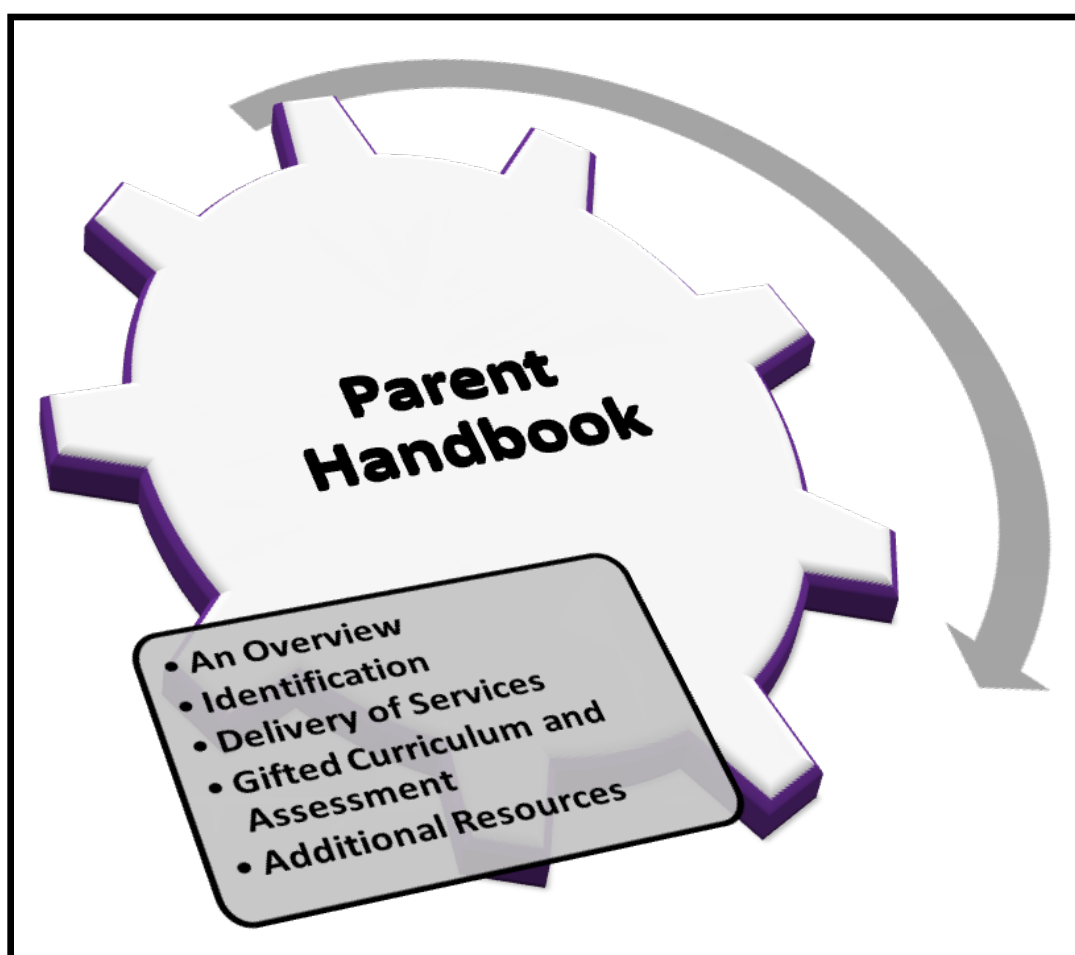




Roanoke County Public Schools Gifted Department



**Elementary School
Discover Program**

**Middle School
Endeavor Program**

Introduction

In the Commonwealth of Virginia, each school division must create a comprehensive plan for the education of gifted students. That plan must provide a specific explanation of the school division's implementation of the regulations which govern the educational services for gifted students. This "Local Plan for Gifted Education," as the document is titled, must further be reviewed, and approved by the School Board. Local Plans are then examined and revised, as needed, on a five-year cycle. A full and complete copy of the current Local Plan is posted on the Roanoke County's gifted website: **<http://www.rcps.us/gifted>**

The document you now hold in your hands is intended to summarize and distill for you the essential elements of that plan so that you, the parent of the gifted child, can better understand precisely what services your child will receive, or is eligible to receive, through the Roanoke County Public Schools Gifted Department.

In RCPS, academically gifted students are identified in "General Intellectual Aptitude." These students possess unique talents and/or superior abilities that differ profoundly from those of their peers. Their mental development is accelerated to the extent that they need and can benefit from educational experiences which are differentiated from those provided by the general education program. For gifted students to maximize their potentialities and to foster their pursuit of lifelong learning, differentiated programming is provided to nurture their academic and socio-emotional growth and development.

The pages which follow provide information about: the general characteristics of gifted students; the delivery of services to identified gifted students at elementary, middle and high school levels; the curriculum and assessment strategies applied to gifted students; and additional resources that may be useful to you, the parent of a gifted learner

Mission Statement Roanoke County Public Schools

It is the mission of Roanoke County Public Schools that identified gifted and talented students are afforded the opportunity to participate in experiences which meet their wide range of needs and challenge their abilities.

So, what exactly *is* a “gifted” student? Chances are you likely have your own ideas based largely on some myths you’ve internalized over the years. These notions are formed due to everything from televisions sitcoms to chats with your neighbor. Here, then, are some of the most...

Common Myths about Gifted Students

- Gifted students are a homogeneous group; they are all high achievers.
- Gifted students do not need help. If they are really gifted, they can manage on their own.
- Gifted students have fewer problems than others because their intelligence and abilities somehow exempt them from the hassles of daily life.
- The future of a gifted student is assured: a world of opportunities lies before the student.
- Gifted students are self-directed; they know where they are heading.
- The social and emotional development of the gifted student is at the same level as his or her intellectual development.
- Gifted students are nerds and often social isolates.
- The primary value of the gifted student lies in his or her brain power.
- The gifted student's family always prizes his or her abilities.
- Gifted students need to serve as examples to others, and they should always assume extra responsibility.
- Gifted students make everyone else smarter.
- Gifted students can accomplish anything they put their minds to. All they must do is apply themselves.
- Gifted students are naturally creative and do not need encouragement.
- Gifted children are easy to raise and are a welcome addition to any classroom.

