

PLC/Book Study Guide for *Differentiation for Gifted Learners*

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This guide is designed as a professional development resource and can be used to facilitate a book study or as a learning experience for a professional learning community (PLC). Facilitator notes are provided for additional support and explanation in planning and facilitating your school or group's sessions. We recommend that the principal and/or facilitator read the entire guide and the book before beginning the study.

For each session, participants will be asked to read chapters of the book. They may also be asked to bring particular materials or create or implement something *prior* to attending a session. Each chapter description includes guiding questions and suggested tasks that can be used as group activities during the group session.

Please note that the preparation work is noted at the beginning for each session. Before you dismiss participants from each session, look ahead to the next chapter and review and clarify what must be done before the next meeting. Reach agreements if suggested tasks are going to be adjusted or modified.

Introduction

To be completed before the introduction book study session:

- Read the book’s foreword and introduction.
- Consider the challenges you have faced in meeting the needs of gifted students in your inclusion classroom or secondary course.

1. What are the challenges you have faced in meeting the needs of gifted students in your inclusion classroom or secondary course?

2. As a group:

- Chart differentiation strategies or ideas that you believe have worked in addressing the learning differences of gifted students. Suggest how and why they worked.
- Chart strategies that have been used with gifted students that you consider “questionable,” since they may not represent best practices.

Facilitator Note: *If strategies are suggested that require more but not different work, consider how you might critically reflect on those strategies. Or you may wish to keep this chart until the end of the book study. Then go back to the chart and reconsider strategies on the list, and add new ideas that teachers have either become aware of or implemented during the book study.*

3. In reviewing the descriptions of each chapter, which are the most appealing to you? Which do you believe may address a challenge that you face in meeting the needs of your gifted students?

4. Does your group wish to prioritize particular chapters and possibly reorder the sequence of the book study?

Chapter 1: Giftedness Defined Through an Equity Lens

To be completed before the Chapter 1 book study session:

- Read Chapter 1.
- Consider identification processes, programs, and services provided by your school or district for gifted learners. Gather information as necessary. In particular, seek information about the percentage of students involved in services and their cultural/ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic characteristics.

1. Consider the identification processes, programs, and services provided by your school or district. Which components of the federal definition (page 6) do you believe are well served at your site? Which components are minimally recognized or underserved? Which components are neither recognized nor served?
2. Do the identification processes, programs, and services in your school or district suggest a higher value for a particular kind of giftedness? Do you agree or disagree with this focus?
3. Why might schools or districts identify and serve only limited components of the federal definition?
4. Discuss the distinctions between gifts and talents defined by Gagné (pages 6–9). Do you have experience with students who are gifted but not talented? Describe the students and their innate abilities, attitudes, behavior, work habits, or interests that may be affecting their performance.

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- 5.** Consider the information presented on identifying giftedness across cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic communities (pages 9–10). Examine the data you collected on students identified for and participating in programs or services for gifted learners.
- Is the percentage of students in your general population roughly correlated with the percentage of students in gifted services? Are particular groups underrepresented? Overrepresented? (e.g., if Asian students represent 21 percent of the general population, is roughly 21 percent of the gifted population Asian?)
 - What efforts has your school or district made to locate gifted students across cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic communities?
- 6.** Do services in your district extend to twice-exceptional (2e) learners? Are factors related to identification for services modified in any way for students who may be gifted and ELL, ASD, ADHD, EBD, or LD? If your school or district is not serving 2e students, what are the obstacles for doing so?

Chapter 2:

Using Brain Research to Improve Differentiation

To be completed before the Chapter 2 book study session:

- Read Chapter 2.
- Create a list of at least three ways gifted students think and process information differently.

Facilitator Note: *Suggested responses include:*

- *Greater capacity in the prefrontal cortex to process information more rapidly.*
- *Neural efficacy to retrieve information more quickly.*
- *More emotional sensitivity, which can lead to asynchronous development.*
- *Better coordination and integration between and within the regions of the brain, allowing for greater sophistication of thought.*

1. Discuss with your team members the significance of how gifted students process information, and why you feel it is important to provide differentiated learning experiences.

Facilitator Note: *From the list of brain attributes each member created before the session, guide participants in understanding that differentiation for gifted students can help them develop strong work habits and avoid behavior issues.*

2. Review the “Putting the Research to Practice” section (pages 22–26). In what ways do you implement each of the three differentiation domains for gifted learners:
 - a. Pace
 - b. Complexity
 - c. Depth

Facilitator Note: *Helping participants identify their strengths in this activity can also help identify limitations. Ask members for specific situations in which they have used any of the strategies and what the outcomes of the practice were.*

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- 3.** Based on the domains of pace, complexity, and depth, where do you feel you need the most focus? Plan to implement any of the strategies listed on page 27, 28, 29, or 32. Be prepared to share in the next session what you tried and the outcomes of your practice. For an additional challenge, work through pages 30–31 to compact a unit of study. Be prepared to share your work and outcomes with members of your group.

