



AIG Booster Shots

AIG Booster Shot #1 Differentiation for Gifted Learners: The Basics

Facilitator's Guide

Differentiation for gifted learners:

- Is a teacher's **proactive** and **flexible** response to these learners' needs.
- Focuses on ensuring that these learners are both **challenged** and **successful**.
- Provides tasks that **respect** these learners' needs to work deeply and quickly.
- Focuses on **qualitative** changes to the regular curriculum.

Differentiation for gifted learners is NOT:

- Reactive and random. It requires planning ahead and knowledge of desired standards and objectives.
- Giving these students *more* work. It's giving them *different* work.
- Asking these students to work independently of the teacher. To grow, they need instruction as much as other students. When they're genuinely challenged, they need support and scaffolding.
- Too open-ended. Gifted learners should know your expectations and will likely need some structure in order to meet them.
- Providing "fun and games" for students to complete when they've finished their work. Good differentiation allows gifted learners to work with important learning objectives at higher levels of complexity and abstraction.

We should differentiate a combination of:

- Content (what gifted learners are exposed to and encouraged to explore).
- Process (the strategies that gifted learners employ to make sense of material and build high-level, real world skills).
- Product (how gifted learners show us what they know and can do by applying their newly-learned knowledge and skills to real-world problems and situations).

Good differentiation for gifted learners requires:

- Knowledge of the characteristics of these learners as a group and as individuals. Pre-assessment is critical.
- A solid grasp of the desired standards and objectives.
- A range of teaching and learning strategies on which to draw.
- Flexibility and humility.



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Websites for Further Reading:

- NAGC Hot Topic: Differentiation of Curriculum and Instruction: <http://www.nagc.org/index2.aspx?id=978>
- http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/diff_curriculum.html
- NCAAGT website (<http://www.ncagt.org>)

Books for Further Reading:

- Eidson, Caroline C., Iseminger, Robert, & Taibbi, Chris. (2008). *Demystifying Differentiation in Elementary School: Tools, Strategies, and Activities to Use NOW.*
- Eidson, Caroline C., Iseminger, Robert, & Taibbi, Chris. (2007). *Demystifying Differentiation in Middle School: Tools, Strategies, and Activities to Use NOW.*
- Tomlinson, Carol A. (2001). *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms.*
- Tomlinson, Carol A., & Eidson, Caroline C. (2003). *Differentiation in Practice: A Resource Guide for Differentiating Curriculum, Grades K-5.*
- Tomlinson, Carol A., & Eidson, Caroline C. (2003). *Differentiation in Practice: A Resource Guide for Differentiating Curriculum, Grades 5-9.*
- Tomlinson, Carol A., & Strickland, Cindy A. (2005). *Differentiation in Practice: A Resource Guide for Differentiating Curriculum, Grades 9-12.*
- Winebrenner, Susan (2012). *Teaching Gifted Kids in the Today's Classroom.*
- Wormeli, Rick (2007). *Differentiation: From Planning to Practice Grades 6-12.*
- Wormeli, Rick (2006). *Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessing & Grading in the Differentiated Classroom.*

General Ideas for Next Steps:

- Continue reading about differentiation for gifted learners (see resources above).
- Explore the exemplary lessons on DPI's IRP Wiki to determine the types of strategies and materials that are most appropriate for AIGs.
- Look for and evaluate other examples of lessons for gifted learners (There are many available on the web!): Are the objectives/goals clear in the lesson? Does the lesson address advanced content? Does the lesson make use of strategies that require students to think at higher levels and produce quality, respectful products? OR does the lesson simply require the students to engage in busy work? These are the types of questions to consider as you explore lessons for AIG learners.
- Meet with your team/PLC to talk about how teachers are meeting AIG needs in different and practical ways: What needs are these students



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demonstrating? How are we already meeting these needs? How can we further our professional practice with regard to teaching AIGs?

- Set goals for working with AIGs, individually or with your team/PLC.
- Write a lesson for AIGs and share it with a colleague to get feedback.
- Teach a lesson for AIGs and ask the students for their feedback about it.

Beginning Steps:

- K-2: Spend time observing your students as they work independently on a particular task. Which students seem to be further down the road with it? What might their next step be in order to ensure an appropriate challenge for them?
- Gr. 3-5: Use a unit post-assessment as a pre-assessment. Which of your students perform well on it? What does this tell you about the unit you're about to teach? How might you modify it for students who already grasp some or all of the objectives the unit addresses?
- Gr. 6-8: Ask your students to identify their strengths and weaknesses within a particular subject area. Do these correspond with your own observations of them? What implications are there for your teaching? How will you adapt your instruction or classroom practices based on this information?
- Gr. 9-12: Explore some AP, IB, or other advanced lessons for your particular subject area. What makes these lessons appropriate for high-end learners? Where do you see challenge for them in these units? How might you use some of these same techniques more regularly in your own teaching?