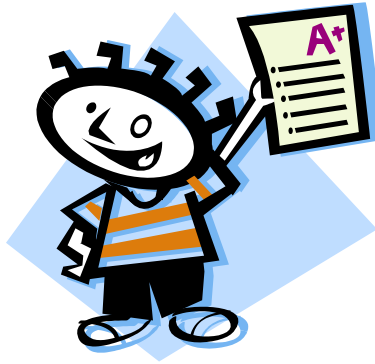
These ideas of what constitute a truly “gifted” individual are often made even more difficult to understand when a parent tries to delineate precisely what really makes his/her child so unique from other classroom peers—peers who may, in fact, be rather “bright” but not truly “gifted.”



“The Bright Child vs. The Gifted Learner”

(Adapted from the work of Janice Szabos)

Bright Child	Gifted Learner
Knows the answer	Asks the questions
Is interested	Is highly curious
Is attentive	Is mentally and physically involved
Has good ideas	Has wild, silly ideas
Works hard	Plays around, yet tests well
Answers the questions	Discusses in detail, elaborates
Top group	Beyond the group
Listens with interest	Shows strong feelings and opinions
Learns with ease	Already knows
6-8 repetitions for mastery	1-2 repetitions for mastery
Understands ideas	Constructs abstractions
Enjoys peers	Prefers adults
Grasps the meaning	Draws inferences
Completes assignments	Initiates projects
Is receptive	Is intense
Copies accurately	Creates a new design
Enjoys school	Enjoys learning
Absorbs information	Manipulates information
Technician	Inventor
Enjoys straightforward, sequential presentation	Thrives on complexity
Is alert	Is keenly observant
Is pleased with own learning	Is highly self-critical



About Gifted Students

(Adapted from *College Planning for Gifted Students*, 2nd edition, by Sandra Berger)

- Gifted students are often perfectionists and idealists. They may equate achievement and grades with self-esteem and self-worth, which sometimes leads to fear of failure and interferes with achievement.
- Gifted students who do well in school may define success as getting an "A" and failure as any grade less than an "A." By early adolescence they may be unwilling to try anything where they are not certain of guaranteed success.
- Gifted students may experience heightened sensitivity to their own expectations and those of others, resulting in guilt over achievements or grades perceived to be low.
- Gifted students are asynchronous. Their chronological age, social, physical, emotional, and intellectual development may all be at different levels. For example, a 5-year-old may be able to read and comprehend a third-grade book but may not be able to write legibly.
- Some gifted children are "mappers" (sequential learners), while others are "leapers" (spatial learners). Leapers may not know how they got a "right answer." Mappers may get lost in the steps leading to the right answer.
- Gifted students may be so far ahead of their chronological age mates that they know more than half the curriculum before the school year begins! Their boredom can result in low achievement and grades.
- Gifted children are problem solvers. They benefit from working on open-ended, interdisciplinary problems (e.g., how to solve a shortage of community resources).
- Gifted students often refuse to work for grades alone.
- Gifted students often think abstractly and with such complexity that they may need help with concrete study and test-taking skills. They may not be able to select one answer in a multiple-choice question because they see how all the answers might be correct.

Often, the very characteristics described above can lead to some unique learning and social challenges for the student, parent, and teacher alike.

Interrelationships of Characteristics and Problems of Gifted Children

(adapted from *Growing Up Gifted* by Barbara Clark, 2007 and "Nurturing Social-Emotional Development of Gifted Children" by James Webb, 1994)

Characteristic	Problem
1. Verbal proficiency	1. Tends to dominate conversation; may be perceived as a "show-off"
2. Enjoys problem-solving; able to conceptualize, synthesize, and generalize	2. Resists routine practice; questions teaching procedures
3. Accelerated thought process	3. Frustrated at pace
4. Quantity of advanced information on many topics	4. Boredom with regular curriculum; impatient with group
5. Quick, accurate memory	5. Dislike for routine drills
6. Able to concentrate and persist	6. Perceived as stubborn; resists interruption
7. Strong sense of humor	7. Peers may misunderstand humor; may become "class clown" for attention
8. Creative/inventive; likes new ways of doing things	8. Ideas may seem out of step
9. Intense concentration; long attention span and persistence in areas of interest	9. Neglects duties or people during periods of focus; resists interruption; stubbornness
10. High expectations of self and others	10. Self-criticism; others don't meet high standards
11. Independent; preference for individualized work; self-reliant	11. May reject parent or peer input; non-conformity
12. High energy, alertness, eagerness; periods of intense voluntary effort preceding invention	12. Frustration with inactivity and absence of progress
13. Discrepancy between physical and intellectual development	13. Hesitation to participate in activities where he/she doesn't excel
14. Intrinsic motivation	14. Strong-willed; resists direction
15. Inquisitive; searches for significance	15. May ask embarrassing questions
16. Emphasizes truth, equity, and fair play	16. Worries about humanitarian concerns
17. Large vocabulary and broad base of information	17. May use words and knowledge to manipulate

These unique characteristics make it critical that the needs of gifted students be addressed. But to do that it's imperative, first, to find them. The next portion of this handbook will address precisely that process

Identification

Roanoke County Public Schools recognizes that gifted learners demonstrate, or have the potential to demonstrate, advanced abilities and learning needs that may differ significantly from those of their age peers. Giftedness occurs in students from every background and may be expressed in different ways, at different times, and within different areas of aptitude. Because students' abilities to demonstrate their intellectual traits differ by age, Roanoke County uses the following elements at specific grade levels. These specifics are detailed on the following page.