Facilitator Note: Remind teammates that the practices of differentiation should be considered carefully and should reflect the areas in which gifted students need greater challenges or supports. Also, for novice teachers it is recommended to start small, using one idea at a time, rather than jump into complex activities such as compacting. Complex differentiation requires time, expertise, and supportive colleagues.

Chapter 3: Gifted Learners and Standards-Based Education

To be completed before the Chapter 3 book study session:

- Read Chapter 3.
- Gather appropriate curriculum maps or course outlines detailing learning goals/standards to bring to the session.

1. Share the strategy (see Chapter 2 book study session) that you implemented in your classroom.
 - What went well?
 - Were there any particular challenges in using it with your students?
 - What suggestions do you have for other teachers who may wish to try this strategy?
2. In what ways has standards-based education enhanced learning experiences for gifted students? In what ways has it hindered their learning?
3. Discuss the degree to which your curriculum goals, as well as school or district policy related to the goals, address the learning characteristics of gifted students (pages 33–34). For example, what policies or practices address their accelerated pace of learning, which may result in them achieving a goal earlier than their age peers?
4. What issues or concerns need to be addressed in your school or district so that standards-based education might better work *for* rather than *against* the learning needs of gifted students?

Facilitator Note: *You may wish to share these issues and concerns with appropriate school or district leadership. In addition, you may want to suggest specific strategies, policies, or procedures that address the issues or concerns.*

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5. The book suggests that teachers consider adapting standards for gifted learners through acceleration, combining standards, adding depth and complexity, and/or integrating standards from two or more disciplines. Given your experience in standards-based education and your curriculum, which adaptation strategy has worked or may work in your planning for gifted learners? Which is most appealing? Which would be difficult for you to implement? Why?

Facilitator Note: *You may wish to model how to examine a standard and then add depth or complexity to it using page 37. Teachers could then work with a partner or alone, adapting a standard from their curriculum and adding depth or complexity.*

Chapter 4: Defensible Programs and Services

To be completed before the Chapter 4 book study session:

- Read Chapter 4, taking note of how your school's or district's programs and services are similar to or different from the recommended formats.
- If available, you may wish to bring a catalog or menu of enrichment activities offered in your school before, after, or during the school day.
- Consider the kinds of grouping you use most frequently in your classroom as you read pages 63–68.

1. Using the PPM (pages 48–63), discuss areas where your school or district is strong and where there is room for improvement.
2. Based on your response to #1, make suggestions for improvement.

Facilitator Note: *These first two activities should be done as a group and then shared with other appropriate faculty. You may also wish to consider sharing this information with appropriate school or district leadership for review, consideration, and possible inclusion in course materials.*

3. Using the E3 method (pages 51–55) and a current unit of study, create enrichment, extension, and enhancement options for students.

Facilitator Note: *This activity can be used as a “takeaway” assignment. Participants should be encouraged to share their ideas with others in their grade or department.*

4. Consider the enrichment activities that are offered to students in your school or district. Complete the chart on page 74.
 - Are there particular talents that are more pervasively addressed?
 - What talents have either limited or no opportunities for enrichment?
 - Are enrichment opportunities accessible to all students or do some require additional fees or an ability to come earlier or stay later at school?

Facilitator Note: *Analysis of this data may be appropriately shared with those responsible for initiating and facilitating enrichment opportunities in the school.*

5. Note the distinctions between the different types of grouping (pages 63–68).

- Which of these practices are most frequently used in your classroom?
- Why do you tend to employ that practice more frequently?
- What other grouping practices would you like to use? What grouping practices would you like to use more often? Why?

Facilitator Note: *Your group may want to create a quick reference chart on grouping. Note the type of grouping, its purpose, and facilitation tips.*

Chapter 5: Creating Authentic Honors Courses

Facilitator Note: *This chapter may be most appropriate for secondary teachers. However, tasks have been designed that will enable elementary teachers to engage in relevant learning experiences, as well.*

To be completed before the Chapter 5 book study session:

- Read Chapter 5, paying careful attention to how the language used in course/program descriptions can either clarify practice or create variations in practice; e.g., do all teachers agree on a common definition of “complexity”? If not, there are bound to be variations in classroom practices.
- Elementary teachers: Gather information about accelerated curriculum (e.g., math) and/or curriculum for send-out programs for gifted learners, if appropriate. Select a unit of study that you believe can be deepened to address the needs of your gifted students.
- Secondary teachers: Collect information about your school’s/district’s honors program, including program description and individual course descriptions.

