the teacher ensure that the gifted readers are still maintaining the skills needed to take standardized tests and meet the "benchmarks" established by most school districts. After creating a list of questions, the teacher may have students meet in cooperative groups so they may work together to formulate answers. Again, it is important to remember that gifted students need to be placed in homogeneous group settings for them to experience satisfaction and success. Teachers may also have gifted readers respond to questions that foster higher-level cognitive learning through journals. This is an excellent method of documenting a student's true understanding of material being presented. Some examples of questions that I have found effective include: If you were given the opportunity, what advice would you give the main character? Do you believe a person's beliefs influence their decision-making process? Explain your answer. In your opinion, what was the turning point in the story? How did this event change the story? The difference between character A and character B is? Would you have done anything differently than the main character/s? These are just some examples of how questioning can be used to reach higher-levels of learning.

Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1993) teaches us that students learn differently and should be given opportunities to enhance their specific intelligences through the infusion of different curriculum areas. Teachers can incorporate many of the intelligences through the use of ***activity menus***. Students may be given opportunities to design posters, create songs, and write poems and plays. As teachers create activity menus, they should incorporate these types of projects. Students may also choose activities that require them to solve given math problems. There are many reasons for incorporating Gardner's multiple intelligences in classrooms. Every student will benefit from this method of instruction; however, the opportunity to enrich a student's dominant intelligences will greatly benefit gifted readers.

Susan Winebrenner (2001, p. 94) explains how teachers can use ***Reading Activity Menus*** to facilitate the element of choice, as well as provide gifted readers with the opportunity to take ownership in their learning. Reading Activity Menus provide highly capable readers with alternate activities that extend the regular reading unit. She offers the following when working with this method of instruction:

- Prepare a list of activities from which students may choose
- Tell students that they may choose an activity to work on during designated times
- Invite students to come up with their own ideas and projects. This should be discussed with the teacher.
- Have students record their work and progress in a daily log.

Using Reading Activity Menus as a method of providing gifted readers with instruction in a regular classroom helps teachers: (1) meet the cognitive needs of these readers; and (2) use many of Howard Gardner's ideas. Teachers need to keep in mind that the goal when providing instruction for gifted readers is to offer learning experiences and differentiated activities that meet the individual needs of each student.

As we continue to explore strategies that have been proven effective in reading programs for gifted readers, we must keep in mind several points. Barbara Clark (1983) emphasizes that gifted students need educational programs that offer small group discussions, flexibility, respect for other's ideas, time for reflection, and the opportunity to compare communication and decision-making processes with academic

peers. Many of the strategies previously outlined support Clark's beliefs. The following strategies have been included to help reinforce Clark's recommendations.

Merkley and Jeffries (2001) provide information that supports the use of ***graphic organizers*** in the classroom. I have to report that graphic organizers are among my favorites when discussing instructional strategies beneficial to gifted students. These authors offer five attributes for effective graphic organizer implementation. These attributes include verbalizing relation-ships among concepts expressed visually, providing opportunity for student input, connecting new information to past learning, making references to the upcoming text, and seizing opportunities to help students decode and make structural analysis. Graphic organizers and reading instruction can help teachers introduce new vocabulary words. These visual aids can help students record general information about character traits, historical references, and comparisons among different stories. Although some educators view graphic organizers as worksheets, I consider them to be ways to see, organize and extend our thinking. The effectiveness of graphic organizers depends largely upon the teacher's ability to create and implement these instructional tools.

The use of ***journals*** during reading instruction encourages students to reflect on a given story, to examine their own thinking, to make predictions and to express their thoughts and feelings in writing. Teachers may have students to record predictions about parts of literature by creating "prediction journals." It is fun to give journals different names that match the skill being covered. For example, a "quotation journal" allows students to record a quote from a story, the page number and why they felt the quote was so important. As one would imagine, this type of journaling promotes critical reading and reflective questioning. A "reflective journal" can also serve many purposes. For example, in the story, *Stay Away from Simon* by Carol Carrick, the children laugh at Simon and decide not to play with him. Students will write their thoughts and feelings about this event. They reflect upon others actions and evaluate if the actions were appropriate or inappropriate. Finally, the "thinking journal" gives students time to analyze their own thought processes as they read stories. Students record ideas, thoughts about what they learned and then how they learned it. Teachers may ask students to determine which events in the story led them to this discovery. A higher-level of thinking naturally occurs when students are aware of their thought processes. Journals used for reading instruction support this belief.