Because no single measure can fully capture a student's abilities or potential, RCPS uses multiple sources of evidence in the identification process. These may include nationally normed assessments, measures of academic performance, student work, observed learning characteristics, and information provided by educators, families, and students. Identification practices should be equitable, evidence-based, and designed to recognize students whose abilities may be masked by disability, language, limited opportunity, or other factors.

Gifted education is not a reward for high achievement. It is a response to students whose learning needs require greater depth, complexity, pace, independence, or abstraction than the general curriculum ordinarily provides. Gifted learners should encounter appropriate challenges throughout their educational experience rather than being expected to wait, repeat mastered content, or succeed primarily through additional work.

Delivery of Services

There are many ways to meet the unique needs of gifted students. In Roanoke County Public Schools, the primary way these needs are addressed on a day-to-day basis is through curriculum differentiation offered by the student's classroom teacher. Although the gifted resource teachers may help design and augment the regular classroom curriculum for gifted learners, it is the responsibility of the instructional leader in the classroom to ensure delivery.

Differentiation is the process of "ensuring that what a student learns, how he or she learns it, and how the student demonstrates what he or she has learned is a match for that student's readiness level, interests, and preferred mode of learning" (Tomlinson, as cited by Ellis et al, 2008). Teachers can differentiate the learning experiences they offer their students in three ways. They can modify the *content*; that is, they can alter what material and objectives they require the child to learn. Teachers can modify the *process*, the way in which the student experiences and grapples with the content. They can vary the *product*, which is the way that the student will show what he has learned about the content.

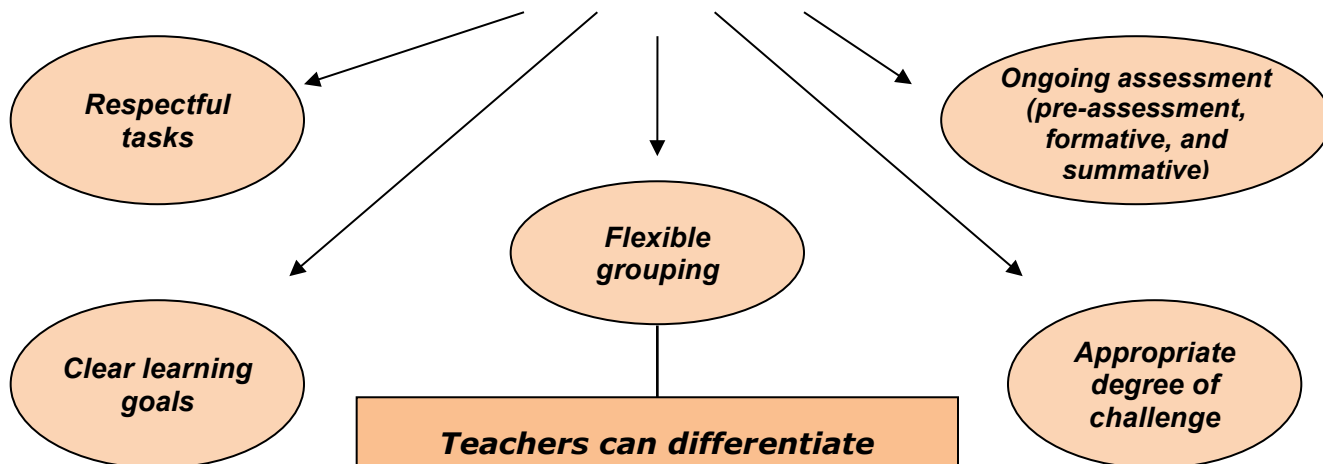
As teachers attempt to find the best match of the material with the needs of the gifted student, they may employ any number of instructional strategies and grouping options. The differentiation plan developed will be an organized, yet flexible way of proactively adjusting teaching and learning methods to accommodate the gifted child's learning needs and preferences to achieve his or her maximum growth as a learner. To this end, to discover what the student may already know, pre-assessment will be offered and, as the school year progresses, ongoing assessments are essential. The results of these provide feedback for both the teacher and the student so that the goal of improving student learning is ensured. Delivery of instruction in the past often followed a "one size fits all" approach. In contrast, differentiation is more individually student centered, with a focus on utilizing appropriate instructional and assessment tools that are fair, flexible, challenging, and engaging.

Many of the strategies that a teacher might employ in the classroom are listed in the graphic organizer and the tables that follow this page. However, it is worth pointing out also that one highly successful, straightforward way of differentiating instruction is through the use of flexible grouping within the school day. When students are grouped *flexibly*, they are grouped and regrouped according to specific goals, activities, and individual needs. Thus, a student that needs further challenge in, say, math may be placed in a higher-level group for that subject. But this same student, who struggles a bit more with his writing skills, might be placed with peers of similar abilities for language arts class. The ways in which flexible grouping is essential to effective differentiation are manifold, since different grouping options allow both the teacher and the student to maximize the efficiency of the learning within the classroom. To this end, there are times, for example, when a teacher may introduce a topic to the *whole class*. Then she may ask the students to gather in *cooperative learning groups* to explore the topic with a hands-on activity. If she notes that a group of students has a particular question they'd like to further investigate, she might group them according to these *interests*. A teacher might group students for any number of reasons: to work on academic skills; to facilitate peer tutoring; to divide up content into smaller, more manageable chunks; to address learning needs; to share resources.

