DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

IN THE ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM

by

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Under the direction of Peter Smagorinsky

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses differentiated gifted instruction as it is implemented in the secondary English/Language Arts classroom by providing a detailed definition of differentiation based on the current educational literature, examining both the positive and negative aspects of said pedagogy, defining the character and nature of giftedness, and offering specific, concrete examples of differentiation in action, as well as providing a framework towards creating a differentiated gifted curriculum for a secondary English/ Language Arts classroom. While this thesis is primarily concerned with the gifted high school English classroom, the tenets of differentiation discussed within have a wide range of applicability for teachers of all subjects, all grade levels, and across the entire intellectual spectrum.

INDEX WORDS: differentiation, differentiated curriculum, constructivism, gifted, gifted education, English, English education, language arts, language education, high school, secondary education

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B.S.Ed., The University of Georgia, 2003

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2007

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DEDICATION

To my students, both former and present, at Colquitt County High School, Commerce Middle School, and Oconee County High School, who gave me actual students on whom I could practice a seemingly endless stream of abstract pedagogy and methodology, and who laughed with me when "perfect" lessons failed.

To my friends, colleagues, and professors from UGA-NETS, the PAGE Teacher Academy, graduate school, and the aforementioned public schools for showing me how this job should (and shouldn't) be done.

To my mother, Gail Edwards, a top-notch teacher and my inspiration for all things educational, and to my father, Richard Edwards, and my sister, Lisa Edwards, both "people person" extraordinaires, who taught me how to love people, even when they aren't so lovable.

And to my wife, Jessica Edwards, who encourages me when I am discouraged, listens unflinchingly to endless hours of "shop talk" after school, and gives me a companion at all of the school plays, honors nights, and sporting events she'd probably rather not attend but sits through anyway. Thanks!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NOTE ON THE TYPE-SET

With a nod toward the subject matter, the Arial font style is used for this thesis. One of the simplest methods of differentiation a teacher may employ is the selection of a font style and size conducive to easy readability for all students, particularly children with vision impairments. Arial is one such font.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

*Issues can be complex, and walking this earth are complicated people
driven by motives both simple and multi-layered. When we're being fair,
we know that each story has two, three, and four sides. (Romano, 1995)*

Mr. Romano's quote meets my eyes every morning, calling from the small red

and black bulletin board behind my computer, joined by a myriad of other muses:

pictures of students, a daily prayer for strength and wisdom, Psalm 41, and a plaque

declaring "You Can't Scare Me…I Teach." All encourage me in what is the difficult –

and, at times, maddening – occupation I truly love.

As teachers, we are charged with the seemingly impossible task of teaching the

same state-approved standards to all students regardless of their background,

intellectual ability, or general desire for success in the realms of academia. This task,

always the goal of true educators, found a heightened impetus the last several years

through the current presidential administration's "No Child Left Behind" Act (NCLB), the

purpose of which is to "[help] schools improve by focusing on accountability for results,

freedom for states and communities, proven education methods, and choices for

parents." (United States Department of Education, 2007) While it sounds fairly

innocuous, NCLB was the equivalent of an atomic blast to the old status-quo of

educational practice, one that muttered, "I taught it; they didn't get it. What else can I

do?"

While teachers across the nation grapple with the new reality of the educational landscape, the Romano quote reminds me each morning I am teaching in complicated times with students as complex and multi-layered as I am. As such, one method, program, lesson plan, activity, etc. cannot be used to teach all students the same material, much as a simple sack lunch doesn't work for all appetites. With a sack lunch you get a sandwich, a bag of plain potato chips, and a piece of fruit. There is no choice in the matter. There is no selection on the part of the consumer. What if I don't like peanut butter and jelly and would prefer a ham sandwich? What if I want cheese doodles instead of potato chips?

Education for many students has been that sack lunch. Certainly some folks are happy with the brown-bag education – it has adequately serviced a majority of the population for decades – but inevitably there are those students who need more, demand something different, to satiate their hunger. As educators we must have the ability and desire to envision our classrooms less like a sack lunch and more as a buffet, a veritable smorgasbord of ideas, activities, and approaches. This concept is called "differentiation."

The scope of this paper is tri-fold. The first section outlines differentiation as it is presented in the popular literature of the day, particular emphasis placed on the classroom environment and on the roles of teachers and students in said classroom. The second section consists of a short definition of "giftedness" and a short discussion of the issues facing modern gifted education. The third section offers a rationale for how gifted students are best served in a differentiated classroom setting and attempts to outline the creation of a differentiated curriculum for gifted students.

Disclaimer

While this paper centers on gifted students, it is not my intent to partition differentiation solely in the domain of gifted education. Many of the methods examined were developed to meet the needs of low-performing students and are applicable for students across the intellectual spectrum. Nor is this thesis intended to marginalize students not labeled as "gifted" by saying they are satisfied with a "sack lunch" education. Certainly many of these students are also seeking more than has been given in their educational experience, as attested by high drop-out rates in many high schools and the ingrained bitterness English teachers sense when we have the the following conversation with almost everyone we meet:

"So what do you do for a living?"

"I'm a high school English teacher."

"God, I hated English in high school!"

OR

"Oh, I'd better watch my grammar!"

Finally, this paper is not meant to offer up the notion that differentiation is the "silver bullet" for solving all the woes of the public education system. Rather, differentiation should be seen as the place where educators begin again the conversation of how to make school work for the largest majority of students.

CHAPTER TWO

Defining Differentiation

"The biggest mistake of past centuries in teaching has been to treat all children as if they were variants of the same individual, and thus to feel justified in teaching them the same subjects in the same way." Howard Gardner (in Tomlinson, 1999)

Differentiation, much like the subject matter based on it, is very much a nebulous term defined differently by individual authors to merit a particular slant on the topic. As such, nailing down a true definition of differentiation is difficult. Sheryn Northey says differentiation is "tailoring instruction to meet the various needs of students." (2005) Rick Wormeli states "[differentiated] instruction is doing what's fair for students. It's a collection of best practices strategically employed to maximize students' learning at every turn." (2006) Amy Benjamin calls it a "broad term that refers to a variety of classroom practices that accommodates differences in students' learning styles, interests, prior knowledge, socialization needs, and comfort zones…[It] involves a balance between the content and competencies expected on the mandated assessments and various pedagogical options to maximize durable learning." (2002) Joseph Renzulli described the Five Dimensions of Differentiation (in Clarke, 2004; in Whibley, 1998) as:

- ❖ Content: What is taught?
- ❖ Process: How is it taught?
- ❖ Product: What is produced by students to demonstrate their mastery?
- ❖ Classroom: How does the learning environment aid or hinder achievement?
- ❖ Teacher: What is the role of the instructor?