SUMMARY

Designing reading instruction for gifted readers often becomes a complex task for educators. Because classrooms consist of diverse populations, a variety of ability levels are commonly found. However, by understanding the needs and characteristics of gifted readers, teachers can begin using trade books in conjunction with the basal text. This combination helps to promote a learning environment more suitable to the gifted reader. As teachers strive to meet the needs of gifted readers, they should remember to give challenges to all students, give them opportunities to demonstrate what they already know, offer choices while focusing on meaningful learning, and select and provide literature that relates to issues that gifted students frequently face.

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TRIBUTE TO THE SEVEN FALLEN HEROES OF SPACE SHUTTLE COLUMBIA

BY MICHAEL E. WALTERS

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This tribute to the seven astronauts who were on the space shuttle Columbia will emphasize their significance to the field of gifted education as related to their sensibility, and range of talents and interest. ***Colonel Rick Husband*** was the Commander of this flight. Starting at four years of age, he eagerly observed the launching of the original astronauts on television . He grew up in Amarillo, Texas and learned to fly when he was 18 years old. His college degrees were in mechanical engineering from Texas Tech University and California State University-Fresno. As a test pilot, he flew in more than forty types of aircraft. Previously in 1999, he was the pilot of the space shuttle Discovery during its docking with the International Space Station. He was a talented baritone who sang regularly in his church choir. ***Commander William McCool***, Pilot. As a child he enjoyed building model airplanes. His father was a Marine infantryman who later became a Navy aviator. In high school in Lubbock, Texas, he graduated second in a class of 1083. He attended the U.S. Naval Academy and received two masters degrees, one in computer science and the other in aeronautical engineering. As a fighter pilot, he logged more than 3800 flight hours. His extra curricular activities included playing the guitar and chess. ***Lt. Colonel Michael Anderson***, Payload Commander. At the age of three, he received his first toy airplane. He was a second generation African American Air Force officer. His hometown was Plattsburgh, New York but he grew up in Spokane, Washington. He earned a BS degree in physics and astronomy from the University of Wisconsin. His masters degree was in physics from Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. He was in charge of the science experiments on the Columbia. His previous space flight was in 1998 when he was on a docking mission with the space shuttle Endeavor and the Russian Space Station Mir. ***Dr. Kalpana Chawla***, Mission Specialist. She was born in Karnal, India and was a devout Hindu and vegetarian. Her undergraduate degree was in engineering from Punjab Engineering College. Her masters degree was in aerospace engineering from the University of Texas, and her doctorate was in the same field from the University of Colorado. She became an American citizen while studying in the United States. ***Captain David Brown***, Mission Specialist. He was a star gymnast at Yorktown High School in Arlington, Virginia. His undergraduate degree was from the College of William and Mary. He received his MD degree from the Eastern Virginia Medical School in Norfolk, Virginia, and entered the Navy as an MD on an aircraft carrier. In 1988, he became the only naval physician in ten years to be chosen for flight training. He graduated first in his flight school class. There was another MD on the Columbia shuttle, ***Commander Laurel Clark***, Mission Specialist. She was born in Iowa but grew up in Racine, Wisconsin. Due to her keen love of animals, she majored in zoology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Originally she intended to be a veterinarian but she later decided to become an MD (University of Wisconsin-Madison). Due to her experiences as a scuba diver, she was certified by the Navy to work on submarines and to be a medical diver. ***Colonel Ilan Ramon***, Payload Specialist. He was born and grew up in Tel Aviv, Israel. Both his mother and grandmother were Holocaust survivors. He took part in the 1981 air attack on Iraq's nuclear reactor. In 1983 he earned an electrical and computer engineering degree from

Tel Aviv University. A personal concern of his was to be able to function in both the technological and religious areas. President Bush in his tribute to these martyrs of giftedness expressed their sensibilities: “These astronauts knew the dangers, and they faced them willingly, knowing they had a high and noble purpose in life. Because of their courage and daring and idealism, we will miss them all the more....”

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