1. Secondary teachers:

- Define and articulate how your course/unit of study does or does not address the five principles of an honors course (pages 82–83).
- Modify, adapt, or create a well-defined and articulated description of an honors course.

Elementary teachers:

- Consider the five principles of an honors course (pages 82–83) and the curriculum that you offer gifted students. Which elements are present? Which need to be considered?
- If your school offers advanced courses, such as accelerated math, or provides a separate curriculum through send-out programs, to what degree do these services reflect the five principles?

Facilitator Note: *At the secondary level, assist participants in creating a well-defined and articulated description of an honors or advanced course. At the elementary level, the send-out program curriculum can be defined and described, or a description can be written of the ways in which tasks within a curriculum unit are differentiated for gifted learners. Clarity of language is essential to clarity and consistency of practice.*

2. Choose one of these tasks:

- Create your own “case” to be used in your class as part of the case method (pages 93–98).
- Using a current unit of study, apply it to the DDM (pages 98–99). Analyze missing elements and add them to your matrix.

Facilitator Note: *This activity can be used as a “takeaway” assignment. Participants should be encouraged to share their ideas with their grade-level or department colleagues.*

Chapter 6: Changing Roles for Educators of Gifted Students

To be completed before the Chapter 6 book study session:

- Complete the Accountability Chart (pages 108–109) or Professional Learning Communities Worksheet (page 110) from Chapter 5 with another member of your study group. Bring this with you to the Chapter 6 session.
- Read Chapter 6 and consider ways to improve your work with gifted students.

1. From your review of practices in Chapter 5:

- What did you discover about professional practices as they relate to meeting the needs of gifted learners?
- What changes do you need to make to ensure you are spending more time in either the coached or consultative role of the TLC (pages 114–118) with your gifted students?

Facilitator Note: *This activity can be used as a “takeaway” assignment. Participants should be encouraged to share their ideas with others in their grade level or department.*

2. Discuss the mindsets of your students (pages 113–114).

- Do some students have a fixed mindset? How do you know?
- Do some students have a growth mindset? What specific examples can you give to support your answer?

Facilitator Note: *Remind participants that we all possess both types of mindsets. However, what is most important to success is the ability to select and use the proper mindset approach in learning. Gifted students need to be encouraged to have a growth mindset by supporting their effort over achievement and using high-quality descriptive feedback (see pages 166–168).*

3. Consider the growth mindset strategies suggested on page 119.

- Which strategies are already in use in your classroom?
- What strategies might you use to change your students' mindsets from fixed to growth?
- What strategies might you use to support their continued development within the growth mindset?
- What additional ideas do you have that you believe support a growth mindset?

Chapter 7: Co-Teaching: A Collaborative Approach to Differentiation

To be completed before the Chapter 7 book study session:

- Read Chapter 7.
- Consider the ways in which co-teaching with a gifted education specialist may address some of the challenges of meeting the needs of gifted learners in your classroom.

1. Share the ways in which co-teaching with a gifted education specialist may address some of the challenges of meeting the needs of gifted learners in your classroom.
2. Consider the chart of individual and shared roles on page 122. Are there other responsibilities in your classroom related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment that are missing from the chart? In which column should they be added?

Facilitator Note: *You may want to revise the chart in light of the realities of your particular school or district.*

3. Review the co-teaching questionnaire on page 128. Are there other things you would like to know about a potential co-teacher in order to form a successful partnership?

Facilitator Note: *You may want to revise this questionnaire to include additional topics that teachers in your school or district would like to know about potential partners.*

4. Consider the variety of co-teaching strategies presented on pages 123–125. Note that they are presented sequentially from the least to the most collaborative style.
 - Which appeals to you the most? Why?
 - Considering your students, which would be the most effective in addressing the learning differences in your classroom? Why?

Chapter 8: Understanding and Reversing Underachievement

To be completed before the Chapter 8 book study session:

- Read Chapter 8.
- Consider a gifted student you view as underperforming. This may or may not be a student who is currently in your classroom.
- Conduct an interview with the student, using the questions on pages 152–153 as a guide. You may delete questions you believe to be less appropriate and add others you'd like responses for.
- Bring your notes to the Chapter 8 session.

