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Diane Heacox, Ed.D. • Richard M. Cash, Ed.D.

DIFFERENTIATION **for** GIFTED LEARNERS

REVISED & UPDATED EDITION

GOING BEYOND THE BASICS

Foreword by Marcia Gentry, Ph.D.

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REVISED & UPDATED EDITION

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Diane Heacox, Ed.D. • Richard M. Cash, Ed.D.

Foreword by Marcia Gentry, Ph.D.



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INTRODUCTION

Differentiation for all is not the same as differentiation for gifted learners. Their learning characteristics are unique, and unlike those of other students in the classroom. Some schools recognize and address this reality, but in too many schools, there is an assumption that differentiating will automatically meet the specific needs of gifted learners. In other schools, differentiation for gifted students does not follow best practices and appears shallow and trivial. Certainly in these circumstances, differentiation does not respond to the distinctive learning characteristics and profiles of gifted students.

What's New in This Edition?

Since the book's initial publication, the following elements have been added to or expanded upon in this new edition.

Serving *All* Gifted Students

- ⊙ expanded discussion of historically underserved gifted learners, as well as specific ideas for providing access to enrichment for recently immigrated students
- ⊙ new information about gifted students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- ⊙ ideas for providing access and equity for learners who are economically vulnerable

Understanding Gifted Learners

- ⊙ additional information about the neurological characteristics of gifted learners
- ⊙ more information on the learning orientations of gifted students
- ⊙ strategies for reengaging and inspiring under-achieving gifted learners

Programs and Standards

- ⊙ ways to achieve closer alignment of gifted programs with Response to Intervention (RTI) and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)
- ⊙ clear guidelines for addressing gifted learners' needs in a standards-based classroom

Honors and Advanced Courses

- ⊙ ideas for “differentiating up” to remove the learning ceiling for gifted students
- ⊙ new guidelines for creating honors/advanced courses
- ⊙ ideas for incorporating the ethics of care into advanced classes

Co-Teaching and Partnering

- ⊙ benefits and constraints of co-teaching for teachers and students
- ⊙ tips and tools to build strong co-teaching partnerships
- ⊙ ways for classroom teachers and gifted resource specialists to effectively and efficiently co-plan

Lesson Planning

- ⊙ tips for streamlining your planning for differentiated lessons
- ⊙ curriculum samples using the content/process/product planning charts
- ⊙ a step-by-step process to work through lesson study

Grading

- ⊙ greater understanding of the assessment and grading practices for gifted learners
- ⊙ specific strategies for addressing issues teachers face when offering and grading advanced coursework

A Note About Research

As you read this book, you'll likely notice that some of the studies and research we cite aren't exactly new. In fact, some of them are relatively old. That's because, unfortunately, very little new substantive research has been done about gifted learners and their needs. So when you do see references to older studies or statistics, we've included them because the results and information are still relevant, and also because there simply isn't newer information to offer.

About This Book

Since this book was first published, many elements have been added to or expanded upon in this new edition. Each chapter offers additional insights, strategies, and ideas.

The purpose of this book is to clearly define and describe how effective differentiation for gifted and advanced learners is different than it is for typical students and to show you how to meet the needs of gifted students. While differentiation is often talked about today as it relates to standards-based education, the term has been used widely in gifted education for decades. Experts in the field of gifted education originally defined *differentiation* as modifications in content, process, or products in response to the specific learning needs of gifted and/or talented learners.

Differentiation for Gifted Learners: Going Beyond the Basics focuses on the specific learning needs of and differences among gifted students and offers effective ways that teachers can plan for these differences. We provide strategies, formats, templates, and examples of differentiation for kindergarten through grade twelve classrooms and present a variety of curricular applications across all core content areas. In addition, we offer guidance for the design of programs and services for gifted students that specifically respond to their learning needs and extend above and beyond including differentiated curriculum in the classroom.

Chapter 1 is a reference point for educators in defining giftedness and understanding the variations among gifted students that require specific differentiation practices. We present an overview of the federal definition of giftedness as well as explore the implications of distinctions between gifts and talents. We note the challenges of gifted students who are also English language learners (ELL students), who have ASD, who have ADHD, or who face other learning or behavior challenges. New information on gifted students who have ASD or ADHD has been added. Various cultural and ethnic communities sometimes associate varying attributes with giftedness; we'll explore this and offer recommendations for providing equal access to and equity in services for gifted learners. The new edition has expanded text on underserved gifted students and on providing access for recently immigrated students. In addition, new ideas for considering and providing access for learners who are economically vulnerable has been included.

Chapter 2 addresses the specifics of differentiation for gifted learners. We explain why, based on neurological studies, differentiating for gifted learners is much more than just adding activities—even those we consider differentiated—that the learner may perceive as “more of the same.” We provide practical strategies that enable teachers to focus content on advanced concepts and complex ideas. We also suggest ways to engage all levels and types of gifted students in using the tools of the practicing professional to produce significant products that have value to others.