Perhaps the best definition is proffered by Carol Ann Tomlinson, who states that a differentiated classroom is one in which "teachers provide specific ways for each individual to learn as deeply as possible and as quickly as possible, without assuming one student's road map for learning is identical to anyone else's….Teachers in differentiated classes use time flexibly, call upon a range of instructional strategies, and become partners with their students to see that both what is learned and the learning environment are shaped by the learner. They do not force-fit learners into a standard mold." (1999) Differentiation is a way of thinking about education, not an instructional strategy. Tomlinson (2000) suggests differentiation is a philosophy set on a system of beliefs of the best ways to educate all children:

❖ Students who are the same age differ in dramatic ways, from cultural background to learning style.
❖ These differences make major impacts on how students learn, the speed at which they learn, and the resources they need to learn.
❖ Students learn best when they are pushed in a positive way just past the point they can achieve without assistance.
❖ Students learn best when they connect material to life outside the walls of the school and where learning occurs naturally.
❖ Students must feel they are cared for and respected by their teachers.
❖ A school's number one job is to "maximize the capacity of each student."

Differentiation, it seems, is much like a football team. You've got a coach whose job it is to get the players ready for Friday night's game. He doesn't assume every kid is a quarterback or a tailback. Some kids are more suited for the offensive line. Some kids make excellent blocking backs. He looks at their body styles, at their speed and strength, at their intelligence, and at the "intangibles" – heart, drive, toughness, a competitive spirit. He watches them in practice, observing who's picking up the offense quickly and who's still struggling. When they have the fundamentals down, players who excel may be ready to prep specifically for the upcoming opponents, learning their

strengths, weaknesses, and tendencies. They're ready to pull a lion's share of the work on Friday night. They're ready to be assessed when it matters most. Struggling players aren't. They may need more reps in a specific drill or one-on-one attention with their position coach. Maybe they don't get the big picture of the offensive scheme yet and need to spend more time watching film. It doesn't mean they will never be ready. For every freshman phenom there are ten other players who aren't ready to contribute significantly until they are upperclassmen. It doesn't mean they aren't good football players, and it doesn't mean the coach cannot or should not play them in the game. A coach needs to see how his players react when it matters the most, and a game situation allows the coach to see hidden strengths or deficiencies he may have missed in day-to-day evaluations. The game film then gives the coach some information to build on for next week. If all of the linemen grade out 80-percent on pass blocking and only 65-percent at the run, then he can focus more on run blocking at practice. If the running back is picking up the blitzing linebacker through the A-gap but misses when a linebacker comes off the edge, the running back will spend more time on that specific technique. It is a poor coach who runs all of his players through the same drills regardless of their performance on Friday night. A coach like that is not likely to keep his job very long.

Yet for too long teachers have done that very thing. They treat all students in the class as if they are they same learner. They give the same concept to all students using the same methodology, have all students practice the same skill using the same problems, and then assess that skill with a pencil and paper test. They write down the score – "Sixty-five on that math test. Allen will never get multiplying fractions" – and

move to the next concept, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy, and Allen really will never understand how to multiply fractions (still doesn't). Yet, unlike football coaches, who are held accountable by their won-loss record, teachers year after year fall into the same cycle of getting classes full of students, helping those they can, and hoping the rest will get whatever was missed somewhere else down the line. As said, "research indicates that both beginning and experienced teachers are reluctant or unable to differentiate their curriculum to cater to student diversity in their classrooms." (Noble, 2004) Educators cannot afford to maintain this mindset any longer. What we are doing is not working. We must find a better way, and differentiated instruction is a step in that direction.

In many ways, that we've kept this mindset for so long is not the fault of teachers. Education in many states has been reduced to a single focus: make "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) as defined by NCLB. This single-mindedness has reduced education from an art form in the hands of skilled artisans to a cold, calculated science dictated by instructional pacing guides and state standards. Teachers feel they must cover all the standards before a single high-stakes testing experience determines both their values as educators and their students' value as learners. Certainly the answer is not, as inferred from the above metaphor, to fire teachers with low test scores. The answer instead is in redefining how we teach what we teach for those to whom we teach it. It's changing the mindset of individual teachers, getting them to adapt established methodology and, in many ways, undergo a true pedagogical paradigm shift. It's in changing the way school systems hire, train, and evaluate teachers and administrators, because while a majority of systems claim this evolution of educational philosophy,

many merely pay lip service to personalized education without offering teachers the tools they need (primarily time, training, and the opportunity for collaboration) to accomplish such a lofty task. Finally, it's in changing state and federal departments of education. Lawmakers must realize the inherent danger of quantifying progress with a single assessment, a practice that flies in the face of true qualitative differentiation.

So what is differentiation? Differentiated instruction is a mixture of the science and art of teaching. The science is the "how-to" – a nuts and bolts approach to teaching, a list of things to consider with regards to the student and the learning environment. The art of differentiation is a horse of a different color, as it revolves just as much around the teacher's learning and teaching style as it does that of the student. (Northey, 2005) While researchers' definitions and applications vary in initial supposition, they converge to create the following as the eight tenets of differentiation:

- ❖ Place focus on essential content/standards.
- ❖ Create a learning environment that stimulates without distracting.
- ❖ Value student differences.
- ❖ Use consistent and multifaceted assessments.
- ❖ Value student-teacher and student-student collaborations.
- ❖ Vary instruction/assessment based on student achievement.
- ❖ Demonstrate respect for the student as a learner through quality work.
- ❖ Relinquish some control of learning to students.

The following pages will examine each of these tenets in some depth. They will then be revisited in Chapter Three of this text.

Place focus on essential content/standards

In a differentiated classroom, learning is focused on depth of knowledge, not necessarily width, and on learning a few basic, specific skills or core concepts, not the pantheon of academia available in an area of study. Wormeli calls these the "essential

and enduring knowledge and skills of the lesson, the prime foundations for differentiated lesson design." (2006) Teachers (and state or local curriculum directors) should decide the most important concepts and skills for a student to learn at this point of development. Teachers should communicate these essentials to students with a nod to the overall conceptual plan as to why these skills are important. There is nothing more disheartening to students than for educators to use as a rationale for teaching a concept the old mantras of "Because it'll be on the test" (or The Test if CRCT, EOCT, GHSGT) or "Because you'll use it in college." Students should see how current content benefits them now and will in future endeavors, so that, according to Tomlinson, "[students] leave the class with a firm grasp of those principles and skills, but they won't leave with a sense that they have conquered all there is to know." (1999) As a colleague once pointed out to me, "Allen, they *will* have other English classes before they die."