1. Present your student to the group as a case study.
 - Describe his/her current academic performance as well as any behaviors, work habits, or interests that you believe to be relevant to his/her situation.
 - Share responses to relevant questions from the student interview.
 - Describe what you have tried in the past to break his/her failure cycle.
2. As a group, analyze the case and consider factors that may be influencing his/her academic achievement (pages 137–140).
3. As a group, consider whether the student is a nonproducer, a selective producer, or an underachiever who has severe and persistent discrepancies between expected achievement and actual school performance.
4. As a group, consider possible plans of action. Review the strategies, resources, templates, and formats presented in Chapter 8 that can be used in establishing a plan with the student.

Facilitator Note: *Remember that if there are multiple issues related to poor performance, it's best to address one issue at a time in order to break the failure cycle.*

5. Determine a date on which your study group will convene to discuss the student's progress. As necessary, reconsider plans and assist each other in establishing a new course of action.

Chapter 9: Grading and Assessment and the Gifted Learner

To be completed before the Chapter 9 book study session:

- Read Chapter 9.
- Consider how and when you use particular types of assessment to guide your instruction of gifted learners.
- List preassessment, formative assessment, and summative assessment strategies that you currently use. Bring this list to the Chapter 9 session.
- Create a series of questions to use with your students using the “Assessment Questions for Critical Thinking” on page 183 or the “Digging Deeper into Questioning Matrix” on pages 184–187. Facilitate a discussion with the questions before the Chapter 9 session and be ready to report on how the questions worked with your students.

1. Review the formative assessment strategies and techniques on pages 188–191. Which of these are new to you? How might they be used differently with your gifted students?
2. Review the “Assessments That Build Autonomy” on page 192.
 - Identify which assessment formats you are using and where they fall on the TLC. Are your assessments focused on a particular level?
 - Considering that you want to move gifted students toward greater autonomy, which strategies should you consider and use more frequently with them?

Facilitator Note: *It may be helpful to create a large blank chart for teachers to write specific assessments they use at each of the levels. Then assist the team in identifying where on the spectrum most of their assessments should be entered. It is most beneficial for students to have assessments that guide them toward greater levels of autonomy in learning.*

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3. Review preassessment ideas on page 165, as well as those noted as “prior to the lesson” on pages 188–191.
 - Create a preassessment that could be used to better differentiate lessons within a curriculum unit, or to compact a student or group of students out of a unit of study.
 - Next, review the information from Chapter 2 on compacting (pages 30–31) to identify how you might compact your student(s) to find time for more advanced work based on student interests.

Facilitator Note: Besides its use in guiding compacting decisions, preassessment data can also be used to “loop” a student out of a redundant lesson. See information about looping on pages 35–36. The preassessment developed can be a “takeaway” assignment. Encourage participants to share their ideas with others in their grade level or department.

4. Share the format you used to create your discussion questions prior to this session.
 - Provide some examples of the questions you asked.
 - Discuss what you learned about your students’ thinking and learning based on their responses to your questions.
 - Consider next steps you might take to improve student responses.

Chapter 10: Leadership

To be completed before the Chapter 10 book study session:

- Read Chapter 10.
- Develop a quick and easy-to-use interest inventory for an upcoming unit and have your students complete it before the session.

1. Consider the “Essential Foundations for Classroom Teachers of the Gifted” presented on page 209. Reflect on your own background, learning, and experiences.
 - Are there strategies on the list you would like to learn more about? Which ones?
 - Is someone in your group experienced in this strategy? Set up a time to get together to swap ideas.
 - If not, select strategies of interest and have study group members each pursue one strategy to share with the group.
2. Share the interest inventories you developed prior to this session. What did you learn about your students’ interests? In what ways might you modify or redesign your upcoming unit in light of the results?
3. The purpose of the “Differentiated Lesson Plan” (pages 214–217) is to walk you through a thinking process about when and how you might differentiate a lesson. Once you start thinking with this process in mind, planning differentiated lessons comes much more quickly. It actually becomes difficult to *not* consider differentiation as you ask yourself, “What am I going to do tomorrow?” With a partner, walk through a lesson you taught recently, considering each component of the plan on pages 214–215 as you discuss the lesson.
 - What components were included in your lesson?
 - What additional ideas do you now have about how the lesson may have been differentiated?
 - *Optional:* If your study group is interested, you may want to conduct a classroom observation study. Use templates and formats on pages 219–227 to facilitate your classroom visits.

Chapter 11: Streamlining Your Lesson Planning

To be completed before the Chapter 11 book study session:

- Read Chapter 11.

1. The final chapter in the book includes additional planning resources for teachers. The chart on pages 230–232 enables teachers to quickly and easily differentiate a task using content, process, or product across readiness, interest, and learning preference.
 - With a partner, design one differentiated task using content, one using process, and one using product. Focus on the ideas with asterisks since they are most appropriate for gifted learners. Use poster paper or a whiteboard to write up your ideas.
 - Share your differentiated tasks with other members of your study group and seek feedback on your ideas.

