

# DIFFERENTIATING CURRICULUM FOR GIFTED STUDENTS: A SUMMARY OF STRATEGIES

There is no general profile of Gifted students. However, there are certain characteristics that Gifted students exhibit frequently, if not universally. Gifted students often:

- Learn at a faster pace
- Demonstrate more mature interests than their peers
- Possess high levels of curiosity
- Can assimilate new material at a faster pace
- Have less need for review by repetition
- Need deeper content

Because Gifted students may often grasp new material more quickly and/or with less effort than their peers, if they are not challenged in the regular classroom, they may not learn how to manage time or how to respond to challenges. They are at risk of becoming underachievers.

## DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES

- QUESTIONING TECHNIQUE:** Adjust questions to the abilities of the students; present questions to Gifted students that emphasize Higher Order Thinking Skills within Bloom's Taxonomy or similar models.
- TIERED ASSIGNMENTS:** Giving students different tasks within the same lesson. All students can be challenged at their level while working on the same assignment.
- FLEXIBLE SKILLS GROUPING:** Grouping students according to their readiness for a given lesson at a given time. This method reflects the students' strengths in different content areas. In this way, students are not stereotyped or "typecast."
- LEARNING CENTERS:** Specific areas in the classroom with games, media, and activities to support students' strengths in different areas. Learning centers can be designed to address different learning styles and multiple intelligences. Interest Centers are not based on skills; instead they are organized around students' interests. Teachers may already be using centers without realizing their value as a strategy for providing differentiated curriculum to Gifted students.
- COMPACTING:** Adjusting the curriculum so students do not have to spend time learning what they already know. Curriculum can be compressed into smaller units of time. This will allow Gifted students the opportunity for postholing: exploring the curriculum in greater depth or branching out into different areas.
- INDEPENDENT PROJECTS:** Students can pursue topics in their interest areas during "earned time." They can also pursue topics in depth over an extended period of time.
- INTEREST GROUPS:** Students can pursue shared interests and develop common talents.
- CLUSTERS:** Scheduling groups of Gifted students together with a single teacher who is enthusiastic about working with Gifted students. This can facilitate many aspects of differentiation.

## KEY CONCEPTS

- All these strategies can used alone or in combination.
- **PRE-TEST, PRE-TEST, PRE-TEST!**
- **Don't give Gifted students more work; give them more advanced work— in the areas in which they are Gifted.**