This same clarity of expectation trickles down to unit planning and day-to-day activities. The key to placing focus on essential content is with students having a clear understanding of what is expected of them throughout the unit of study (and the year as a whole), in turn maintaining the students' interest by the self-encouragement of seeing where they currently are, where they were, and where they are going. (Tomlinson, 1999; Wormeli, 2006) It is not simply placing standards and essential questions around the room without discussing and "rediscussing" them, a common practice in many "learning-focused" classrooms. Wormeli states, "We have to be clear in our objectives before we can differentiate instruction and properly assess our students' attainment of those objectives. Obtuse objectives make for deadly differentiation." (2006)

Create a learning environment that stimulates without distracting

The physical environment of the classroom should be clean, well-lit, and orderly. The classroom should be filled with student work demonstrating the concepts or standard currently being engaged by the students. Products of high quality from past units should also be visibly present in the room like the trophies of successful academic attainment they are. (Gregory and Chapman, 2002)

Posting student work creates a welcoming feel to the classroom, a necessity according to Tomlinson. (2001) A flexible seating chart (Tomlinson, 2001) and opportunities for social interaction in that seating chart (Gregory and Chapman, 2002) directly contribute to higher levels of intellectual growth, as long as those interactions are not distracting to students. Playing music, particularly music selected by students, creates higher levels of concentration among groups of students. Laughter, primarily by prompting the brain to release endorphins, creates a positive learning environment, as do activities such as cheering and applauding classmates' achievements. (Gregory and Chapman, 2002)

A differentiated classroom, particularly an English classroom, should be a glut of vocabulary information, a word-filled environment. Through debate, intensive book talks, music, storytimes, independent reading, creative writing assignments, etc., the English classroom should foster the "unconscious knowledge of syntax" by providing a "general language environment [with a] rich variety of forms and expressions." (Kutz and Roskelly, 1991)

Finally, differentiated classrooms should be a safe place, both physically and emotionally, and a place where "mutual respect is nonnegotiable" in both teacher-

student and student-student interactions. (Tomlinson, 2001; Gregory and Chapman, 2002) While this may appear to be a pie-in-the-sky goal – an educational utopia of loving and valuing the human experience – (Delpit, 1988; hooks, 1989) it should be the goal of all educators.

Value student differences

Perhaps the most damaging and most disconcerting issue in teaching today stems directly from the opening lines of the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal…" Certainly we can all agree that human life has equal value across the board. However, people's interpretation of that line can be problematic if taken to idyllic levels in the classroom with the assumption that all are created equally and should be treated thusly. I'm guilty of this. When I graduated from the University of Georgia, nurturing a new-found humanism, I saw myself as the "nurturing teacher" who "wanted the same thing for everyone's children." (Delpit, 1988)

I now see how dangerous this thinking is.

All students are not the same, nor are they raised equally. Students of color and of lower socioeconomic status invariably do worse in school than do students (particularly female) from white, middle-class backgrounds. While one can chalk this up simply to a lack of parental support and a dearth of early-childhood experiences rich in education, Delpit (1988) asks if it may be the way classrooms are managed. Are teachers seeking what Paulo Freire calls "the practice of freedom," (in hooks, 1989) or are we just perpetuating the cycle of discriminatory education? Differentiation can be a beginning point with which to confront this issue.

Teachers should strive then to teach where students are and allow them to grow intellectually from there. Too many times a teacher becomes the school-yard bully, holding high above his head a shorter kid's baseball cap, saying, "Get it! Get it!" As educators we can become short-sighted and find ourselves thinking, "I have the knowledge; if they don't get it, that's their problem." The question becomes, What if they *can't* get it? As Delpit states, when it comes to people different from ourselves, we have a tendency to "listen" but not "hear" of the struggles and experiences of those around us. (1988) Teachers should know the cultures and values of the students in their classes, whether through actual experience or through a willingness to understand where students come from. If and when this happens, teachers have no need to reinvent the wheel with each lesson, striving to find viable "hooks" for students to latch onto. Through conceptual "scaffolding" (Wormeli, 2006; Carolan and Gunn, 2007; Broyles, 2005) of old, established student knowledge and experience, teachers can present new information or skills, allowing students to "face the new, therefore, not only with the knowledge drawn from the past but with developed tendencies to interpret it in a certain way." (Britton, 1970)

One of the most important (and challenging) aspects of the differentiated classroom is that an understanding of learning styles by both the teacher and students should permeate the classroom environment. There are multiple tests to determine learning style, and each individual test allows teachers a different insight into a particular student's psyche. One of the simplest and least time-consuming is classifying students as auditory, visual, or kinesthetic learners. By knowing individual learning styles, teachers can create a menu of assignments based on their students' particular

intellectual inclinations. Students as well should know their own learning style and self-select activities based on this knowledge to demonstrate their mastery of a concept. (Waterman, 2007)

In the same vein as learning styles, teachers should also give serious consideration to Howard Gardner's research into multiple intelligences, classified originally as linguistic, logical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, naturalistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. In recent years, Gardner has considered the possibility of "digital" and "spiritual" intelligences. (Gardner, 2003; Noble, 2004) Gardner states since individuals "differ in their intellectual profiles, it makes sense to take this into account in devising an educational system." (Gardner, 2003)

Variations outside of learning styles should also be taken into consideration. Benjamin (2006) suggests teachers begin their unit planning by creating lists of how students individually differ, and be consistently in tune with the social and emotional conditions of the classroom, as these conditions directly impact student achievement. Wormeli (2006), Tomlinson (1999), and Johnson (2001) all suggest tiering assessments by difficulty to allow students a range of activities with which to demonstrate mastery. Other factors to consider are gender, race/ethnicity, values, socioeconomic status, family support, prior experience, fears, study skills/ethics, future goals, and self-concept. (Chapman and King, 2003; Davalos, 1999; Delpit, 1988; hooks, 1989; Jarrett, 1991; Smith and Wilhelm, 2002; Tomlinson, 1999)

Use consistent and multifaceted assessments

A teacher seeking to create a differentiated classroom focuses more on formative assessments and less on the traditional, end-of-unit, "one-shot" summative assessment.

Teachers should begin units of study by pretesting students' existing knowledge and

adapting units of study thusly. (Wormeli, 2006) Formative assessments should take the

form of day-to-day "check ups" (Wormeli, 2006) or benchmark testing. (Tomlinson,

1999) Again, these formative assessments should guide instruction, as well as provide

opportunities for remediation and enrichment. As Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam (1998)

point out, "strengthening the practice of formative assessment produces significant and

often substantial learning gains." Both Wormeli (2006) and Black and Wiliam (1998)

note the invaluable nature of using formative assessments as a time for commentary

between teacher and student as to where the student is on the pathway to achieving a

particular learning goal. Formative assessments should then be used as check-points

along the road to success rather than as another opportunity to place a grade in the

gradebook. Formative assessments are opportunities to encourage students to keep

moving forward, not as feedback to teach "low-achieving pupils that they lack 'ability,'

causing them to come to believe they are not able to learn." (Black and Wiliam, 1998)

Finally, summative assessments should provide students with multiple

opportunities to demonstrate mastery. While the time-honored multiple choice test has

its place in a teacher's toolbox of assessments (especially in the accountability-minded

environment in which we now teach), it cannot be the only method of assessment used.