Chapter 3 considers the implications of standards-based education for gifted students. Clear how-tos for addressing gifted learners' specific needs in a standards-based classroom are outlined. We present ideas for applying and extending the standards in ways that enhance the education of gifted learners.

Chapter 4 provides guidance in developing, refining, or extending high-quality programs and services for gifted students from elementary school through high school. The educational support systems and structures for gifted learners are typically

not mandated or reinforced by state/provincial or federal rule or law. Therefore, districts and states/provinces are left to their own devices to provide equitable services and programs for these students. This chapter outlines a spectrum of services that address the varying needs of gifted learners and provide significant differentiation of content, process, and product to help each of them reach their maximum potential. Additionally, we discuss how to align gifted programming with RTI/MTSS and other district or schoolwide program initiatives. We suggest that services for gifted students are not limited to one type of program, but are wide ranging with a focus on talent, academic, social, and emotional development. New to this edition is the form **Principles of Differentiating Up for Gifted Learners: Self-Assessment** (page 70). Use this form to check your current level of services and identify where you may want to make adjustments.

Chapter 5 considers the design of honors and advanced courses at the secondary level. As schools become more diverse and funds dwindle, exclusive programming for gifted learners has become more difficult to sustain. In addition, if specialized courses are offered too often, there is little distinction between “regular” and “advanced” sections of a course, and the teacher frequently lacks training in differentiation for gifted learners. This chapter helps teachers ensure that courses for gifted students are distinguished by *articulation*, *alignment*, and *accountability*, or the “Triple A” method. Included in this edition are **Guidelines for Creating Honors/Advanced Courses** (pages 104–106). In addition, this chapter offers a curricular framework that infuses the pedagogy of gifted education into secondary courses.

Chapter 6 discusses the changing roles of educators in the differentiated classroom. This chapter provides critical information on the specific educational, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners that must be addressed in the general education setting. We also explore how the roles of teacher and students change within the differentiated classroom, and we present our model—the Cash-Heacox Teaching and Learning Continuum

(TLC)—which outlines how to develop greater student responsibility, self-regulation, and learning autonomy in the classroom.

Chapter 7 describes co-teaching as a collaborative approach to differentiation for gifted learners. In many schools, classroom teachers have primary responsibility for meeting the needs of gifted students in their classrooms without the assistance or support of gifted education specialists. Such “inclusion” classrooms demand teachers who have specialized training in differentiation for gifted learners. However, when schools have gifted education specialists available to support the needs of gifted learners, co-teaching can be effectively used by these specialists and classroom teachers. This chapter details the co-teaching model and introduces six effective co-teaching strategies in differentiation for gifted learners. We detail how to get co-teaching going, how to find a co-teacher match, and how to negotiate space for both teachers in the classroom. We clearly present the benefits and constraints of co-teaching for both teachers and students. We offer specific suggestions for building and maintaining effective collaboration between gifted education specialists and classroom teachers. Finally, we present a tool to examine indicators of strong co-teaching partnerships for use by school leaders.

Chapter 8 provides valuable guidance for teachers who are challenged by gifted students who may underachieve and produce selectively or not at all. In this chapter, we discuss potential underlying issues related to these learners. We suggest potential causes for lack of school performance and offer strategies to break the cycle of underachievement. We offer suggestions and strategies for guiding students out of their failure cycles, including James Delisle’s strategies for reengaging and inspiring underachieving gifted learners. We also provide coaching tips for teachers that can be used to support school success and curtail a gifted student’s slide into low production.

Chapter 9 addresses assessment for and grading of learning and its critical relationship to differentiation for gifted students. We suggest the ways in

which preassessment and formative assessment specifically inform our planning for gifted learners. We provide informal assessment strategies that minimize planning and preparation time for teachers. Because critical and creative thinking are foundational to differentiation for gifted learners, specific assessment strategies for assessing creative and critical thinking skills are detailed. In addition, we discuss the connections between descriptive feedback and student achievement and provide guidelines and strategies to optimize the results of this feedback. We have also included a new discussion of grading gifted learners and strategies for offering and grading advanced coursework.

Chapter 10 contains ideas for how the gifted education specialist can provide leadership in embedding the strategies of differentiation for gifted learners in classroom practice. Most educators of the gifted are not school administrators but are on teachers' contracts as specialists, facilitators, directors, or teachers on special assignment. However, they are often expected to take on leadership roles in the school. This chapter discusses the challenges of "quasi administrators" and suggests appropriate roles and typical responsibilities for these specialists, such as instructional coaching. We describe specific coaching strategies along with processes, procedures, and routines that gifted education specialists often find effective. Finally, we present a collaborative approach to supporting professional development and professional learning communities called "lesson study." We offer a step-by-step process to work through a lesson study as well as templates for quickly implementing the process in your school. Finally, we suggest ways classroom teachers and gifted resource people can effectively and efficiently co-plan.

Chapter 11 provides some go-to resources for your practice. We present an easy-to-use reference to streamline your planning of differentiated learning experiences. This collection of strategies enables you to consider content, process, and product differentiation across readiness, interest, and learning profile variations among gifted students.

