

Glossary of terms used in Gifted Education

Ability grouping - Placing students of similar ability in the same class or group for purposes of instruction. Research shows higher academic achievement gains for all students when grouped by ability and taught at a pace that matches their learning rates. Ability grouping is NOT the same as tracking although many confuse them.

Acceleration - Faster presentation of content to more closely match the speed at which gifted students learn. Compare with grade skipping. See pacing, compacting.

Accountability- Holding students, faculty, administrators and district personnel responsible for instructional outcomes.

Achievement - Accomplishment or performance; the realization of potential. Compare with aptitude.

Advanced Placement (AP)- A program developed by the College Board where high schools offer courses that meet criteria set by institutions of higher education. In some cases college credit can be earned after completing an AP exam. (Contact college or university for their specific requirements)

Aptitude - Undeveloped potential or ability; the inclination to excel in a particular area

Asynchronous development - Different rates for physical, cognitive, and emotional development. For example, a gifted child may be chronologically 8 years old, intellectually 15 and emotionally 5. Extremes displayed by gifted children have led some experts to define giftedness itself as asynchronous development.

Bloom's Taxonomy- Developed in 1956 by Benjamin Bloom, the taxonomy is often used to develop curriculum for gifted children. There are six levels that move from basic to high levels of thinking. These include knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

Cluster Grouping- a grouping assignment for gifted children where typically 5 or 6 gifted students with similar abilities are 'clustered', which allows the teacher to differentiate assignments to a group.

Compacting - Eliminating repetition, minimizing drill, and accelerating instruction in basic skills so that gifted students can move to more challenging material.

Constructivism - The theory that new knowledge is an active product of the learner integrating new information and perceptions with prior knowledge. It is based on the work of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, and Lev Vygotsky.

Content - The academic subject matter studied in an educational program or class.

Convergent thinking - Thinking which results in conventional solutions and answers or conformity. Contrast with divergent thinking.

Cooperative learning - Students working in small groups within a classroom on the same assignment. There is often a division of tasks but the same grade is given to all. Cooperative learning groups with students of similar ability with complementary skills tend to work most smoothly.

Differentiation- Adapting the curriculum to meet the differing needs and abilities of students within a class. One strategy for differentiating the core, grade level curriculum is to modify the content or subject according to the following theories:

Depth- students go further, deeper and more elaborately within a subject area.

Complexity- students make relationships and associations across and between subject areas. They study relationships over time and from different points of view.

Novelty- students personalize their understanding. They express their knowledge in their own words and way.

Acceleration- students can move at a faster pace or with more difficulty.

Discovery method - A variety of student-centered approaches to teaching, including the **Socratic method**, in which the teacher acts as a guide and/or resource. Unlike programmed instruction, the emphasis is not on efficiency in mastering a predetermined body of knowledge, but in developing students' abilities to learn how to learn.

Divergent thinking - Thinking which results in novel, unique, or creative solutions or answers. Contrast with convergent thinking.

Enrichment - Deeper coverage of content often provided for gifted students. Contrast with acceleration

Exceptional learners - Students with an IQ in the bottom (retarded) or top (gifted) three percent of the population, or those with other physical or mental differences which affect learning.

Gifted and Talented- Although school districts differ in their identification and labeling process of Gifted and Talented, The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act defines gifted as “students who give evidence of high potential or capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic or leadership capacity who need special services and activities not ordinarily provided to fully develop those capabilities.

Grade skipping - Promotion to a higher grade. Often confused with acceleration

Heterogeneous Grouping- grouping students by mixed ability or readiness levels. In this environment a teacher is expected to meet a broad range of students needs. Compare with Homogeneous grouping

Higher order thinking skills - Abstract reasoning, critical thinking, and problem solving abilities

Homogeneous Grouping- Grouping students according to similar readiness and ability. The purpose of this grouping is to allow students to spend more time with their peers and restrict the range of needs that a teacher must address.

Identification - The selecting and labeling process. Requirements to be identified as gifted vary between school districts.

Inclusion - Grouping of students in regular classrooms without regard to ability.

Independent study - Self-education, often using self-selected resources and driven by student interest.

