Section 8.3   Gifted Learners

How does gifted education fit into the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework?

Advanced learning needs for the majority of students can be addressed in a general education classroom which offers a quality learning environment by providing instructional interventions prior to, or in lieu of, identifying students for specialized educational services. By documenting instructional interventions, the RTI process allows gifted and high-achieving students access to a differentiated curriculum, flexible pacing, cluster grouping, and other universal interventions available to all students in the regular classroom. However, there are times when regular education interventions may not offer gifted and high achieving students the desired level of curriculum rigor and acceleration. In these cases an alternative program is needed.

When should students be considered for gifted education services?

If there is evidence that instructional modifications have not met a student's needs, local school districts should follow the student nomination and decision-making process outlined in the Georgia Gifted Education Resource Manual. Factors to be considered in the nomination process should include evidence of the student's advanced learning needs and the recency and performance levels of any previous gifted program referrals or placements.

The term differentiation is used quite often in education. What is differentiation and when should differentiation be used in the classroom?

Differentiated instruction is a teaching theory based on the premise that instructional approaches should vary and be adapted in relation to individual and diverse students in classrooms (Tomlinson, 2011). The model of differentiated instruction requires teachers to be flexible in their approach to teaching and adjust the curriculum and presentation of information to learners rather than expecting students to modify themselves for the curriculum (Hall, 2011).

Differentiation of curriculum for gifted learners is the process of adapting and modifying curriculum structures to address these characteristics and needs more optimally. Thus curriculum goals, outcomes, and activities may be tailored for gifted learners to accommodate their needs. Typically, this process involves the use of the strategies of acceleration. Acceleration is a broad term used to describe ways in which gifted student learning may occur at a faster more appropriate rate throughout the years of schooling. It refers to content acceleration through compacting and reorganizing curriculum by unit or year, grade skipping, telescoping two years into one, dual enrollment in high school and college or university, as well as more personalized approaches such as tutorials and mentorships that also would be sensitive to the advanced starting level of these learners (NAGC, 2011).

Additional information regarding Gifted Education can be found on the Georgia Department of Education website. The web address is below:
http://www.gadoe.org/ci_iap_gifted.aspx

Instructional Options for Gifted and High Ability Students

The needs of gifted and high-ability students vary widely; therefore, an array of instructional modification options should be available for all grade levels and content areas. Specific learner objectives are developed on a case-by-case basis. Tier 1,2,3, and 4 options to consider include, but are not limited to, the following:

Acceleration (subject and whole grade)
An individual student moves to a higher grade, for instruction in one or more subject areas or a student skips a grade level to move to a higher grade than one more typical for the student's age group.

Assessments
Assessment measures should document where the student is in relation to normative expectations when compared with others of his or her same age and/or in relation to curriculum mastery for grade-level expectations. Early mastery of content may require the use of off-grade-level measures to accurately capture the child's learning levels. (Coleman, M.R. & Hughes, C., 2009).

Cross-Age Grouping/Multi-Age Grouping
Students of different ages/grades are grouped together for instruction for all or part of a day.

Curriculum Compacting:
Curriculum a student has already mastered is eliminated. The student is then allowed to pursue alternative curriculum options.

Gifted Resource Classes/Enrichment Clusters
Students are grouped according to achievement levels for instructional purposes. The instructional focus is on an interdisciplinary curriculum.

Graduated Rubrics
The standard and level of student proficiency and accomplishments designed for students and teachers to measure learning outcomes are increased. Graduated rubrics offer clear expectations for quality and increasing levels of excellence to encourage optimum performance among high-ability learners.

Independent/Directed Study
A student participate in a self-initiated, teacher directed and approved course of study in an area of interest as described in a written contract which is based on curriculum standards, research and planned presentations. Independent study encourages student autonomy in planning, research and problem-solving.

Internship/Mentorships
A student works with a mentor to explore a potential career choice. The internship/mentorship teacher maintains close contact with both the participating student and the selected mentor to ensure acceptable progress towards the student's individual career goals.

Interest Centers
Centers placed within the classroom that link curriculum topics to areas of student talent and interest in depth and breath.

Subject Grouping Within Class/Gifted Cluster Classes
Students are grouped/clustered according to achievement, within a regular education classroom, for instruction in one or more subjects.

Subject Grouping Across Teams/Classes
Students are grouped according to achievement and go to a different classroom or team, within the same grade level, for instruction in one or more subjects.