Instead, teachers should choose and create from a broad base of "forced choice" and

constructed response questions and activities, each allowing the teacher a different

insight into student achievement. For students who perform poorly the first time around

in an assessment, Wormeli recommends remediating and retesting students using

similar assessments until they get it right, the focus being not so much on the grade

given at the end of the unit of study but on the journey toward the mastery the student

has finished. (2006) Some students may take a little longer than others to complete their

journey. The point is in the getting there.

Value student-student and student-teacher collaborations

In a differentiated classroom, students and teachers learn to negotiate using the

language of learning. Tomlinson states that teachers are to be the "chief architects" of

experience by establishing content essentials and the instructional methodology, and by

ensuring the classroom runs smoothly. (1999) Students should be given room to

develop rules, self-govern based on those rules, and self-assess their progress toward

established learning goals. Wormeli (2006) and Waterman (2007) both recommend

giving students the opportunity to assess themselves on a regular basis, collaborating

with the teacher on final assessments. Success or failure then is a negotiated concept

with the teacher having the final say in the matter.

The differentiated classroom also values student-student collaboration. Group

and partner collaborations allow students to react to different sets of opinions and

viewpoints than their own, as well as gain multiple perspectives on the same issue or

assignment. True collaboration nurtures free thought and promotes discussion by

"respectfully granting other points of view" validity. (Smit, 1994) Still, what many

teachers think of as collaboration is actually "the use and misuse of the rhetoric of

collaboration" (Gergits and Schamer, 1994) turned into "group work" that creates an

"authoritarian leveling toward the norm through peer pressure," (Smit, 1994) as students

often refuse to recognize "that difference is essential if a group wishes to generate truly

original ideas rather than to rely on made-to-order compromises that satisfy none."

(Gergits and Schamer, 1994) Many students don't know how to be truly collaborative, possibly as a result of the American emphasis on individuality. Smit also cautions teachers that remaining "at the edge of action" (read: sitting at desk while students work in groups) during collaborative experiences may result in students' marginalization through incidents of physical and intellectual domination, racism, and sexism. (1994)

Vary instruction/assessment based on student achievement

In the differentiated classroom, instruction and assessment cannot be guided exclusively by the laminated lesson plans written ten years prior (or even last year). Instead, teachers in many ways "reinvent" lessons daily, taking into account the student variables mentioned in the earlier section and based on student achievement in the days and weeks before. (Wormeli, 2006) Curriculum guides are invaluable in planning standards-based instruction, but they cannot be the end all, be all source of when it is time to move to a new unit of study. Flexibility in planning allows for student differences by creating time for both enrichment and remediation based on assessments. (Tomlinson, 1999)

In addition, teachers should feel open to experimenting with various types of assessment and to do so based on student learning styles, as well as to have the freedom to decide a summative assessment should come earlier, later, or not at all if students have demonstrated competency throughout the unit of study. (Wormeli, 2006) Benjamin lauds the move to variability in assessment and recommends teachers work together to create differentiated assessments. She then throws the bulk of the responsibility for creating an environment of acceptance for multi-type assessment on the backs of school administrators, as administrators hold the key to making this shift

palatable to over-worked teachers: "Because teachers may give up on differentiated instruction if the logistics and paperwork overwhelm them, principals need to value and promote collegiality. Differentiation thrives in a collegial community…." (2006)

Demonstrate respect for the students as a learner through quality work

As mentioned in the previous sections, teachers should create assignments that allow for student differences (learning styles, intellectual, and environmental). As well, teachers must create an environment where every student is expected to learn, where "I can't" is not an acceptable response. Giving students the opportunity to create their own units of study, complete with project proposals, student-teacher conferences, and self-negotiated goals/deadlines, is an excellent example of differentiation that respects the individual student, as are projects based on over-arching concepts and themes (Waterman, 2007) that get students to the same place while traveling down different roads and at different speeds. "In the end, it's not standardization that makes the classroom work. It is a deep respect for the identity of the individual." (Tomlinson, 1999) Providing students with hands-on, "real-life"- applicable assignments also raises student achievement (Carolan and Gunn, 2007) by allowing students to "[make] connections with the real world of experience [and] explicitly helps…bring the world of text [or writing, debate, etc.] into real experience." (Kutz and Roskelly, 1991) This involves students' different interests in the unit of study while providing the structure, support, and accountability found in adult workplace assignments.

Relinquish some control of learning to students

Differentiation is rooted in the pedagogy of constructivism, and central to this concept is the idea that teachers are to be "guides on the side rather than sages on the stage" (Flynn et al., 2004) or an "experienced traveler who's been in the wilderness and returned to lead the new generation out of it." (Kutz and Roskelly, 1991) While many teachers are uncomfortable relinquishing some of the control of the classroom over to students, much research points to the link between student involvement in their education and an increase in achievement/performance. (Marzano et al., 2001) Simply put, when students have some control over their education, they learn more. Shifting control of learning can be accomplished in multiple ways, from the student-directed learning project found in the previous section to student seminars/discussions and students creating the test questions they will be asked later. (Waterman, 2007; Wormeli, 2006) Susan Jarrett says that empowering students to take control of their own learning allows the "possibilities for using argument to reconstruct knowledge available to both teacher and student," (1991) as students learn to see the teacher not as the omniscient purveyor of knowledge but a facilitator of their education, creating a more symbiotic relationship than in the "current-traditionalist" classroom – "classroom[s] where active teachers meet passive students, where right answers are sorted out from wrong ones, and where knowledge is seen as static and quantifiable, rather than fluid and dynamic" (Kutz and Roskelly, 1991) – which in many ways is the antithesis of constructivism and differentiation.

Some caution should be noted with this step. True differentiation is not the teacher relinquishing *all* power and responsibility of learning to the students, as Michelle

Payne (1994) lamented her experiences teaching a class that was entirely student-centered: "What I saw was excitement that gradually gave way under the pressure of time, the struggles with negotiating and accommodating so many personalities and ideas, and what I sensed was an increasing fear that they wouldn't really learn much…[Asking] students to question my authority was overwhelming at best, debilitating at worst." Instead, differentiation calls for teachers to shift the classroom atmosphere back and forth from student-centered to teacher-centered to create a "decentered" power structure with a more "comfortable, manageable" feel (Payne, 1994).

