

# Special Education Gifted Education –

## A Resource Guide for Teachers (found on Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators website)

### Gifted Learners in the Classroom

The student profile is used to create a program to meet the student's unique learning needs. What each student needs in a program will vary.

Thirty-three academically gifted students at Vancouver's University Hill Secondary School were asked: "If we as teachers could provide the very best learning situation for you, what would you have us do?" While responses varied, the major concern was with recognition of an accelerated learning rate. Secondary concerns centered around learning styles. Responses included:

- Let me go ahead and work at higher levels.
- Let us work with older kids. We can fit in.
- It's not an age difference but an attitude difference that's important here. Older kids are more accepting.
- Give us independent programs. Let us work ahead on our own.
- Know that everyone has talent -- and need. Provide challenge (in our talent area).
- Have totally hands on lessons. If we're studying elections, have a mock election.
- Use more videos, films and telecommunications.
- Use humour.
- Provide independent study opportunities -- let us study something we are interested in.

These student responses are consistent with strategies promoted by educators and curriculum developers in gifted education. All agree that gifted students need a learning environment that provides opportunities for challenge, opportunities to work with intellectual peers, encouragement to become independent learners, and curriculum enrichment.

The following principles of a differentiated curriculum for the gifted/talented were set out by Kaplan (1986, p.183). This is a useful starting point for the classroom teacher who is looking for ways to enhance the curriculum for a gifted student.

- Present content that is related to broad-based issues, themes or problems.
- Integrate multiple disciplines into the area of study.
- Present comprehensive, related and mutually reinforcing experiences within an area of study.
- Allow for the in-depth learning of a self-selected topic within the area of study.
- Develop independent or self-directed study skills.
- Develop productive, complex, abstract and/or higher level thinking skills.
- Focus on open-ended tasks.
- Develop research skills and methods.
- Integrate basic skills and higher level thinking skills into the curriculum.
- Encourage the development of products that challenge existing ideas and produce "new" ideas.
- Encourage the development of products that use techniques, materials and forms.
- Encourage the development of self-understanding. For example, recognizing and using one's abilities, becoming self-directed, appreciating likenesses and differences between oneself and others.
- Evaluate student outcomes by using appropriate and specific criteria through self-appraisal, criterion-referenced and/or standardized instruments.

See Carolyn Harrell for additional information.