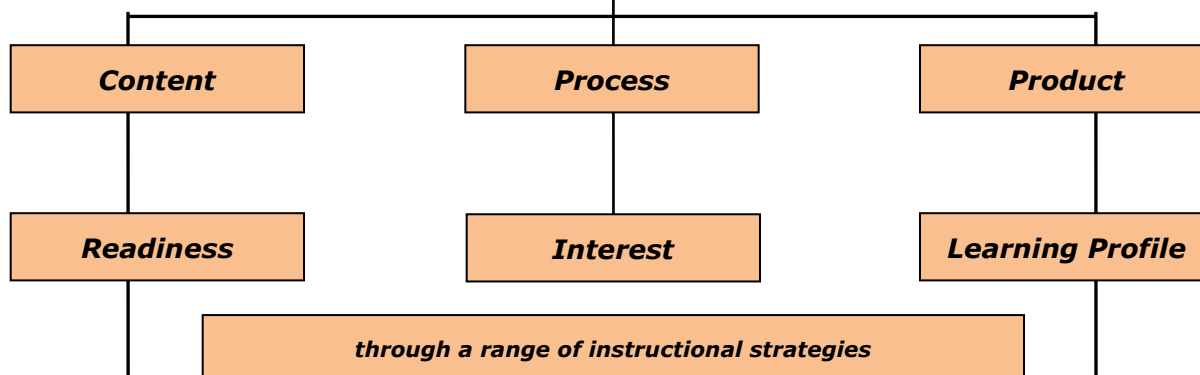
***Differentiated Instruction
is
a teacher's response to a learner's needs***



Guided by general principles of differentiation such as



Teachers can differentiate



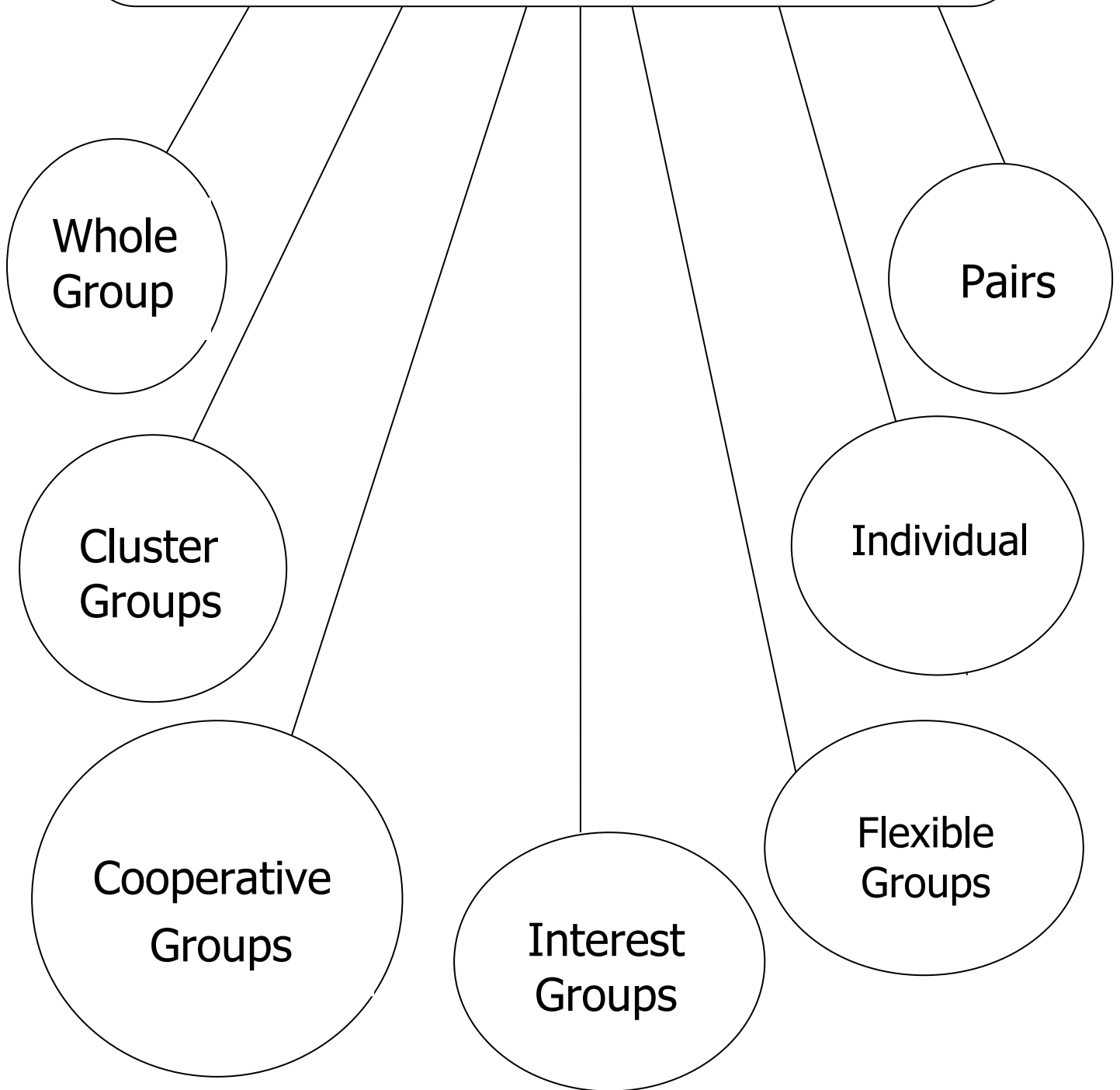
*Multiple intelligences
Jigsaw
Taped materials
Anchor activities
Varying organizers
Varied tests
Varied supplementary materials
Literature circles*

*Tiered lessons
Tiered centers
Tiered products
Learning contracts
Small group instruction
Group investigations
Orbitals
Independent study*

*4 Mat
Varied questioning strategies
Interests centers
Interest groups
Varied homework
Compacting
Varied journal prompts
Complex Instruction*

Tomlinson - 2006

There are as many *ways* to group students in the classroom as there are reasons to do so. Here are just a few of those flexible grouping options.