<u>CHAPTER THREE</u>

Defining Giftedness

He never pays attention, he always knows the answer, and he can never tell you how he knows. We can't keep thrashing him. He is a bad example to the other pupils. There's no educating a smart boy. – Terry Pratchett

The generally accepted statistic as to the number of gifted students in the United States is roughly five-percent of the general population or around three million students, a number that should (and could) be higher given appropriate methods of identification and retention, especially among minority and low socioeconomic status students. (Hardy, 2003) The primary problem is that identification of the gifted for the better part of America's educational history was accomplished almost solely through aptitude tests with teacher observation and classroom performance used as secondary indicators. While these measures are still used in many states to assess giftedness, the general criteria accepted almost universally as to what qualifies a student as "gifted" are as follows:

- ❖ Uniqueness/Originality
- ❖ Creativity
- ❖ The ability to create something new, novel, and/or useful
  (Tardif and Sternberg, 1988)

First Descriptor: Uniqueness/Originality

This first descriptor is potentially problematic, as terms like "unique" and "original" are relative from person to person, depending largely on teacher/parent observations and based on societal norms. Because of the difficult nature of this indicator it is rarely

used alone. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1994) According to this descriptor, gifted students are "willing to make waves" (Daniels, 1997) and stand apart from the crowd, either in dress, in action, or by challenging authority figures. As well, gifted students are at times loners, constantly preferring or needing time alone to nurture and explore creative ideas. (Gardner, 1993)

Second Descriptor: Creativity

The primary indicator of giftedness outside aptitude tests is creativity, usually measured in its own series of tests and through documented observations by teachers, counselors, and parents. According to this indicator, gifted students tend to have some combination and varying levels of the following characteristics:

Self-Awareness: Gifted students understand themselves to be creative and have the ability to recognize others' creativity.

Risk-takers: They generally will risk having their ideas rejected.

High Energy: They generally have the energy and drive to create.

Curiosity: Gifted students often ask, "How does this work? Can I make it work better? Why can't it work this other way?"

Humor: Gifted students often find humor in what appears to be sedate material and in situations where humor is completely inappropriate.

Drawn toward Complexity: They are often drawn toward projects that move across multiple disciplines and require various types of thinking at one time.

Artistic: They are more likely to do a project "for art's sake" rather than for economic or social reward, as gifted students often have a different set of values to work from than do others.

Open-mindedness: They are more likely to accept multiple possibilities and ambiguity during the creative process, thereby leading them to newer approaches to the same idea. Gifted students accept the possibility of a gray area in situations where their peers see only black or white.

Perceptiveness: They can see past initial exploration to the finer points and possibilities of the world.

Imagination: Gifted students tend to day-dream more often and longer than do normal individuals. (all taken from Tardif and Sternberg, 1988, unless otherwise noted)

Third Indicator: The ability to create something new, novel, and/or useful

As mentioned above, gifted students are driven to create and are willing to spend large amounts of time working on a project they are deeply dedicated to. Because of their humor and wit, gifted students see problems and conceptualize them in different ways than do normal students, often leading to solutions that seem off-the-wall or even farcical. Many inventions have been the result of someone "fooling around" with an idea. (Davis and Rimm, 1989) Many of the other creative indicators from above also lend themselves well to this section.

The State of Georgia's Definition of "Giftedness"

The Georgia Department of Education dictates giftedness as follows: "Gifted Student: a student who demonstrates a high degree of intellectual and/or creative ability(ies), exhibits an exceptionally high degree of motivation, and/or excels in specific academic fields, and who needs special instruction and/or special ancillary services to achieve at levels commensurate with his or her abilities." –State Board of

Education Rule 160-4-2-.38 (Georgia Department of Education, 1998). Georgia allows students to be classified as gifted in one of two ways:

1) The Psychometric Approach: A student must have a composite score in the 96th percentile on a mental ability test to be classified as gifted in high school, as well as satisfying one of the following criteria: "90th percentile Total Reading, 90th percentile Total Math, 90th percentile total achievement test battery, or superior product/performance assessment." (Georgia Department of Education, 1998)

2) The Multiple-Criteria Approach: A student may qualify by meeting the standard in three of the four "ability categories": mental ability, achievement, creativity, and motivation.

Issues facing modern gifted education

Gifted education has long been the whipping boy of local and state school systems, consistently taking a back seat to more pressing demands on individual schools, namely raising test scores and graduation rates, especially among minority and special education students. As long as gifted students are meeting and exceeding state standards on tests, aren't they being served with their education? Research says no. Gifted students generally begin the school year knowing over half of the standards and content to be taught in a course. (Hardy, 2003) As such, the same one-size-fits-all approach to curriculum that causes special education students to consistently fail because they lack the necessary prerequisite skills for success in a course causes gifted students to succeed too easily, as they have "too many" of the skills coming in. In both cases, students with special needs lose their motivation to learn. (Tomlinson, 1999)

Yet in the face of this quality research there remains a discrepancy in how gifted students are served in relation to other student subgroups, a practice supported in many ways by federal and state governments. Consider the following figures from 2003:

- ❖ Economically disadvantaged students received $11.7 billion in Title 1 funds.
- ❖ Special Education students received $9.7 billion through the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA).
- ❖ Gifted students received only $11.7 million in federal grants, $7 million of which went to research, not local school systems.
 (Hardy, 2003)

Certainly the figures are skewed by population totals, as there are more economically disadvantaged and special education students in the United States than there are gifted students. However, the primary reason for this disproportionate gap in allotted resources comes as a result of little legislation on behalf of gifted students. Only thirty states have statutes on educating gifted students. Georgia is one such state (note the state's definition in the previous section). The state's definition is both hopeful and problematic in that it recognizes students may be gifted in some areas but not in others. This distinction is logical when taking into account Gardner's MI theory mentioned in the last chapter. As well, the inclusive nature of the law allows more students to be classified as "gifted" and so receive services where they are available. However, this definition is problematic in that many local schools and systems do not delineate for giftedness between subjects when applying gifted curriculum, serving gifted students in one or two particular academic areas but possibly not in the realm of their assessed giftedness. For example, a student may be classified as gifted in mathematics but receive services for his or her giftedness in English, in effect not serving that student at all.