In this new edition, we provide curriculum samples using this process in a variety of curriculum areas. We also include a handy summary of what distinguishes differentiation for gifted learners, which will be a helpful resource in conversations on this topic with colleagues, parents, students, and other stakeholders.

All the reproducible forms in this book are available as digital files. See page 250 for information on how and where to download them.

If you wish to use this book in a professional learning community or book study group, a PLC/Book Study Guide with chapter-by-chapter discussion questions and teaching suggestions is available. You may download the free guide at freespirit.com/plc.

How to Use This Book

Differentiation for Gifted Learners extends the work of Diane's previous books, *Differentiating Instruction in the Regular Classroom* and *Making Differentiation a Habit*. And it expands principles and practices initially presented in Richard's book, *Advancing Differentiation*, to the specific needs of gifted learners. This resource builds on the strong foundations of differentiation presented in our previous three books, and it provides clear direction and guidance in effective differentiation for gifted learners.

Our intent is to inform the practices and support the work of classroom teachers and gifted education specialists, as well as school leaders such as curriculum specialists, building principals, teacher leaders, and professional development trainers. We also encourage college and university faculty to use this book with preservice teachers and graduate students to deepen their understandings of the learning needs of gifted students and of how to better differentiate instruction for them within inclusion classrooms.

You may wish to read through the book chapter by chapter, or you may want to go directly to a particular topic that is of immediate interest to you. For example, as your school works with learning

standards, you will want to read and review our thoughts and ideas on the best applications for gifted learners in chapter 3. If you are involved in establishing, revising, or refining high school courses, consider going directly to chapter 5.

This book will not only help you apply best practices for gifted learners in your classroom, but also enable you to assertively and with great detail outline and defend the ways that differentiation for gifted learners diverges from the practices used with other students. As advocates for the gifted,

we need to step up and claim these differences and clarify others' understandings of them.

Finally, we want to strengthen your gifted programs and services, extend the strategies of differentiation you are already using, and provide new ideas, tactics, formats, and templates to make appropriate differentiation for your gifted learners both practical and doable.

Come with us as we go *beyond* the basics of differentiation to practices that address the unique learning needs of gifted students!

GIFTEDNESS DEFINED THROUGH AN EQUITY LENS

Definition of Gifts and Talents

Our definitions of gifted and talented learners have evolved over the years. Beginning with the 1972 Marland Report, the first national report on gifted education, the United States Department of Education has worked to define what it means to be gifted and talented. The initial definition was broad and included academic and intellectual talent, leadership ability, visual and performing arts, creative and productive thinking, and psychomotor ability.¹ Psychomotor ability was removed from later versions of the federal definition, which was revised in 1978, 1988, and 1993. Here's how the 1988 definition read: "The term 'gifted and talented students' means children and youth who give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic (visual and performing), or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop such capabilities."² It should be noted that, although many schools currently provide some level of services to students with intellectual gifts or high academic abilities, the federal definition provided direction for much broader services.

Figure 1.1 on page 7 summarizes the characteristics of gifted students.

In 1993, the Office of Education revised its definition once again to define gifted and talented

students as "Children and youth of outstanding talent who perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment."³ Unfortunately, this definition suggests that gifted and talented students always perform at high levels. The reality is that some do not. Some gifted students are, in fact, academic underachievers. Yet they still need gifted services—especially academic interventions and services designed to break their cycle of underachievement. More information on underachieving and unmotivated gifted learners is provided in chapter 8.

The 1993 definition also noted "Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor."⁴ The issues that led to the inclusion of this notation in the federal definition have historically been and continue to be a challenge for schools. Today, students from historically underrepresented groups continue to be underserved in gifted education programs and services.

For purposes of clarity, it is critical that we use a common definition for gifted and/or talented learners. The view of gifts and talents that we use in this book best reflects the work of François Gagné⁵ along with a general synthesis of other leaders and researchers in the field of gifted education. We define gifts and talents in this way:

1 Marland, 1972.

2 Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act, 1988.

3 US Department of Education, 1993.

4 US Department of Education, 1993.

5 Gagné, 2003.

- © **Gifts** are superior *innate* aptitudes in intellectual, creative, social, and perceptual mental domains and muscular and motor physical domains. Gifts are born-with superior (top 10 percent) aptitudes. They are the “promise” of giftedness, which may or may not develop into talents over time.
- © **Talents** are outstanding *learned* capabilities and skills developed over time through training, learning, and practice. Talents reflect superior (top 10 percent) performance in fields such

as academics, science and technology, arts, social service, administration, business, games, or athletics.

Related to Gagné’s model, gifts over time have the potential to become talents in particular fields. However, with gifted students, we are unable to initially predict what specific talents will emerge or even if talents will be developed. Gifted students hold the promise for talent development, but gifts do not always result in talents.