Individual education plan (IEP) - A written document which states the student's unique characteristics and needs, educational goals and objectives to meet those needs, and instructional materials and services to be provided.

Individualized instruction - Content and pacing of instruction geared toward the individual's unique learning styles, abilities, needs, and goals. See special education

Inquiry method - See discovery method.

Integrated curriculum - Combination of content from two or more subjects to enhance meaning through interconnectedness of knowledge. See brain based teaching.

Intelligence - A general concept of mental ability, often summed up as the ability to learn from experience. The concept was put into a measurable form as intelligence quotient, but theorists such as Howard Gardner believe there are multiple intelligences which traditional IQ tests do not sample. Others counter that multiple intelligences are merely manifestations of an underlying general factor ("Spearman's g"). Pragmatically in schools, intelligence has come to mean whatever intelligence tests measure, regardless of the test's reliability or validity

Intelligence quotient (IQ) - A quantitative representation of cognitive ability which results from testing a sample of cognitive skills. The formula is intellectual age divided by chronological age, times 100. For example, someone 10 years old with an intellectual age of 13 would have an IQ of 130. This is called the "ratio IQ."

Javits Act - Federal legislation originally passed in 1988 to provide grant money for gifted and talented programs and research.

Levels of giftedness - According to IQ measurements, the following labels are generally accepted:

- Bright - 115 and above
- Gifted - 130 and above
- Highly gifted - 145 and above
- Exceptionally gifted - 160 and above
- Profoundly gifted - 175 and above

Multiple intelligences - Constructs of intelligence that include more aspects of mental ability than the conventional concept of intelligence. Howard Gardner proposed seven intelligences: musical, bodily-kinesthetic, logical-mathematical, linguistic, spatial, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. He recently added an eighth: naturalist.

Overexcitabilities - A term originated by Kazimierz Dabrowski to describe excessive response to stimuli in five psychic domains (psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imaginal, and emotional) which may occur singly or in combination.

Overexcitabilities are often used to describe certain characteristics of the gifted. "It is often recognized that gifted and talented people are energetic, enthusiastic, intensely absorbed in their pursuits, endowed with vivid imagination, sensuality, moral sensitivity and emotional vulnerability.

Pacing - The speed at which content is presented and instruction delivered. Pacing which matches the student's rate of learning is optimal. Because gifted students are usually able to learn faster, they often need accelerated pacing.

Peer group - People with which one feels equal. Due to gifted students' asynchronous development, they may have very different intellectual, social, and emotional peer groups.

Perfectionism - The desire to execute tasks flawlessly. Gifted children may develop perfectionism after entering school, as they perform better than their classmates. Later, such perfectionism may lead to avoiding challenges so as not to appear imperfect.

Portfolio - A collection of student work that demonstrates achievement for purposes of assessment.

Pull-out - A part-time special educational program that takes exceptional learners out of the regular classroom for a limited time. Many elementary gifted programs are once a week, pull-out, enrichment activities. Since gifted students are gifted all day, every day, pull-out programs alone seldom meet their needs.

Self-contained - A classroom is self-contained if the students in it spend the entire day (or the bulk of the day) with the same teacher. Elementary education is almost always conducted in self-contained classrooms. Self-contained programs can also be geared toward grouping by ability, disability, or other labels placed on students, such as the label "gifted."

Self-esteem - A subjective feeling of self-worth built from the respect and sense of worth reflected back on the person from significant others.

Standardized test - A test taken by many students under identical conditions which allows results to be compared statistically to a standard such as a norm or criteria. See reliability, validity.

State mandates - In the absence of a federal mandate for gifted education, many states have passed mandates. The level, quality, and availability of services varies widely from state to state.

Tiered Assignments- A strategy to differentiate instruction in which all students work toward the same goal but activities are geared toward each student's level of knowledge and understanding.

Tracking - Full-time, often permanent assignment to achievement groups. Compare with ability grouping, where students may be temporarily grouped and regrouped for immediate instructional needs.

Twice exceptional - A term used to describe a student who is both gifted and disabled.

Underachievement - A significant difference between ability and performance. A gifted underachiever is often defined as having superior intelligence, yet working below grade level