Subject Advancement Across Grades
Students are grouped according to achievement, in a higher grade level, for instruction in one or more subjects.

Tiered Assignments
Assignments are designed to meet the varying ability levels of students.

Tiered Products
Products are designed to meet the varying ability levels of the students.

Instructional Modification Options for Gifted and High Ability Students

In a differentiated classroom, teachers differentiate **content, process, product and assessments** *according to a student's* **readiness, interest,** *and* **learning profile.**

- **Content** –The Georgia Board of Education adopted curriculum standards *the student* is expected *to* master *and* related support *materials*.

- **Process** – instructional strategies *designed to ensure that students* acquire a deep understanding of the curriculum standards.

- **Products** - *vehicles through which students demonstrate and extend what they have learned*

- **Assessment**- formative and summative on and off-grade-level monitoring to document students mastery of curriculum standards and learning levels.

- **Readiness** - *a student's entry point relative to a particular understanding or skill*

- **Learning Profile** - *how an individual student learns*

- *Tier* **1,***2***, 3, and 4** *instructional and management opportunities with varying degrees of preparation might include:*

Tier 1: Low Preparation Differentiation	Tier 2: Medium Preparation Differentiation
Flexible-Learning Groups by Readiness, Interest, Learning Profiles	Students are Assessed in Multiple Ways
Choice of Books	Tiered Activities
Homework Options	Tiered Products
Use of Reading Buddies	Use of Literature Clubs
Various Journal Prompts	Multiple Testing Options
Student/Teacher Goal Setting	Multiple Texts
Varied Pacing with Anchor Options	Alternative Assessments
Work Alone or Together	Subject Advancement within class
Flexible Seating	Curriculum Compacting
Varied Scaffolding	Tiered Centers
Varied Computer Programs	Spelling by Readiness
Design-A-DAY	Varying Organizers

Varied Supplemental Materials	Community Mentorships
Computer Mentors	Stations
Think-Pair-Share by Readiness, Interest, Learning Profiles	Group Investigations
Open-ended Activities	Gifted Collaboration Classes
Explorations by Interest	Student choice in selecting learning activities.
Options for Competition	Simulations

Tier 3: High Preparation Differentiation	Tier 4: Advanced/Autonomous Differentiation
Accelerated English/language arts, mathematics, science and/or social studies courses	Above grade level accelerated English/language arts, mathematics, science and/or social studies courses
Advanced Placement Classes	Early Entrance to a post secondary option
Independent/Directed Study	Independent/Directed Study
International Baccalaureate Classes	Internship/Mentorships
Socratic Seminars	Whole Grade Acceleration

Purpose of the Gifted Education Program:

Gifted Education services are designed to serve students in grades K-12 who meet the eligibility criteria as defined in SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.38 EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR GIFTED STUDENTS.

Instructional Staff:

All Gifted Education teachers must be certified staff and hold either the Gifted In-field Endorsement or the Gifted P-12 Certificate.

Eligibility:

Students in grades K-12 are eligible for Gifted Education Services if the requirements in SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.38 EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR GIFTED STUDENTS are met. The student is assessed in four areas (mental ability, achievement, creativity and motivation). Once the evaluation is complete the rule provides two options to establish a student's eligibility for gifted program placement: (See http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/_documents/doe/legalservices/160-4-2-.38.pdf)
- Option 1- psychometric option uses a composite mental ability test score and achievement data; or
- Option 2- three out of four multiple-criteria eligibility option. Local school systems should give children opportunities to qualify in both eligibility methods.

Gifted Education Services Instructional Delivery Models:

There are six SBOE-approved instructional models to serve gifted students. (See http://www.gadoe.org/_documents/curriculum/instruction/gifted_regulations.pdf)

Direct
- Resource Class (K-12) ~ Limited class size (grades K-5: 17; grades 6-12: 21)
- Advanced Content Class (6-12) ~ Reduced class size (21)
- Cluster Grouping (K-12) ~ Recommended class size (5-8 gifted students)

Indirect
- Collaborative Teaching (K-12)
- Mentorship/Internship (9-12)
- Joint Enrollment/Postsecondary Options

Other
- Innovative Model approved yearly by the GA DOE Gifted Education department

Class size:

A Gifted Education class must follow specific class size regulations. See Appendix C of SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.08 CLASS SIZE: http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/_documents/doe/legalservices/160-5-1-.08.pdf

References:

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