Figure 1.1 Educational Characteristics and Behaviors of Gifted Students*

<p>Visual/Performing Arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outstanding sense of spatial relationships Unusual ability for self-expression through art, dance, drama, music, etc. Desire for producing original product Practices talent regularly without being told Strives to improve artistic skills 	<p>General Intellectual Ability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehends and formulates abstract ideas Processes information in complex ways Observant Excited about new ideas Uses a large vocabulary Inquisitive Learns rapidly Self-starter
<p>Creative Thinking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent thinker Exhibits original thinking in oral and written expression Comes up with several solutions to a given problem Strong sense of humor Challenged by creative tasks 	
<p>Specific Academic Ability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High academic success in a special interest area Pursues special interest with enthusiasm and vigor Good memorization ability Advanced comprehension Acquires basic skill knowledge quickly Self-directed and motivated 	<p>Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widely read in special interest area Knows the correct answers Corrects own errors Recognized by peers and other teachers as having high intellectual ability Self-aware of academic aptitude

* Adapted from a model developed by Eastern Connecticut State University and from the work of Marcia Gentry, 1999.

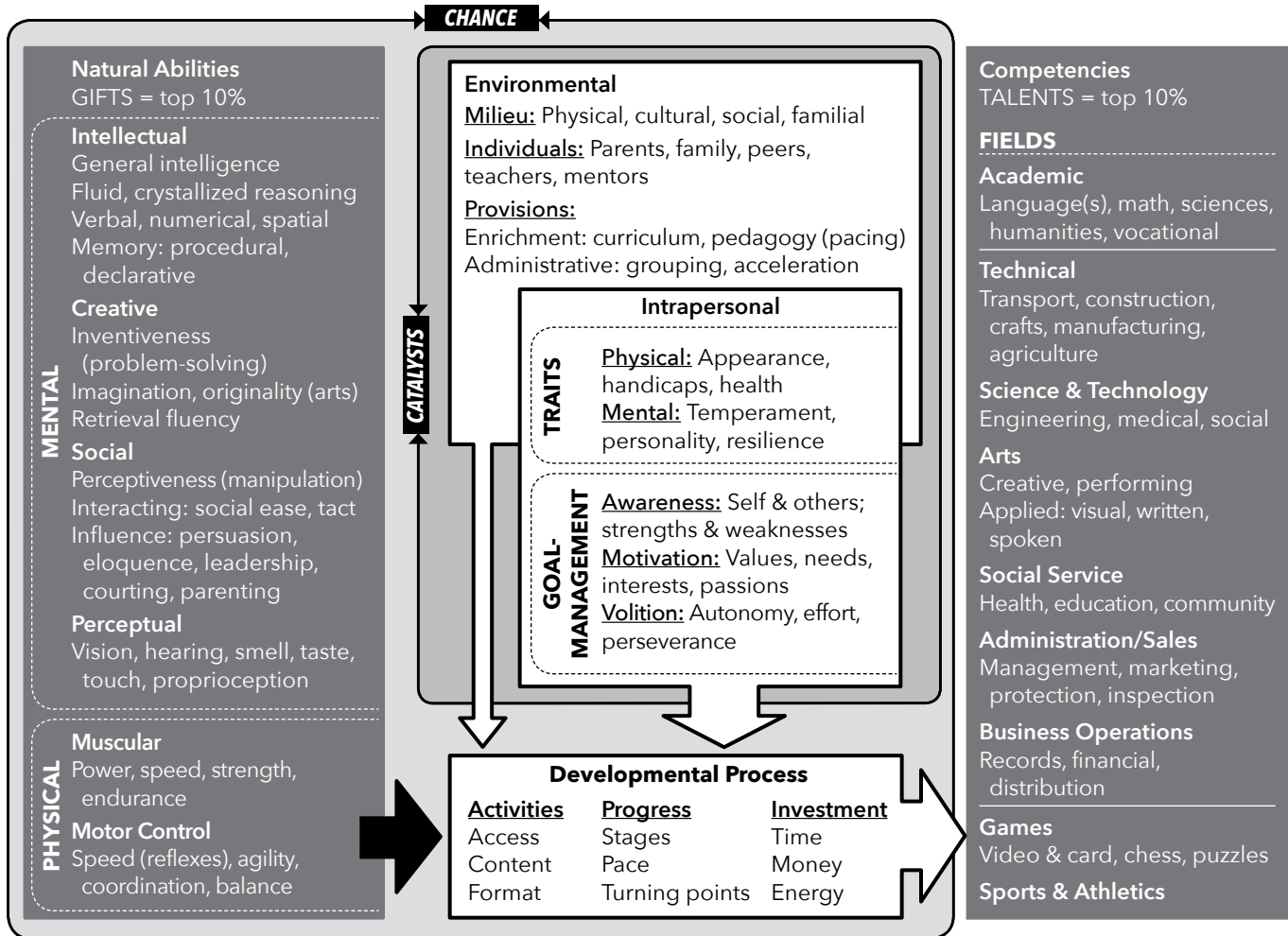
Gagné’s Model

Gagné’s model of giftedness (**figure 1.2**) specifies two categories of catalysts, environmental and intrapersonal, that influence when and if talents are developed. Environmental catalysts include milieu: the physical, cultural, social, and familial contexts. Other environmental catalysts include significant individuals in the student’s life as well as access to educational provisions for developing gifts into talents, such as gifted education services, school programs, or activities, and important events, such as awards, adventures, experiences, or encounters. Intrapersonal catalysts reflect the student’s physical and mental traits as well as goal management capabilities. They include physical qualities like health status; motivation, including the student’s needs, interests, and values; volition, including

willpower, effort, and persistence; self-management skills, reflecting persistence, work habits, and effort; and, finally, personality factors, including temperament, self-awareness, self-esteem, and flexibility. Catalysts either facilitate or inhibit the development of a particular talent.

