

IAG Position Statement on Services for High Ability

The Indiana Association for the Gifted was founded in 1978 to advocate for strong services for the gifted children in Indiana. Service options in schools include how gifted students are grouped and the curricular and instructional modifications they receive to address their learning needs. While grouping options vary based upon school and district size, **programs with strong achievement gains group gifted students together daily for curriculum and instruction that addresses the characteristics typical of this group of learners.**¹

Gifted students are a unique population of learners as far from the mean on ability measures as are students in special education. Consequently, appropriate curriculum for gifted students does not consist only of extensions of material appropriate for the typical student. Gifted students need qualitatively different curriculum and instruction to maximize their potential. While a variety of curriculum models and approaches have been developed for gifted learners, commonalities can be found across these models, including the following features:²

- . Content is taught through higher level, “macro” concepts that foster interdisciplinary connections.
- . Content is accelerated in standards covered.
- . Materials used are substantive and written at levels of complexity appropriate for students with high ability.
- . Opportunities for in-depth exploration of concepts are included that offer students the ability to pursue individual areas of choice.
- . Assessments call for the development of authentic products, demonstration of advanced understanding, and the skills of synthesis, analysis, and evaluation.
- . Curriculum is vertically articulated, documenting conceptual and skill development throughout elementary, middle, and high school.

According to experts and best practice, effective instruction for gifted students is also different from grade level instruction in multiple ways. Both curriculum and instruction are based upon these students’ characteristics of learning “whole to part,” with a natural propensity to think conceptually and draw connections between disciplines, and a preference for open discussion and less repetition or routine.³ The pace of instruction needs to be accelerated with a significant amount of

¹ Rogers, K. (2007). Lessons learned about educating the gifted and talented: A synthesis of the research on educational practice. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 51(4), 382-396.

² Van Tassel-Baska, J. (2016). *Content-Based Curriculum for High Ability Learners, 3rd Edition* Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

³ Cross, T. L., Speirs Neumeister, K. L., Cassady, J. C. (2007). Psychological types of academically gifted adolescents. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 51, 285-294.

instructional time focused on the development of critical and creative thinking, communication and collaboration skills, and problem-solving. Instruction is designed to provide learning experiences that are constructivist, allowing students to discover and generate their own analysis of ideas and concepts.

Indicators of *inappropriate* instruction for gifted students include:

- . Asking students to complete “more of the same” type of work rather than different, more complex work.
- . Asking students to complete the same type or complexity of work, designed for typical learners just at a higher grade level. (e.g. one grade advanced math or “guided” reading.)
- . Asking students to spend too much time working on their own or with technology rather than with direct interaction with teachers.
- . Asking students to serve as “junior teachers” for less-able peers.
- . Asking students to complete “enrichment” activities that may be fun or novel but are disconnected from their core curriculum or do not result in a depth of understanding.

Additional differentiation within the group of identified students is necessary to meet individual needs. Management of the differentiation within the group as well as within the curriculum and the instruction is challenging; therefore, grouping students so that the gifted students constitute as much of the class as possible will facilitate the delivery of the differentiated curriculum and instruction. Self-contained classes (all identified students) within a school, a magnet program within a district, or multi-age groupings of gifted students foster the delivery of effective gifted services. As gifted education is a qualitatively different approach to teaching, earning a license in gifted education is recommended for teachers to enhance the effectiveness of teachers working with these students.