Hence the major problem with most state-mandated gifted programs: Though research indicates the need for a dynamic gifted curriculum, nearly all leave the interpretation and execution of the legislation in the hands of school districts that struggle or refuse to provide suitable gifted services for students, claiming that they serve gifted students through means other than a differentiated curriculum (which is possible for some students classified as gifted, but not necessarily all), that economic factors don't allow for adequate instruction of gifted students, or that the instructional expertise of implementing a truly differentiated curriculum for the gifted is not in place. (Hardy, 2003; Davalos and Griffin, 1999)

Contrary to the fears and excuses of many local systems, creating a differentiated curriculum for all gifted students is easier and much less expensive than many realize, fundamentally requiring only a shift in the philosophy of those who instruct gifted students and time for those teachers to create a truly differentiated curriculum for the gifted. In fact, research demonstrates differentiation can work in the regular education classroom with little economic impact if the following five criteria are met: (Davalos and Griffin, 1999)

- ❖ Classroom teachers must understand and be "highly motivated" to implement said curriculum.
- ❖ Classroom teachers must be willing to give some control of learning over to the students.
- ❖ Classroom teachers must understand the needs and characteristics of gifted students and work to develop an appropriate curriculum as such.
- ❖ Classroom teachers must receive training in differentiation techniques and be allowed ample time for planning.
- ❖ Classroom teachers must develop a "shared language of learning" among all involved in the classroom.

<u>CHAPTER FOUR</u>

Differentiated Instruction for Gifted Students

My mind rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram, or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere. I can dispense then with artificial stimulants. But I abhor the dull routine of existence. I crave for mental exaltation. – Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

When preparing any differentiated curriculum, it helps to consider Renzulli's Five

Dimensions of Differentiation, mentioned earlier as:

- ❖ Content: What is taught?
- ❖ Process: How is content planned and presented?
- ❖ Product: What is produced by students to demonstrate their mastery?
- ❖ Classroom: How does the learning environment aid or hinder achievement?
- ❖ Teacher: What is the role of the instructor?
  (in Clarke, 2004; in Whibley, 1998; in Dinnocenti, 1998)

It is through Renzulli's framework that I will begin laying out a differentiated curriculum

for gifted students.

Content

All lesson planning begins by examining the curriculum standards assigned for a

particular course for obvious reasons, the first being that a curriculum such as the

Georgia Performance Standards is spiraled and scaffolded to move students through a

range of concepts over the four-year period of their high school career. Therefore, if a

student misses a specific skill one year it is increasingly difficult for him or her to

understand the next level of the skill to be learned during the following year, leaving

subsequent teachers the responsibility of "catching up" said student, cutting into that

teacher's instructional time. The second reason is more pragmatic: These are the standards students are responsible for mastering for high-stakes testing.

However, as mentioned earlier, gifted students come into classrooms with a large amount of knowledge already, perhaps up to fifty percent of the content to be examined. As such, teachers would be wise to focus their instructional time on skills and information not yet mastered and in allowing gifted students the opportunity to understand concepts on a deeper level while practicing their skills on a wider range of application than perhaps possible with regular or lower level students. Whibley suggests "depth of content can be attained by studying or researching concepts in natural and 'authentic' situations" (1998) by relating content to broad-based thematic questions: "What is the American Dream?" "How are we the descendants of the Ancient Greeks and Romans?" A broad-based thematic approach activates gifted students' natural curiosity and allows for the engagement of almost all types of intelligence (i.e. spatial: examining the relationships between seemingly unlike cultures). As well, a thematic approach to content fosters a student's self-knowledge and understanding of those around him or her. (Waterman, 2007) It gives the gifted student the chance to examine and understand the problems and issues of the human condition, leading to the always constructive dialogue of how to solve the problems inherent in society.

A strategy developed by Renzulli (in Tomlinson, 2001) aimed specifically at gifted students is "curriculum compacting." In this model, students' previous knowledge is assessed through pre-testing or through a conversation between the student and teacher. Students then "opt out" of whole-class activities dealing with that particular concept and focus on more challenging material than would be possible with all

students. For sections of the unit where mastery was not demonstrated, the student is pulled back into the whole-class setting, or the teacher may devise a plan for the student to demonstrate mastery of those objectives outside of the whole class. This second option can be accomplished through an individual study project or an "investigation" with parameters co-designed by the student and teacher.

Another, perhaps simpler, method of differentiating for gifted students is through using higher-level texts than those used with the whole group. (Forsten, et al., 2003; Tomlinson, 2001) The gifted text should be similar thematically and should require application of the same skills as used with regular students, allowing gifted students to learn the same basic concept without the mind-numbing drudgery of plodding through a lower-level text. Research now points to the value of moving away from the "whole-class novel" with all students, as it "may actually limit or restrict the variety, depth, and quantity of students' reading…[Teachers] can expand students' reading by significantly increasing the number and variety of texts in English classrooms and by offering a greater number of creative opportunities to read in school" (Fisher and Ivey, 2007) through individual or group readings, especially in the concept of the literature circle (Tomlinson, 2001) and Sustained Silent Reading.

Perhaps the best place to create differentiated instruction for gifted students is in the advanced-placement (AP) class. (VanTassel-Baska, 2001) The coursework in these classes is already approved as being on college-level. The content is focused on specific core knowledge used by professionals and on learning tools necessary for success in finding/creating information on their own. AP classes are taught by teachers

trained to instruct at a higher level, providing in many ways the perfect opportunity of acceleration for gifted students.

Process

Perhaps the most effective method of differentiating curriculum for gifted students is the application of a matrix combining both MI theory and the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy. The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (RBT), a hierarchical ordering of cognitive processes and thinking skills, rates thinking from simplest at the bottom of the scale to critical and creative at the top, as "Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, and Create." The purpose of the taxonomy is to create deeper thinking questions and strategies for use in instruction, assignment, and assessment. Applying MI theory (discussed in Chapter Two) to classroom activities allows students to approach concepts and skills from the viewpoint that best fits them. It gives teachers "an integrated model" of how "the typologies of MI theory and RBT…[help teachers] in different ways cater to the individual learning capabilities of the students in their classes and thereby [facilitate] student success…The MI/RBT grid was indeed a high level tool to facilitate not only effective programming but also facilitate a change in the way [teachers] taught." (Noble, 2004) The RBT is an excellent tool for creating tiered assignments of varied difficulty for use in a heterogeneously grouped classroom. (Tomlinson, 2001; Wormeli, 2006; Johnson, 2001)

Applying the model to lesson planning requires time and critical thinking on the part of the classroom teacher and curriculum coordinator. At the beginning of the year, teachers use a simple test (multiple tests are available online at little to no cost to the educator or school) to determine the particular learning styles of students. The teacher

then should spend time discussing with students the meaning of the separate dimensions of MI theory, with particular attention to what this test says and does not say about students' individual intelligence(s). For example, a student who scores higher in the musical dimension of the model is not necessarily more musical than other classmates. In addition, students who score lower in linguistic intelligence are not doomed to perform poorly in activities and classes highly steeped in language. Instead, teachers should point to these as specific tendencies in the student's brain and encourage students to "play to their strengths" in activities.