Talent development is influenced by both environmental and intrapersonal catalysts. In addition, the kinds of activities students engage in, their learning progress, and their investment of time and energy all influence talent development. If gifted students do not or cannot put time and effort into the development of their talents, those talents will not emerge. Regardless of how gifted a student is, if the student does not spend time training, learning, and practicing, one cannot expect specific talents to emerge.

Figure 1.2 The Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent*



* Gagné, 2009.

Let's consider the potential effects of environmental catalysts using the example of a creatively gifted student who attends a school that does not provide music education. Such a student may not develop their innate musical talent because of a lack of opportunity for training, learning, and practice in this field. Conversely, a student given an opportunity to attend a summer STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) camp may develop both a passion for engineering design and talent in the field of engineering.

According to Gagné's model, a student with outstanding talents in a particular field is also likely to be gifted. This is because superior talents often require a solid foundation in related aptitudes. However, a gifted student will not necessarily develop talents if particular catalysts are not in place. Thus, we may have students who are gifted intellectually but not talented academically. This is the case with academically underachieving gifted learners.

It should be noted that Gagné suggests that talents continue to emerge in gifted individuals over time, even into adulthood. There is a strong relationship between innate ability (gifts) and the ease and speed of developing new talents. Many gifted adults may indeed have "hidden talents" that are discovered, given the opportunity for training, learning, and practice.

If we were to apply Gagné's concepts to the federal definition of giftedness, intellectual ability and creativity would be considered gifts. Specific academic abilities, leadership, and visual and performing arts would be considered talents.

Gifted Versus Talented

For clarity and consistency, we will use the term *gifted* throughout this book. Please keep in mind that we are thus referring to students who have innate superior aptitudes and who, over time and with the right catalysts and support for their gifts, develop into talented learners.

Identifying Giftedness in All Communities

Gifted students are found in all communities. Keep in mind that the word *smart* may be defined in numerous ways across the communities you work with in your school. As such, educators need to consider additional definitions of giftedness viewed through the lens of each community's values, practices, beliefs, and experiences. By ignoring a culture's perception of giftedness, we may fail to identify students who are in fact gifted.

It can be extremely helpful to have respectful conversations with representatives of your school's cultural/ethnic communities, generally asking the question, "How would you describe a student who is exceptional?" The various answers you receive to this question may lead you to reconsider students of particular cultures whom you might otherwise overlook for gifted programs.

Following are some general characteristics associated with being gifted⁶:

- ⊙ a strong desire to learn
- ⊙ intense, sometimes unusual interests
- ⊙ uncommon ability to communicate with words, numbers, and symbols
- ⊙ effective and often inventive strategies for identifying and solving problems
- ⊙ exceptional ability to retain and retrieve information, resulting in deep knowledge of particular topics or subjects
- ⊙ extensive and unusual questions, experiments, and explorations
- ⊙ quick understanding of new concepts; deeper understanding
- ⊙ ability to make connections: "This is like this . . . because . . ."
- ⊙ logical approaches to finding solutions
- ⊙ ability to produce unique, original ideas
- ⊙ keen, unusual sense of humor

Consider how these characteristics might be expressed in various cultural and ethnic groups

with differing values, practices, and beliefs. Many excellent resources exist for exploring these cultural expressions, such as *Special Populations in Gifted Education* by Jaime A. Castellano and Andrea Dawn Frazier (Prufrock, 2011), *Cultivating the Genius of Black Children* by Debra Ren-Etta Sullivan (Redleaf, 2016), and *Start Seeing and Serving Underserved Gifted Students* by Jennifer Ritchotte, Chin-Wen Lee, and Amy Graefe (Free Spirit Publishing, 2020).

Underrepresentation in Gifted Programs

The lack of proportional representation of some racial and ethnic groups in gifted programs is a critical and continuing issue. As discussed, some of this underrepresentation is due to differing cultural concepts of giftedness, but much is a result of educator bias as well as identification processes that fail to detect all students with high potential. This is particularly true of nonwhite students who have experienced unequal opportunities. Black, Latinx, and Native American students tend to be concentrated in high-poverty schools. Over half of Latinx students attend schools where more than 75 percent of students are qualified for free or reduced lunch programs. Meanwhile, a majority (70 percent) of white and Asian-American students attend schools where fewer than half of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch programs. Furthermore, concentrated poverty results in students living in poverty surrounded by other students in poverty, which researchers believe multiplies the negative effects of poverty on learning.⁷

Gifted students living in poverty and attending high-poverty schools face multiple barriers to identification and access. In addition to their own and their school community's lack of financial resources, some of their teachers potentially exhibit racial bias, misunderstand their cultures' concepts of giftedness, and use inadequate identification processes. On top of this, many of these same students are learning English. The following sections discuss these specific challenges in more depth.