To be clear, differentiation is a set of proactive, prescriptive decisions that a teacher makes to address the needs of a particular student. We have said before that differentiation is not a “one size fits all” approach. The ways in which a teacher might differentiate for one student may differ greatly for another. Still, it should be clear what constitutes effective curriculum differentiation and what does not. The following chart delineates this difference.

Differentiation	
Is	is not
• Offering a variety of learning options • Providing challenging activities • Open-ended activities • Inquiry approach to learning • Self-directed • Being able to demonstrate what has been learned • Higher level thinking • Creative problem solving • Appropriate to the level of readiness in the learner • Active learning • Abstract thinking	• Giving all students the same assignment • Imposing higher grading standards for advanced students • Letting students who finish their regular work tutor other struggling students rather than providing more challenging work • Requiring students to do more work on material that has already been mastered • Having the gifted student assume the role of a teacher • Passive learning • Rote memorization

For the classroom teacher, the task of differentiating instruction for the gifted learner can be a daunting one. With diverse needs within a single classroom, there is a lot to manage—from instructional decisions and varying assessments to record-keeping and beyond. To this end, there are many strategies the teacher might employ to help meet the needs of the academically advanced student. Some of these are more appropriate and therefore more commonly used at lower grades, while others are used more frequently at higher grade levels. Of course, some are useful at any level.

The chart on the following page lists some of these in-class teaching strategies that a teacher might employ in the differentiation process. You’ll note that many of these appear at the bottom of the Differentiation Flow Chart and are explained in more detail here.

Possible Differentiation Strategies for Daily Classroom Instruction
Anchor Activities: tasks important to central learning that students automatically move to once assigned work has been completed
Compacting: the process by which students demonstrating mastery of topic or set of skills are allowed to “opt out” of unit material that would be redundant or that they could learn more efficiently on their own
Cooperative Learning: combines teamwork with individual accountability by assigning a common task and/or project to a group of students
Exit Card: a quick method of assessing student understanding using index cards and questioning strategies at the end of a lesson
Heterogeneous and Homogeneous Grouping: grouping strategies that facilitate learning by placing students with no regard to demonstrated ability or level or knowledge together (heterogeneous group) <i>OR</i> placing students together based on similar needs, abilities, or interests (homogeneous group) to complete a task
Interest-based Differentiation: differentiation by interest can refer to both the general interests of a student and specific interests he/she may have within a discipline or topic and can maximize a student’s motivation to learn
Jigsaw: a cooperative strategy in which students are divided into smaller groups to become “experts” in a topic. Later, they instruct a larger home group on what they’ve studied.
Learning Contract: an agreement between a student and teacher creating parameters for responsible, independent work on an assignment
Learning Centers and Learning Stations: designated areas in a classroom to which students move on a specified timetable to complete a particular task
Most Difficult First: allows a student to do the most difficult items of an assignment first as a means of demonstrating understanding or mastery (most effective with skill-based assignments). Students who correctly answer the most difficult items do not have to complete the rest of the assignment.
Open-Ended or Divergent Questioning: a question used to provide opportunities for more than one solution or answer
Pacing: allows each student in a mixed-ability classroom to work at a comfortable pace, ensures all students have purposeful work, and offers time for all students to be prepared for whole-class discussions
Problem-Based Learning: an instructional model enabling learners to solve meaningful problems using knowledge, skills, and understanding across the disciplines by practicing critical and creative thinking and searching for information and organizing ideas to solve real-world problems

Possible Differentiation Strategies for Daily Classroom Instruction
Varying Questions: varying the types of questions posed to learners based on readiness, interests, and learning styles
RAFT activities: an assignment in which students play a specific Role for a particular Audience sing a certain Format regarding a Topic
SCAMPER: a tool used to develop creative thinking skills as students alter an original idea by Substituting , Combining , Adapting , Modifying , Putting to other uses, Eliminating , or Reversing the initial suggestion
Simulations: a reproduction of a real-world system or experience in which some elements have been simplified
Think-Pair-Share: a cooperative discussion strategy in which students consider a question or prompt alone and then discuss their ideas with a classmate before settling on an answer or response to share with the rest of the class
Think-Tac-Toe Menu: a method for offering students various ways of exploring and expressing ideas and using key skills. Menus can be based on readiness, interest, and learning style.
Thinking Maps: a tool for students to organize ideas in a visual format
Tiering: a process of adjusting the degree of difficulty of a question, task, or product to match a student's current readiness level

Opportunities Within the Regular School Day

Opportunities	Elementary	Middle	High
Acceleration of content: pacing students through the curriculum at a rate commensurate with their advanced ability	X	X	X
Grade level acceleration: moving students to a higher grade level	X	X	X
Cluster grouping: students with similar needs, interests, and/or abilities are grouped together within a heterogeneous classroom	X		
Flexible grouping: purposeful reordering of students into working groups to ensure all students work with a wide variety of classmates and in a wide range of contexts during a relatively short span of classroom time (systematic grouping and regrouping of students)	X	X	X
Pull-out instruction: small group enrichment experiences offered outside the regular classroom	X	X	
Guidance services: addressing special needs of the gifted	X	X	X
Accelerated Math Program: a mathematics course that covers Math 6 and Math 7 in one year. (Students will be chosen in 5 th grade for this program.)		X	
Advanced classes: rigorous classes that prepare students for the Advanced Placement Program in high school		X	X
Advanced Placement (AP) Classes: courses offering students the opportunity to do college-level work while still in high school. (Students may gain college credit and/or advanced college placement by successfully passing a nationally given and scored Advanced Placement examination.)			X
Dual Enrollment: a course of study offered through VWCC resulting in both high school and college credit.			X
Specialty Centers: located at the Arnold R. Burton Technology Center and include Engineering, Mass Communication, Performing Arts, Visual Arts and Museum Studies, and a STEM Academy. (Any Roanoke County student meeting the grade level requirement may apply. Positions are awarded based on the strength of the student's application.)			X
Independent Study: provides senior students with the opportunity to pursue a program of his/her own design in the areas of mathematics, world languages, music, art, or science. (This option will only be considered if all other Roanoke County courses in that field of study have been exhausted.)			X
Governor's School: a rigorous half-day program designed for students in grades 9-12 who have a strong interest in science and technology. (Any Roanoke County student meeting the grade level requirement may apply. Positions are awarded based on the strength of the students' application.)			X

Opportunities outside the Regular School Day

Finally, there are opportunities that gifted students may avail themselves of *outside* the regular school day. Some of these are detailed in the table below.

