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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.

Praise for

DIFFERENTIATION for GIFTED LEARNERS

“Heacox and Cash hit a home run again. With a strikingly fresh and updated perspective, the authors take *Differentiation for Gifted Learners: Going Beyond the Basics* to a new level of possibilities with their revised and updated edition. If you liked the original book, you will love this new edition. It promises to be a must-have classic that all educators should read. This book is not to be missed!”

—**Patti Drapeau**, adjunct faculty at University of Southern Maine, founder of Patti Drapeau Educational Consulting Services, and author



“The highest praise for the authors! This new revision spans the gamut of how all aspects of teaching can be differentiated using formative assessments to create authentic learning and real-world connections. Heacox and Cash skillfully consider the roles of teaching and leadership, defensible gifted programming, and how to ensure equity when differentiating instruction. Through surveys, questionnaires, reflection guides, and observation and feedback forms, the authors show teachers how to design lessons that engage and challenge all learners. They then provide an abundance of practical templates, lesson plans, and ideas that create a complete system for taking differentiation beyond the basics.”

—**Dina Brulles, Ph.D.**, director of gifted education, Paradise Valley Unified School District, and School District Representative, National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Board of Directors



“I have been referencing and recommending the first edition of this book, from its first release, to student teachers and practicing teachers. This new edition is even more helpful in establishing a solid foundation in the topics that are so crucial for the field today, especially in areas of equity and in comparing and contrasting historical practices and improvements. At a time when gifted education courses struggle for enrollment numbers and gifted programs around the country are being debated for closure, discussions of defensible practices are critical for meeting the needs of the real students. Teachers also need to see how gifted education fits within the larger scope of education. This book has practical ideas, a clear writing style, and many avenues for conversation. It should be used in teacher preparation courses and professional development opportunities to build expertise and reflection. I look forward to the conversations that I will have with both new and experienced educators as a result of this new edition.”

—**Nikki Myers**, founding director of Academy for Advanced and Creative Learning and member of the Colorado Academy of Educators for the Gifted, Talented, and Creative



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Dedication

To the educators whose classrooms and schools we have visited, as well as those whose classrooms we have yet to visit: it is our intent that this book strengthens and extends your instructional practices for gifted learners. We also hope that it provides much-needed encouragement and support in your advocacy for the unique needs of gifted learners.

Acknowledgments

To our Free Spirit friends and pets, and especially to Judy Galbraith and Meg Bratsch: your encouragement, support, and celebration of our work has been extraordinary. You make us better authors, educators, and advocates!

From Diane

Richard, I get inspiration from your brilliant, creative, and inquisitive mind, and you make me laugh when I need to! Yours is always the first email I open, since I know it is going to make my day. Working together is complete joy! This second edition moves our work forward; I'm delighted.

To my Cape Codder, John: whenever I sit on the beach and look at the waves, you are with me.

Kylie, you are my sun and moon and stars. Patrick and my grandbaby, Mickey (Mimi), you bring me true joy and happiness.

To my brother, Greg: your passion for your work, your family, and life itself serve as a daily inspiration for me.

Sarah Noonan, we have been together since we both started out in giftedland in neighboring school districts. I depend on and cherish your strength, wisdom, and good counsel.

From Richard

The process of writing this book with my good friend and colleague, Dr. Diane Heacox, was a true pleasure. Diane, your continual striving for quality and intellectual integrity are an inspiration for me. Also, I love that you laugh at my jokes. I know we will have many more years of laughing and learning together!

To Craig Feltmann and the "Steno Pool" (Roxxy and Vellma): thank you for keeping me from going off the deep end and for always supporting me. I love you!

To my siblings (Susan, JC, and Robert), their families, and my friends: thank you for believing in me and always encouraging me to persevere.

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FOREWORD by Marcia Gentry, Ph.D.

Diane Heacox and Richard Cash are professionals who continue to make important contributions to gifted child education by helping teachers better differentiate their curriculum and instruction. Not surprisingly, they deliver with this revised and updated edition of *Differentiation for Gifted Learners: Going Beyond the Basics*. Each author is a bright spot in the field, bringing energy, integrity, and knowledge as they connect across disciplines and with educators within and outside of gifted education. In this book, as scholar-practitioners, they bring scholarship and methods to teachers in a friendly, accessible, and usable format. This book and the workshops the authors contribute will continue to help thousands of teachers reach and teach their students. Differentiation is often recommended, but many teachers struggle to implement it. *Differentiation for Gifted Learners* will help guide teachers to confidently practice differentiation strategies and, in doing so, benefit students across the country and around the world.

There are many reasons for you to read this book. Namely, it is well written, it is filled with practical strategies that work with students, and it offers sage advice from two well-respected experts in gifted child education. However, as my differentiation-expert graduate Jason McIntosh, Ph.D., pointed out after he read it, there are also several circumstances under which you should NOT read this book. In fact, in developing a list of these circumstances, he used one of the strategies from the book called *reverse brainstorming*. He is convinced that you should NOT read this book if:

1. You do not need to learn new ways to differentiate using required standards.
2. You have already been exposed to the Cash-Heacox Teaching and Learning Continuum.
3. All your colleagues are on board with differentiation for gifted students and you do not need any tips for engaging them.
4. The term *Candy Wrapper Lesson Design* makes perfect sense to you.

5. You do not desire to see dozens of example activities that enrich, enhance, or extend content for students.
6. You have all stars and no stairs when it comes to differentiation (see page 175).
7. You are a master at asking higher-level critical thinking questions of your students. You understand perfectly how to ensure an honors class is rigorous enough.
8. You know how the Autonomous Learner Model, the Holistic Development Framework, Multi-Tiered System of Supports, and Response to Intervention can be combined to create the Progressive Program Model.
9. You routinely empower all your students to develop confidence through accountability, collaboration, and initiative.

For everyone else, I highly recommend reading the newly revised and updated *Differentiation for Gifted Learners*. You will discover numerous practical strategies, discussions about recent brain research, and new ways of tackling old problems. The authors expanded this edition by including information on how to reach and teach twice-exceptional (2e) learners, guidance on how to engage students from underserved populations, and strategies for working with students who underachieve. Additionally and importantly, they address ethics and empathy. I encourage you to challenge yourself as an educator just as much as you strive to challenge your students to think and work at advanced levels. Diane Heacox and Richard Cash have put forth a teacher-friendly resource that takes differentiation to the next level. I believe this book will become one of those on your desk with worn and creased pages because you will use it so frequently. I predict that you will recommend it to your colleagues, but you will not let them borrow it!

—**Marcia Gentry, Ph.D.**, professor of education and executive director of the Gifted Education Resource Institute at Purdue University

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"> Likes structure Well-liked by peers Considered a leader among peers Self-confident Good judgment in decision-making High expectations for self and others

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