In creating daily lesson plans, teachers of the gifted should focus unit activities and assessments on the top of Bloom's taxonomy, thereby forcing gifted students to apply deeper thinking skills to the concepts and standards being learned. When tasks are cognitively challenging and match their strengths as learners, students experience a "state of flow," allowing for deeper, more critical thinking and more creative responses. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1994) Teachers should also be encouraged not to throw out the baby with the bathwater, as it were. Many unit plans and daily activities can be "tweaked" to create the environmental aura of differentiation. Sandra Page (2000) notes that when differentiated instruction was first implemented in her school, teachers began their planning with a highly successful unit the social studies department had been using for years. To differentiate this unit for all students, teachers explicitly explained the content standards to the students and had the students create their own project proposals and rubrics detailing the quality and complexity required in individual products needed to demonstrate mastery of the standards. While Bloom's taxonomy is an invaluable reference while planning, it is important to note Vicki Whibley's warning that the

taxonomy should be used as "a checking tool. It should not be used as a structure in which a box for each level of the taxonomy has to be filled with an activity, fractionating learning. A purposeful study…enables higher order thinking skills to naturally take place." (1998), as well as Renzulli's concern that gifted programs can become a "collection of exercises" rather than a permeating conceptual mindset if activities take place in isolation of a unit of study. (in Clarke, 2004)

More and more research is available discussing the value of teaching thinking skills and metacognition to students (Johnson, 2001). While gifted students already "know the answer," teachers should engage gifted students in the metacognitive process of discussing how they develop an answer. For example, gifted students might be able to compare and contrast differing concepts with little guidance, even when there seems to be little commonality between the ideas/objects discussed. However, teachers should spend time breaking the process down into steps ("First look at the whole, then find similarities between the two…,"), thereby strengthening their ability to do the process individually next time. Teachers of the gifted should also engage their students in as much high-level and complex thinking as possible by focusing students on processes that take multiple steps before reaching a solution, creating a "brain-map" of explicit steps students recall when working with future complex ideas, referred to as an "embedded approach" to problem-solving, (Johnson, 2001) and is a concept at the heart of AP coursework, (VanTassel-Baska, 2001), already established in this paper as a positive environment for gifted students.

Another pedagogical strategy/activity to consider is the Socratic Method, a teacher- or student-led dialogue based in dialectic philosophy that searches for deeper

understanding/conflict-resolution through a discussion of questions. The questions generally center on concrete objections or logical fallacies present in a precept; the questioners seek to "streamline" an argument through the defense of a particular point of view accomplished by responding to the original question in like form as if the question itself is the answer, forcing the original questioner to formulate either his or her own response to the question or a second question. Other strategies to consider include simulations of real-world scenarios, using art to assist in thematic interpretation, independent study (either guided or unguided), literature circles/interest groups, cooperative controversy resolution, and model-making. (Dinnocenti, 1998; Gregory and Chapman, 2000; Murata, 1997; Northey, 2005; Tomlinson, 2001; Wormeli, 2006)

One particular warning issued by Dennis McInerney is that engaging activities should not come at the loss of academic rigor. "It is important that highly motivating techniques should not be at the expense of the substance of learning." (in Noble, 2004) It is the responsibility of the teacher to properly assimilate content and standards in the original inception of the these daily activities and to guide students back to content should their learning move away from the focus.

Product

Products in a differentiated classroom should be geared toward gifted students' individual learning style and intelligence. As such, a range of assessment types should be offered students in a "menu" format (Wormeli, 2006) from which students may select. As the concept of individualized assessment was discuss in Chapter Two, this section will instead examine how teachers might create opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery of particular content.

Looking at the unit discussed by Page in the preceding section, teachers gave students the freedom to plan, create, and assess the product themselves using rubrics they designed. The result was that "students who used the rubrics wrote longer, higher quality articles, included more quotations, and created more lively layouts…[The] quality of the students' work was noticeably higher than in preceding years." (Page, 2000) As well, Page notes the project especially stretched gifted students who struggled to meet the expectations they set for themselves.

Throughout the weeks leading up to final assessment time, the teacher should keep in perpetual dialogue with students to alleviate problems that arise, clarify any confusion, and limit surprises come assessment time. There is no worse feeling (for student or a caring teacher) than knowing an issue could have been resolved if it were known in time. One of the most troubling experiences I've had in education was during student teaching. Students created short plays, modernized versions of *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail*. The students worked for a week, both in class and out, and when it came time to present several groups – students who had worked diligently to craft creative, humorous, and thought-provoking skits on civil disobedience – received lower grades than I wanted to give them and certainly lower grades than they wanted to receive, all because of confusion over the meaning of two criteria listed on the rubric developed at the beginning of the week. I didn't know they were confused; they didn't know they were confused, and the result was anger and disappointment on their part, chagrin on mine, at perceived "failure" in a product with which they were happy.

In evaluating the products produced by gifted students to assess for mastery, it is important that students engage in the metacognitive processes of reflecting on their own

work and discussing with the teacher how and why their product does or does not meet the standard. (Whibley, 1998; Wormeli, 2006) Whibley recommends using a journal throughout projects to assist in this conversation, creating an internalization of successes and failures and generating mastery at a later date if and when the same standard/content is engaged again. Tomlinson (2001) encourages teachers to allow "mentors," professionals who are experts in particular fields, to evaluate students' projects if they are based on real-world scenarios. An example would be bringing in a published author to discuss with students the strengths and weaknesses of their writing or having a senior citizen discuss the accuracy of a research project on life during the Great Depression. This type of "grading by professionals" is already in place and proven successful by AP exams, which are assessed holistically by both high school teachers and university professors for evidence of quality. (VanTassel-Baska, 2001)

Tomlinson (2001) does an excellent job of summarizing this entire process:

- ❖ Identify the essentials: What students must know (facts), understand (concepts), and be able to do (skills). Connect the essentials with real people/application outside of the classroom.
- ❖ Create "packaging options" for the product to be created, including required sections, talent/MI/learning styles driven, and an "exploratory nature."
- ❖ Negotiate expectations of quality with students (rubric). Require a synthesis or "blending" of various information types/texts.
- ❖ Decide on scaffolding/resources needed for students to accomplish this task, including ideas for getting started, time frames/goals, and planning/project proposal. Use check-in dates to "zap procrastination." Ensure students are using their time wisely.
- ❖ Create an assignment sheet with the previous information spelled out for students.
- ❖ Be prepared for variability/teach with flexibility. Help students learn the production skills necessary for a quality product, not just the content.
- ❖ "Coach for success" by talking with students of the importance of critical and creative thinking. Help students find their creative outlet through creating products that are different and unique. Teachers should let students see their teachers are passionate about the content.

❖ Create opportunities for students to share work with each other and with those outside the classroom.
❖ Provide time for metacognitive reflection before, during, and after the project.