Opportunities	Elementary	Middle	High
QUEST: enrichment activities offered for grades 3-5 throughout the school year. (A brochure outlining the year's sessions and costs is mailed in September.)	X		
Insight: A 0.5 credit elective course offered to 11 th and 12 th graders giving students opportunities to work with mentors in career areas of interest and to participate in monthly seminars. (Students receive applications in March for the next school year.)			X
Summer Residential Governor's School: provides rising juniors and seniors opportunities for intensive educational experiences in an area selected by the school. (There is an application process through guidance.)			X
Destination Imagination: a creative problem-solving experience open to all students in Roanoke County	X	X	X

With all these strategies, options, and opportunities, what is our plan for the day-to-day instruction of gifted learners?

This is a reasonable and prudent question to ask. As previously described, differentiation has been adopted by Roanoke County Public Schools as the primary means of meeting the needs of its highly diverse learners. To this end, at the start of every school year, teachers in grade K-8 who have gifted students in their room are expected to differentiate instruction. A document listing the strategies the teacher might use throughout the year to meet the needs of the gifted learner will be sent home in the fall.

As a parent, you can expect to see this document before the close of the first nine weeks. This serves as a helpful tool whenever you wish to discuss your child's progress in school.



Gifted Department

5937 Cove Road, N.W.

Roanoke, Virginia 24019

Phone: (540) 562-3700 Fax: (540) 562-3994

www.rcps.us

Dear Parent/Guardian of _____,

At Roanoke County Public Schools, our mission is to ensure every student is "Opportunity Ready." Because your child has been identified for gifted education services, the classroom teacher will consider your child's demonstrated readiness, interests, and learning needs when planning instruction.

The primary way gifted learners' advanced instructional needs are addressed each day is through classroom differentiation. Depending on the subject, unit, and student's prior mastery, teachers may adjust the learning environment, content, learning process, or expected product. Effective differentiation is not simply "more work." It is intended to provide appropriate challenges, greater depth and complexity, and opportunities for advanced thinking and application.

Gifted Resource Teachers support classroom teachers and provide gifted-service opportunities. A significant part of the RCPS elementary and middle school services is pull-out sessions with the Gifted Resource Teacher.

Refer to the back of this page for strategies that may be used throughout the year by classroom teachers. The specific strategies selected will vary according to your child's needs and the learning goals of each unit. Questions about your child's classroom differentiation may be directed to the classroom teacher. For general information about gifted services, contact your school's Gifted Resource Teacher.

Classroom Teacher: _____ School Year: _____

Gifted Resource Teachers 540-562-3900

Dr. Kim Filer - x10223

Schools: Glenvar, Herman L. Horn, Mount Pleasant, and W.E. Cundiff Elementary Schools

Kate Lear - x10224

Schools: Clearbrook, Fort Lewis, and Penn Forest Elementary Schools

Michelle Luckie - x10221

Schools: Bonsack, Masons Cove, and Oak Grove Elementary Schools

Dawn Saferight - x10222

Schools: Burlington, Cave Spring, Glen Cove, Mountain View Elementary Schools

Betsy Walsh - x10228

Schools: Back Creek Elementary School

Jennifer Bodine – x10226

Schools: Green Valley and Glenvar Elementary Schools

Example of Potential Classroom Differentiation

I. Learning Environment

- Flexible Grouping: Students are placed in dynamic, short-term groups with peers who have similar abilities or interests.
- Student Agency: Students have control over their learning paths with options like choice boards, learning contracts, or individual agendas.
- Small Group Instruction: Focused sessions with teachers to enhance critical thinking, creative problem-solving, and diverse perspectives.
- "Go-To" Enrichment: Immediate access to high-level independent activities as soon as core mastery is demonstrated.

II. Content & Materials

- Curriculum Compacting: Pre-assessment allows students to bypass repetitive practice, maximizing instructional time.
- Interest Studies & Deep-Dives: Opportunities for independent research into topics of personal interest.
- Complex Text Tasks & Questions: Engaging with advanced questioning frameworks and critical thinking tasks on grade-level texts.
- Layered Depth & Complexity: Exploring topics through advanced lenses such as ethics, hidden patterns, or unanswered questions.
- Multi-Perspective Studies: Examining topics from different viewpoints, roles, or real-world professions.

III. Process

- Higher-Order Questioning: Advanced questioning frameworks to encourage deep analysis and creative thinking.
- Problem & Project-Based Learning: Real-world projects that require teamwork, critical thinking, and innovative solutions.
- Structured Discussions & Debates: Student-led discussions fostering critical listening, multiple perspectives, and evidence-based arguments.
- Independent Inquiry & Research: Guiding students through complex questions to identify patterns and draw conclusions.

IV. Product & Assessment

- Multiple Product Choices: Students choose formats such as debates, digital designs, or podcasts to demonstrate knowledge.
- Challenging Tiered Assignments: Projects with varying challenge levels, encouraging deeper questions and higher-level thinking.
- Authentic Audiences & Real-World Outputs: Sharing projects with experts or designing solutions for real purposes.
- Rubrics for Advanced & Original Thought: Specialized grading criteria rewarding creative risk-taking and unique insights.