Facilitator Note: *These tasks can also be shared with grade-level or department colleagues.*

Closing Activity

Facilitator Note: *Ask group members to share at least four insights, new ideas, or strategies they have taken away from this book study. They may also suggest what else they would like to learn about or collaborate on in order to meet the needs of gifted students within their classrooms.*

About the Authors

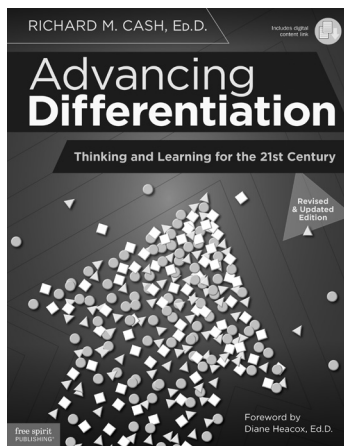


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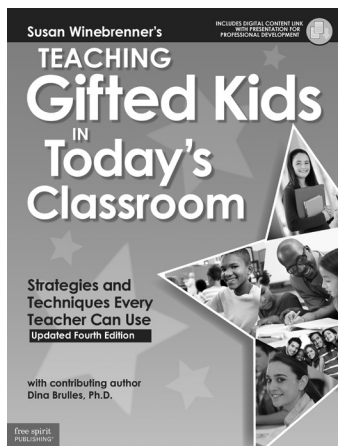


Richard M. Cash, Ed.D., is an award-winning educator and author who has worked in the field of education for more than thirty years. Currently, he is a highly sought-after presenter and professional development trainer who has worked with schools throughout the United States and internationally. Previously, he taught elementary, middle grade, and graduate students and served as director of gifted programs for the Bloomington Public Schools in Minnesota. He was the 2011 recipient of the National Association for Gifted Children's *Early Leader Award*, recognizing his leadership in programming for gifted children. Richard was also named "Friend of the Gifted, 2016" by the Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented. His areas of expertise include differentiated instruction, thinking skills, brain-compatible learning, creativity, and gifted education. He is the author of *Advancing Differentiation: Thinking and Learning for the 21st Century* and *Self-Regulation in the Classroom*, along with numerous articles on high-quality instructional practices. Richard lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Connect with Richard on Twitter @RichardCash or visit his website nrich.consulting.

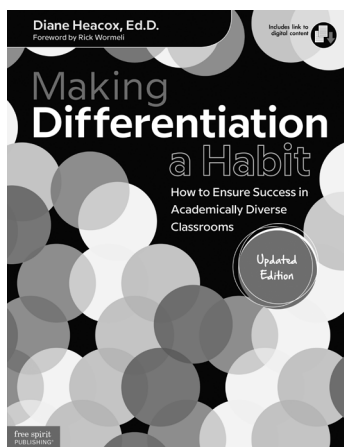
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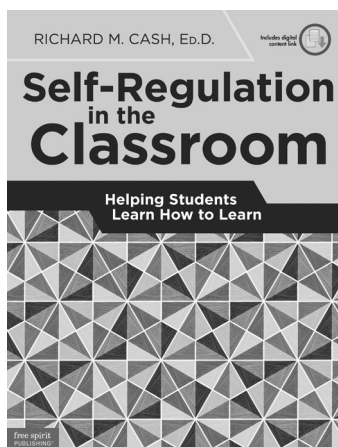
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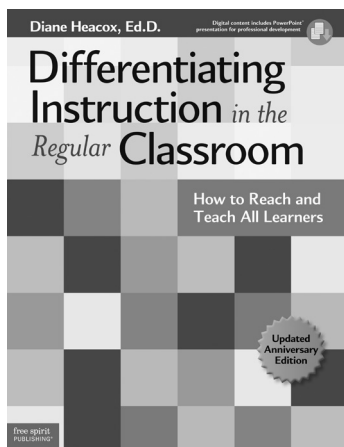
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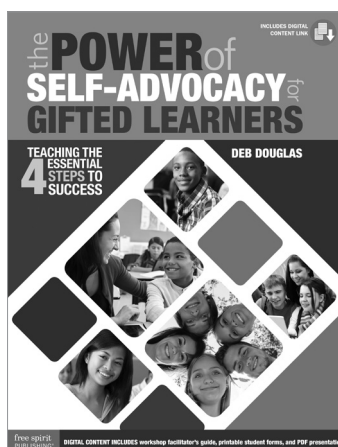
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