The issue of racial and cultural bias in identifying gifted students is one that deserves special attention beyond the scope of this book. We recommend the following helpful resources:

Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race by Beverly Daniel Tatum (Basic Books, 2017)

Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People by Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald (Bantam, 2016)

Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think, and Do by Jennifer L. Eberhardt (Viking, 2019)

So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo (Seal Press, 2018)

AMAZE and **Teaching Tolerance** are both nonprofit organizations supporting anti-bias education and training for adults and students. Visit amazeworks.org and tolerance.org.

Identifying Gifted English Language Learners (ELL Students)

Much has been written about the difficulties in identifying ELL students who are gifted. Previous pages included some ideas about how various cultures may define *gifted*; however, with ELL students, we also need to carefully examine the methods we use to locate such gifted learners.

Many of the assessments used in gifted education services depend on language—a student's oral and written language skills. Yet with ELL students, advanced thinking and problem-solving abilities may be masked by limited use of the English language. This also affects some students in under-resourced urban or rural settings, students living in poverty, or those whose cultural or linguistic background differs from the native-English-speaking middle-class population for which such assessments were generally designed. To counter this bias, some schools use multiple or alternative criteria to screen ELL candidates for further assessment. If schools use the same verbally focused

standardized assessment for all candidates, the purpose of widening and deepening the candidate pool is lost.

Keep in mind that the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) indicates that newly immigrated ELL students must be included in district testing during their first year in the school. However, their results do not count toward their school's rating. In their second year, the ELL students' results for reading and math are incorporated in the rating. ESSA suggests that ELL students' stage of language acquisition in their third year at a school should enable them to take the same assessments as their classmates. Do your identification and assessment protocols for gifted ELL students at least minimally reflect this practice?

When considering which students, especially ELL students, might need gifted education services, it's best to use multiple criteria and draw information from as many sources as possible. This approach evaluates students from a variety of perspectives and, therefore, provides a more in-depth examination of their particular learning abilities and needs.

How do we assess students without relying on language? Nonverbal standardized measures assess problem-solving skills using graphic representations with no language limitations. The Culture Fair Intelligence Tests, Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Tests, and Raven's Progressive Matrices are examples of nonverbal assessments used by many schools.

These types of ability tests are believed to have less cultural bias. However, one of the major criticisms of nonverbal tests for identifying giftedness is their generally lower ability to predict school achievement in specific subject areas. Studies have found advantages and disadvantages of using each assessment, and particular assessments may be more effective with particular groups of ELL students. Some schools have also sought to assess students in their native language.⁸

In addition to standardized measures, schools may set criteria that reflect exceptional ability in

their particular ELL populations. Identifying such culturally based characteristics of giftedness may be particularly helpful to teachers who are learning how students' cultures define their talents. These criteria will guide teachers as they observe students in their classrooms. They may also be used as part of a behavioral checklist or inventory.

With more and more English language learners in our schools and classrooms, we need to carefully consider the ways in which we identify gifted learners in ELL populations. Understanding the cultural, linguistic, and cognitive skills of ELL students is an important first step in developing culturally relevant definitions of gifts and talents.

Students Who Are Economically Vulnerable

As discussed, gifted education has long struggled with issues related to access and equity. The underrepresentation of low-income students in gifted education services is evident. One study found students from low-income families were five times less likely to be placed in gifted services than their higher-income classmates were.⁹ Data reports that, on average, 51 percent of American public school students come from low-income backgrounds.¹⁰ Although no published research provides a national estimate for the specific proportion of low-income students identified as gifted, it is accepted that the proportion of low-income gifted students does not reflect the proportion of low-income students in the general school population. Data indicates that students whose families had incomes in the top quarter of the population were five times more likely to be in gifted programs than students from the bottom quarter.¹¹

Issues underlying access and equity for low-income students include:

1. If a teacher's definition and conceptions of gifted behaviors are viewed from a middle-class lens, the teacher's perceptions of gifted behaviors may not align with how low-income students exemplify their gifts.

⁸ Peters and Engerrand, 2016; Lewis, 2001.

⁹ Borland, 2005.

¹⁰ Suitts, 2015.

¹¹ Suitts, 2015.

If this same teacher's nominations are the gateway to further giftedness assessment, then fewer low-income students may be referred. In reviewing statewide data on screening processes, students who received free and reduced lunch were less likely to be nominated by their teachers. Their classmates who did not receive free and reduced lunch were three times more likely to be nominated.¹²

2. Low-income students often have fewer opportunities to learn outside of school than their higher-income peers have. Stretched finances can result in limited access to learning materials and participation in enriching activities. This “opportunity gap” is reflective of economic inequities.
3. If low-income students are included in testing for giftedness, they are at a disadvantage when tests are designed for native-English-speaking middle-class populations. Disparities in test results exist amongst low-income and high-income students. If achievement or aptitude measures are used as cutoff scores for further assessment, children in poverty are disadvantaged.