The mission of Roanoke County Public Schools is to ensure every student is "Opportunity Ready." We recognize the unique needs of our gifted learners. The primary way our gifted students' needs are addressed on a daily basis is through curriculum differentiation offered by classroom teachers. In addition to these differentiated activities, the Gifted Resource Teacher provides small group enrichment opportunities on a regular basis.

Our goal is to maximize the success of middle school gifted students by providing tasks with high-depth, high-complexity, rigorous cognitive challenges while advancing their abstract thinking skills, inspiring their curiosities, and supporting their need for autonomy. Possible classroom differentiation strategies are listed below.

Classroom Differentiation Possibilities

The Learning Environment: The physical and emotional layout. Gifted learners need deep autonomy, intellectual peer collaboration, and a safe space to fail and succeed.

- Flexible Peer Clustering
- Small Group Instruction
- Low-Risk Innovation Zones
- Self-Pacing Progress Walls

The Content: The information and skills learned. Gifted learners require abstract concepts, real-world complexity, and advanced thematic connections.

- Pre-assessment
- Concept-Based Themes
- Advanced Cross-Curricular Texts
- Real-World Multi-Layered Problems
- Curriculum Compacting
- Complex Tasks, Questions, & Resources
- Abstract Concepts
- Interest Studies
- Multi-Perspective Studies

The Process: The activities used to make sense of content. This keeps quick-processing minds highly engaged through critical and creative thinking.

- Socratic Inquiry Seminar
- Divergent SCAMPER Tasks
- Expert Mentorship Paths
- Sophisticated Problem Solving
- Higher-Order Questioning
- Structured Discussions & Debates
- Independent Inquiry & Research
- Tiered Assignments
- Inquiry-Driven & Problem-Based Learning

The Product/Assessment: The ways students demonstrate mastery. These choices require transformation of knowledge rather than mere summarization.

- Real-World Impact Products
 - Advanced Multi-Media Design
 - Co-Created Criteria Rubrics
 - Defense of Learning Panels
-

If you have any questions about how these possible strategies may be integrated into daily instruction, please do not hesitate to contact your child's classroom teacher or the school's Gifted Resource Teacher.



Tamatha Farrell

Gifted Resource Teacher

CSMS, GMS, HVMS, NMS, WBMS

Phone: 540-562-3900 ext. 1022

Email: tfarrell@rcps.us

Gifted Curriculum and Assessment

Elementary and Middle School

The Gifted Resource Teachers (GRTs) have developed curricular objectives for students in the academically gifted program. These objectives include four thinking strands for gifted students in grades K-5. The progress report frames precisely what thinking skills the GRTs seek to explore with the students they serve. Throughout the school year, the gifted resource teacher will address these thinking skills. Although the way a particular skill is taught may differ from GRT to GRT, the essential goals and objectives of that experience should be the same. (This is no different than any other classroom teacher. For example, one may decide to teach figurative language through poetry while another teacher might do so through a novel study.)

The K-5 curriculum focuses on the skills related to convergent, divergent, visual-perceptual, and evaluative thinking. The four thinking strands selected are listed and explained below. Each was chosen because they are deemed by experts to be the most essential part of a gifted child's education. Specifically, these four strands of the Gifted Department's curriculum include:

- *Convergent Thinking:* Students employ convergent thinking when they consider all available information and use that data to arrive at a single best answer using both analytical and deductive thinking skills. Occupations which employ this skill include detectives, accountants, bankers, and real estate agents.
- *Divergent Thinking:* When students are able to offer many unique creative responses to a single problem, using fluency, flexibility, and originality, they are using divergent thinking skills. Writers, professional performance artists, and those in sales might use divergent thinking on a daily basis.
- *Visual/Perceptual Thinking:* Students visually interpret information and process visual images to solve problems; this might involve representing, transforming, generating, and recalling symbolic and non-linguistic information. Air traffic controllers, city planners, and surgeons employ this type of thinking.
- *Evaluative Thinking:* Students use this thinking style to judge the appropriateness, efficacy, or value of something with respect to a specified standard. Judges and lawyers, teachers, program administrators, and doctors evaluate and make decisions with this type of thinking.

Keep in mind there is a great deal of overlap among the thinking skills listed here. A city manager, for example, might really use *all four* of these skills as he works with his staff to improve the town's traffic patterns, establish new residential districts, revise tax maps, and tackle other aspects of urban development.

Curricular Objectives for Elementary, Grades K-5

Collaboration	Citizenship	Communication	Creativity	Critical Thinking	Centeredness
---------------	-------------	---------------	------------	-------------------	--------------

Gains a basic understanding of own point of view as well as the points of view of others
Gains understanding of dynamics of a group and how to work within that dynamic
Increases personal awareness of the need of empathy and tolerance towards others
Interacts appropriately with group members
Communicates ideas effectively to others
Clarifies how to solve problems and achieve goals despite possible roadblocks
Communicates ideas effectively to others
Expresses opinions
Learns techniques to improve listening
Develops solutions and new ideas using elaboration, flexibility, fluency, and originality
Discusses the value of creative thinking to solve problems
Considers all available information and arrives at a single best answer
Works to develop analytical and deductive reasoning skills
Learns to recognize flaws in reasoning
Learns how to develop and apply criteria when making decisions
Interprets and processes visual images to solve problems
Mentally manipulates visual information and gains understanding of spatial relationships and patterns
Learns to build perseverance and mental stamina when attempting a challenging task
Begins to change mindset to see challenges as opportunity for personal growth

How is Student Progress on These Objectives Assessed?

The regular classroom teacher must differentiate the curriculum for gifted students and enter comments regarding the progress of gifted students on the regular report card. The gifted resource teacher completes a progress report and sends it home at the end of the school year. Refer to the example on the next page for an explanation of assessment levels.

These reports should help you get a better sense of how your gifted child is performing in school - both with the Gifted Resource Teacher during enrichment time and with the classroom teacher on a day-to-day basis.