Classroom

Differentiating a classroom for gifted students is much the same as differentiating one for all students as described in Chapter Two. In addition to those characteristics, a gifted teacher should provide a variety of high-level texts for students to work with and enjoy. The gifted teacher should consider the classroom design to be fluid and be inclined to move tables, desks, computers, and bookshelves in creating an environment that better serves students. And, he or she should consider both the internal classroom and the external as possible hot-spots for intellectual growth, as well as other parts of the school as necessary for learning particular skills or concepts; gifted teachers should not be afraid, for example, to take their students to the gym if content or process demands it. Likewise, field trips, either official whole-class trips or chosen by the student during personal time, foster a "combination of interests" (Dinnocenti, 1998) in the unit of study and are therefore strongly encouraged.

Teacher

As with the gifted differentiated classroom, the gifted differentiated teacher should be much the same as described throughout the entirety of this text. The differentiated teacher of gifted students should take a constructivist approach to learning and use "artistic modification" (Dinnocenti, 1998) to share personal knowledge/experience of topics with students, relating the curriculum to students' particular learning styles/interests. A differentiated gifted teacher should be an "expert"

in the content and enthusiastic about what is taught, as well as show genuine care in creating a supportive environment for the students in his or her classroom, as gifted students highly value relational learning. (VanTassel-Baska, 2001)

Of particular interest to the teacher of the gifted are the negative manifestations of the characteristics of gifted students mentioned in Chapter Three. Teachers should recognize that the "difficult" nature of these behavioral qualities occasionally causes the gifted to demonstrate sardonic, anti-social, and anti-authoritarian behavior. Gifted students consistently question answers, concepts, and "proven" knowledge given them, not out of disrespect for teachers but of a nascent desire to understand. Gifted students often demonstrate high levels of energy, often confused with the behavioral patterns of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). In addition, their compulsive nature to learn and connect may lead to a "chatty" nature, and gifted teachers must learn to accept a certain amount of "white noise" in the classroom. Teachers of gifted students must learn to take such behaviors in stride and to develop a thick skin for the (at times) unintended disrespect shown, much as one must learn to accept the actions and words of emotional-behavior disordered students as a function of their exceptionality. This, however, is not a call for *carte blanche* acceptance of such behaviors. As with other special needs students, the gifted must learn how to self-correct to participate in society.

Tips for Schools Considering Differentiation

While the entire process of differentiating instruction for the gifted can and should be seen as a major moment in the life of a school, it should not be undertaken with a sense of fear or dread, but rather with the excitement generated with the ushering in of any inevitable change for the better, a positive paradigm shift, so to speak. The

following tips for creating a differentiated gifted curriculum may help ease schools and

local systems through the process: (guided and taken largely from Page, 2000)

- ❖ Begin with small groups of teachers and by offering extensive staff development on how differentiation should (and shouldn't) look. Continue to provide staff development and training throughout the initial implementation.
- ❖ Begin with the current curriculum and practices already in place. There's no need to reinvent the wheel.
- ❖ Devote resources and support to the design, and follow through with the support, even if/when positive results aren't immediately seen.
- ❖ Provide time for and support collaboration between teachers, administrators, and students. As well, ensure parents understand the intent of a differentiated classroom, as it is often a foreign experience for them just as it is for many students and teachers.
- ❖ Set aside time to share successes and failures with all teachers involved with differentiation.
- ❖ Assess teachers and students consistently on the impact of differentiation in the classroom.
- ❖ Provide consistent and total administrative support to classroom activities.
- ❖ Assess the success of the program with gifted students in mind to ensure gifted students are being appropriately challenged and developed intellectually.
- ❖ Spend time reflecting on changes for the next class period, the next unit, and the next year so that the "practice of perfection" pays off for future groups of students.

CHAPTER FIVE

Closing Thoughts

A great many educational policies and methodologies have been written, lauded, and put into action before slowly fading away. Educators have watched the study of rhetoric replaced by composition and process writing, and watched as the current-traditionalist approach and New Criticism gave way to a bevy of learner-centered pedagogies (constructivism, reader-response, etc.) Yet one philosophy of teaching has stood the test of time: differentiation. One finds it at work in the great teachers of past ages, as Socrates, Plato, and Jesus all taught using questioning strategies and allegory/metaphor (parables/fables). It's crowned the brow of history's great centers of learning; note the guided study approach used at Oxford, Cambridge, and Harvard for hundreds of years. It is a part of American public education's history, as researchers describe the one-room schoolhouses of the 18th and 19th centuries as bastions of differentiation. (Wormeli, 2006) And it's been among the "best practices" employed by teachers for decades, aiding countless students from across the intellectual spectrum to find success in the classroom. (Marzano, et al., 2001)

Differentiation has been and will be the guiding philosophy among the best teachers of this generation and the next. There is no pedagogy one may work from, no single philosophy that accounts for so many specific student hindrances and provides the proven success that differentiation does. It allows learning to be a positive and perpetual experience rather than one of grueling bitterness. In the end, isn't it the goal of our education system to teach all students now to be learners the rest of their lives?

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How do you support. Learner? Differentiation in the Language Classroom. P. icture a German II class in which the students are studying the weather in order to plan for their week-end activities. Â The Differentiated Language Classroom. In her book, Tomlinson describes a differentiated French I classroom with students often working with written tasks at differing levels of complexity and with different amounts of. 40 The Language Educator n August 2011. Â In her book, Differentiated Instruction: A Guide for Foreign Language Teachers, Deborah Blaz says that in differentiated instruction, teachers must identify the differences both in students and in possible teach-ing strategies, and make adjustments according to what will most benefit students and facilitate learning. This allows opportunities for differentiated instruction and intervention in the school. 9. Teacher-Specific Regulations Regarding Implementation Teachers are held accountable for student performance. Teachers and paraprofessionals must be highly qualified. They must continue in their professional development which might include attending workshops, reading articles and books, and taking online classes. Â Differentiating instruction for exceptional nbsp; differentiating instruction for gifted students in the english/language arts classroom by richard allen edwards, jr. Under the direction of Peter SmagorinskyDocuments. Differentiating instruction with menus language arts pdf 1Education. Differentiated Instruction options in the Treasures program address students . Sample Quick Check from a Grade 4 Comprehension Lesson. Classroom Practices for English Learner Instruction - Pearson. Earlier that week Jamie had asked her students, mostly intermediate English student told them about a cool book she had seen about mummies in the library. Differentiated Instruction Strategies in English Language Teaching for. Â 2 I Teacher's Survival Guide: Differentiating Instruction in the Elementary Classroom 2. Every student will become a lifelong learner, the long-term goal for all. Â 5 What Do Specific Examples of Differentiated Instruction Look Like in the English Classroom? 61. 6 How Do Teachers Put It All Together?