Gifted education continues to underserve children living in poverty. To rectify this inequity, schools must evaluate the degree to which students involved in gifted programs reflect the realities of their school populations. Are students on free and reduced lunch represented in your gifted population? If not, what are the obstacles or barriers to their involvement? In what ways are your own and your school's cultural values and views of giftedness limiting access for students who are living in poverty?

Moving forward, we need to continue to critically examine the ways that our belief systems and cultural practices may shape how we identify and serve students. Access to excellence through gifted services should be assured for students from all cultural and linguistic communities and socioeconomic groups.

Serving Children Who Are Recent Immigrants

As with ELL students, children whose families have recently immigrated represent a wide range of cultures and economic realities, and educators often face similar challenges as described earlier with ELL students in identifying and serving children who are recently immigrated and gifted. A number of factors—including cultural and linguistic background, financial challenges, experience and expectations of education systems, cross-cultural stress, and even intergenerational family conflicts—increase the complexity of working with families new to the United States. Some students have had little, sporadic, or no formal education prior to immigration. In addition, hidden factors such as immigration status, limited knowledge about how to access social and health-care services, and physical and psychological problems resulting from violence in their country of origin may impact students' educational progress and success. Following are some suggestions for making gifted education services more accessible to children who have recently immigrated.¹³

Communication

- ☉ Specifically provide program and service information to parents, as they may be unaware of such opportunities or feel uncomfortable talking with teachers or school staff.
- ☉ Host culturally specific parent meetings with a translator and invite parents to speak up for their students and their learning needs, since parents may not want to draw attention to themselves because of respect for the authority of the school.
- ☉ Explain the purposes of gifted services to parents in their native language.
- ☉ Consider what aspects of your program would be valued by the student's culture, and communicate that to parents.

¹² McBee, 2006.

¹³ D. J. Kohn, 2008.

Identification

- ⊙ Make an effort to learn about culturally based characteristics of giftedness related to immigrant children so you can better reflect on student learning behavior that occurs in the classroom.
- ⊙ Assume nothing about the economic status or educational background of the families. (For example, recent immigrants are sometimes assumed to have little money or education, which is certainly not always the case.)
- ⊙ Interpret behavior in the context of the child's experiences.
- ⊙ Consider using exploratory enrichment activities to observe how the immigrant student responds to new ideas and materials.
- ⊙ Use referrals from peers inside or outside of the immigrant student's cultural group.

Services

- ⊙ Prepare to work with immigrant students by gathering information about the immigrant group's culture, country of origin, religion, history, values, and expectations.
- ⊙ Provide services that are culturally sensitive, relevant, and responsive to the context of the immigrant group.
- ⊙ Identify ways that gifted services may conflict with the student's home culture, and work to remedy those conflicts.
- ⊙ Consider the immigrant group's aspirations, and plan curriculum that responds to these goals.
- ⊙ Use references and resources in the student's home language.
- ⊙ Create opportunities for immigrant students to develop relationships with gifted peers outside their cultural community.
- ⊙ Periodically meet with immigrant students' other teachers to discuss their attitudes and possible biases. Hold informal sessions to identify problems and exchange ideas.

To provide both equity and access to gifted services for children who are recent immigrants, we need to consider communication, identification, and services within the context of the immigrant group's culture, history, values, and aspirations.

See pages 234–241 for specific resources on serving gifted students to move toward equity in our schools.

Twice-Exceptional (2e) Learners: Gifted Students with Learning or Behavior Challenges

The gifts and talents of some students may be masked by learning or behavior challenges. Referred to as “twice-exceptional” or “2e,” these students may have cognitive difficulties, such as learning difficulties or attention and behavior issues, as well as gifts and talents that need to be acknowledged and nurtured.

Between 5 and 10 percent of a school's gifted population may also have learning difficulties.¹⁴ Although specific characteristics of giftedness for students with learning difficulties may vary, research does reveal some common elements. The reproducible chart on page 18, **Characteristics of Gifted Students and Gifted Students with Learning Difficulties**, provides more specific and in-depth information on this topic.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Gifted Learners

In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association published a major revision to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5). This resulted in changes in the diagnostic criteria with which individuals with learning or behavior challenges were described. In turn, it impacted US diagnostic criteria and classifications related to

student involvement in special education support or services.

Certainly, prior to the DSM-5, there were gifted students who were 2e. In some cases, the second exceptionality was called Asperger's syndrome. The DSM-5 now refers to this as high-functioning autism, or HFA, and places it within autism spectrum disorder (ASD). In April of 2018, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released data on the prevalence of ASD in the United States. Their study identified 1 in 59 children (1 in 37 boys and 1 in 151 girls) as having ASD.¹⁵ ASD is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects how individuals process information and interpret the world around them. Core characteristics of ASD are persistent deficits in social interaction and communication and restricted or repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities. However, individuals with ASD display a unique combination of characteristics that can be placed on a continuum from mild to severe.