Please note that these reports only apply to elementary school age children in grades K-5. Progress reports are not sent home for middle school students.

THINKING SKILL STRANDS			
Convergent Thinking			
Considers all available information and arrives at a single, best answer by using analytical and deductive thinking skills. Sees interrelationships between clues and defers judgment until all clues have been collected. Recognizes and analyzes flaws in reasoning.			
Level Explanation			
1. Beginning to apply convergent thinking skills	2 Developing – finds and organizes clues/facts, analyzes data, and narrows possibilities to arrive at a single best answer with assistance	3 Proficient – finds and organizes clues/facts, analyzes data, narrows possibilities to arrive at a single, best answer or choice with minimal assistance	4 Exceeds Expectations – finds and organizes clues/facts, analyzes data, and narrows possibilities to arrive at a single, best answer or choice independently
Divergent Thinking			
Generates many ideas and novel solutions. Demonstrates the following characteristics: Fluency – generates many ideas or responses; Flexibility – approaches the problem in diverse ways; Originality – produces many clever, unique, or unusual ideas; Elaboration – expands, develops, and embellishes ideas by adding details and making changes			
Level Explanation			
1 Beginning to apply divergent thinking skills	2 Developing – uses a limited repertoire of divergent thinking skills	3 Proficient – uses a sufficient repertoire of divergent thinking skills	4 Exceeds Expectations – uses a rich repertoire of divergent thinking skills
Evaluative Thinking			
Judges the appropriateness, efficacy, or value of something with respect to a standard.			
Level Explanation			
1 Beginning to apply evaluative thinking skills	2 Developing – rates or ranks choices, develops criteria, and judges the best answer/solution with assistance	3 Proficient – rates or ranks choices, develops criteria, and judges the best answer/solution with minimal assistance	4 Exceeds Expectations – rates or ranks choices, develops criteria, and judges the best answer/solution independently
Visual/Spatial Thinking			
Interprets and processes visual images to solve problems. Involves the mental manipulation of visual information, generating and recalling symbolic and non-linguistic information, and understanding spatial relationships and patterns.			
Level Explanation			
1 Beginning to develop visual perceptual thinking skills	2 Developing – generates/recalls visual information, perceives, and processes patterns, and mentally manipulates spatial information with assistance	3 Proficient – generates/recalls visual information, perceives, and processes patterns, and mentally manipulates spatial information with minimal assistance	4 Exceeds Expectations – generates/recalls visual information, perceives, and processes patterns, and mentally manipulates spatial information independently

Curricular Objectives for Middle School, Grades 6-8

5 Cs				
Collaboration	Communication	Creativity	Critical Thinking	Citizenship
Clarifies how to solve problems and achieve goals despite possible roadblocks				
Clarifies personal beliefs about challenging topics				
Clarifies personal views and values related to leadership and being a leader				
Communicates ideas effectively to others				
Develops solutions using elaboration, flexibility, fluency, and originality				
Discusses the value of creative thinking to solve problems				
Explores how "What if?" questions can affect ethical decisions				
Expresses opinions				
Gains a basic understanding of other points of view				
Gains a basic understanding of the influence power can have in group setting				
Gains understanding of how personal and group values can conflict				
Increases personal awareness of the need of empathy and tolerance towards others				
Interacts appropriately group members				
Learns about the values group members hold regarding different social issues				
Learns how to apply ethics when making decisions				
Learns how to arrive at a group decision using consensus rule				
Learns more about others in a group and how they can work together to get the most from every member				
Learns techniques to improve listening				
Learns to involve and rely on all members to accomplish a task				
Learns what it means to use active listening				
Pursues a risk-taking challenge as a team				
Recognizes and shares individual strengths of group members				
Recognizes general qualities of people perceived as leaders				
Sets and achieves goals				
Works as a team member				

Additional Resources

The following resources are available through the Gifted Department. Please contact the gifted resource teacher for your child's school if you would like to check out a resource.

Learning & Memory – The Brain in Action. Marilee Sprenger. ASCD, 1999.

The Social and Emotional Lives of Gifted Kids – Understanding and Guiding Their Development. Tracy L. Cross. Ph.D. Prufrock Press, Inc., 2005.

Perfectionism – What's Bad About Being Too Good? Miriam Adderholdt-Elliott, Ph.D. Free Spirit Publishing, 1987.

Helping Gifted Children Soar – A Practical Guide for Parents and Teachers. Carol A. Strip, Ph.D. with Gretchen Hirsch. Gifted Psychology Press, Inc., 2000.

Barefoot Irreverence – A Guide to Critical Issues in Gifted Child Education – James R. Delisle, Ph.D. Prufrock Press, Inc., 2002.

Smart Kids with School Problems – Things to Know & Ways to Help. Priscilla L. Vail. A PLUME Book, 1987.

Smart Boys – Talent, Manhood, and the Search for Meaning. Barbara A. Kerr, Ph.D. & Sanford J. Cohn, Ph.D. Great Potential Press, 2001.

Smart Girls – A New Psychology of Girls, Women & Giftedness. Barbara A. Kerr, Ph.D. Great Potential Press, 1994.

The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide – For Ages 10 & Under. Judy Galbraith, M.A. Free Spirit Publishing, 1999.

The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide – A Teen Handbook. Judy Galbraith, M.A. and Jim Delisle, Ph. D. Free Spirit Publishing, 1996.

The Survival Guide for Parents of Gifted Kids – How to Understand, Live With, and Stick Up For Your Gifted Child. Sally Yahnke Walker. Free Spirit Publishing, 1991.

Additional Resources

Online:

<http://www.rcs.k12.va.us/gifted/>

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/gifted_ed/

<http://createroanoke.org/blog/>

<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/>

The RCPS Gifted Department home page

The Virginia Department of Education Gifted Page

The Roanoke DI home page

Hoagies' Gifted Education