High-Functioning Autism (HFA) and Gifted Learners

Students with HFA typically are linear and sequential thinkers who prefer order and predictability. HFA does not affect one's intellectual abilities; such students typically fall in the normal to above average intellectual range. Behaviors that are typical of HFA include:¹⁶

- ⊙ introversion, social awkwardness, and aloofness
- ⊙ attention problems
- ⊙ overexcitability
- ⊙ obsessive interests in limited topics
- ⊙ hypersensitivity to such things as bright lights or loud noises
- ⊙ motor clumsiness
- ⊙ repetitive patterns of interests, activities, and play
- ⊙ resistance to change

- ⊙ inability to interpret social cues; poor awareness of how others view them
- ⊙ excessive run-on talking and question asking
- ⊙ concerns with fairness
- ⊙ quirky sense of humor

Individuals with HFA do not typically remain aloof and withdrawn their entire lives; most show greater interest in others as they grow older. Many become well adapted but may still appear to be egocentric and idiosyncratic in their behaviors.

Some typical behaviors of HFA may also be common among students who are gifted. This raises two questions: Are we determining which gifted students also have ASD? Do we consider students with ASD also candidates for gifted services?

Researcher James Webb and colleagues provide guidance in identifying students who may not truly have characteristics of ASD but are simply exhibiting the behaviors of gifted learners. According to Webb, the following attributes disqualify students from an ASD diagnosis but *do* indicate behaviors associated with giftedness:¹⁷

- ⊙ Students have normal friendships with others who have common interests.
- ⊙ They can read interpersonal situations and the emotions of others.
- ⊙ Their emotions are appropriate to the situation or issue.
- ⊙ They appropriately display sympathy and empathy.
- ⊙ They are aware of others' perceptions of them.
- ⊙ They have little or no motor clumsiness.
- ⊙ They tolerate abrupt changes in routines.
- ⊙ Both their speech and their sense of humor are more adultlike.
- ⊙ They understand both metaphors and idioms.

Although it is certainly possible for students to have ASD and be gifted, we need to avoid making assumptions and to carefully consider both possibilities when these characteristics are present.

¹⁵ Baio et al., 2018.

¹⁶ Adapted from Davis, 2006.

¹⁷ Webb et al., 2005.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Gifted Learners

The DSM-5 diagnostic criteria for inattentiveness and hyperactivity-impulsivity (or ADHD) have essentially retained the same characteristics as those determined by the DSM-4.¹⁸ To warrant a diagnosis of ADHD under the DSM-5, individuals younger than seventeen years old must exhibit at least six of nine inattentive and/or hyperactive-impulsive characteristics and these characteristics need to be present in two or more settings. Consider whether you have seen the following ADHD characteristics in gifted students. Are any of these typical behaviors of gifted learners? Could these be both ADHD characteristics *and* gifted behaviors?

ADHD Inattentive Characteristics:

- ⊙ often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork or during other activities
- ⊙ often has difficulty in focusing attention on tasks
- ⊙ often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly
- ⊙ often does not follow through on instructions and is easily sidetracked
- ⊙ often has difficulty organizing tasks and managing time
- ⊙ often avoids or is reluctant to engage in tasks requiring sustained attention
- ⊙ often loses things necessary to complete tasks
- ⊙ often is distracted by outside stimuli
- ⊙ often is forgetful about daily activities or tasks

ADHD Hyperactive-Impulsive Characteristics:

- ⊙ often fidgets
- ⊙ often fails to remain seated
- ⊙ often runs about or climbs where it is inappropriate

- ⊙ often unable to quietly play or engage in activities
- ⊙ often restless, “on the go”
- ⊙ often talks excessively
- ⊙ often blurts out responses before questions are fully stated
- ⊙ often has difficulty waiting for a turn
- ⊙ often interrupts or intrudes on others

The operational word in these characteristics lists is *often*. Remember to consider the degree and dimension of the behavior in light of typical behaviors of gifted learners in order to avoid making assumptions about the child. Also remember that diagnosis must come from a trained mental health professional or physician who also thoroughly understands typical behaviors of gifted learners.

In addition, psychologist Kazimierz Dabrowski suggested that a trait he referred to as *overexcitability* is unique to some highly gifted learners.¹⁹ Overexcitability refers to having an unusual intensity and sensitivity. Dabrowski identified five interrelated areas of overexcitability. For those with this trait, high levels of activity are noted in all five areas:

- 1. Psychomotor.** Students exhibit excessive energy, enthusiasm, drive, and restlessness. They are likely to talk rapidly and compulsively. They may act impulsively, have nervous habits, and can become “workaholics.”
- 2. Intellectual.** Students have high levels of curiosity and ask many probing questions. They carefully analyze ideas and are motivated to learn all there is about a topic. They may become preoccupied with problems in specific areas of interest. Also, they examine issues related to morality and ethics and demonstrate high levels of moral thinking.
- 3. Imaginational.** These highly creative students are both excitable and sensitive. Capable of creating strong visual imagery, they may easily engage in metaphorical thinking such as

¹⁸ Rabiner, 2013.

¹⁹ Dabrowski, 1967.