

Differentiating the Curriculum for Gifted Learners

2nd Edition

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Introduction


The education of gifted students is a complicated topic. Many teachers shy away from talking about it because the subject intimidates them and possibly raises many questions. Some of the following reservations could be questions that you or your colleagues have considered:

- What does it mean for a child to be “gifted”?
- How are gifted students different from general education students?
- Why do gifted students need special services in our schools?
- How does a gifted educational program differ from general education programs?
- What are the best ways to differentiate instruction for gifted students?
- How should curriculum be taught to students who are identified as gifted?
- If gifted students are so bright, shouldn't they just be able to make it on their own?

This book will take the mystery out of teaching gifted students by addressing effective research-supported strategies to differentiate instruction, as well as how curriculum can be extended, accelerated, and enriched for gifted students. The book discusses how teachers can recognize gifted students in their classrooms. This book also explores the reasons why gifted students should be serviced in our schools and some of the most effective ways to accomplish this.

Within this book you will also find:

- Strategies for identifying gifted students, modifying content, and differentiating instruction in classrooms with gifted students
- Post-chapter reflection questions to help the reader reflect on how to apply the new knowledge learned



This book is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 helps teachers understand gifted learners by explaining what the word *gifted* means as well as characteristics of gifted children. Chapter 2 focuses on how teachers can prepare differentiated classrooms for their gifted learners. Teachers will learn how to use curriculum compacting effectively in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 shows ways to differentiate the content for gifted learners. In Chapter 5, readers learn about differentiating the processes in the classroom for gifted learners. Figuring out ways to differentiate products for gifted learners is discussed in Chapter 6. Ways to incorporate creative problem solving is dealt with in Chapter 7. Finally, the book ends with some final thoughts and ideas about gifted learners.

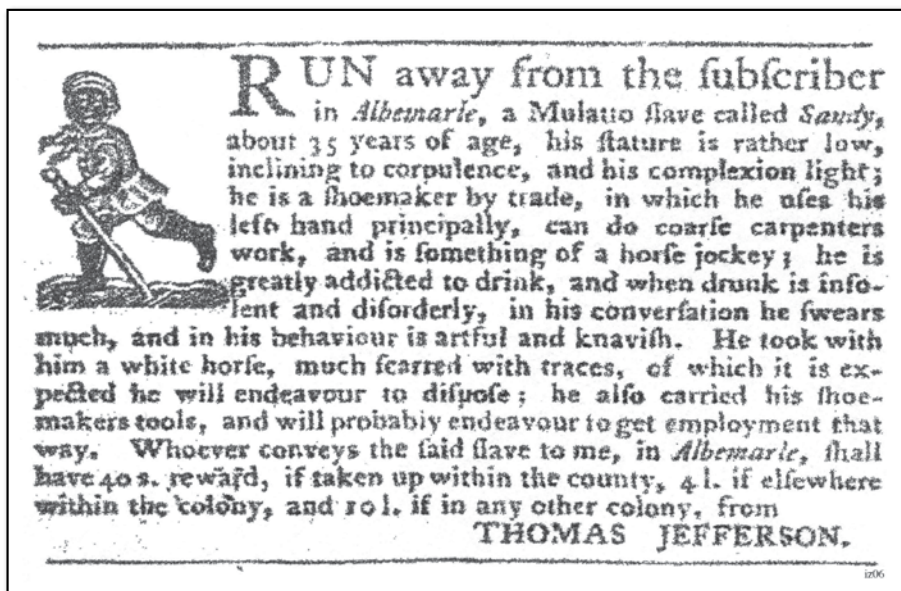
Chapter 4

Differentiating the Content for Gifted Learners

While we explore differentiating content for *gifted students*, the following example shows what a differentiated lesson looks like for an entire class.

On-grade-level students analyze an advertisement for a runaway slave, as seen in Figure 4.1. The advertisement was written by Thomas Jefferson.

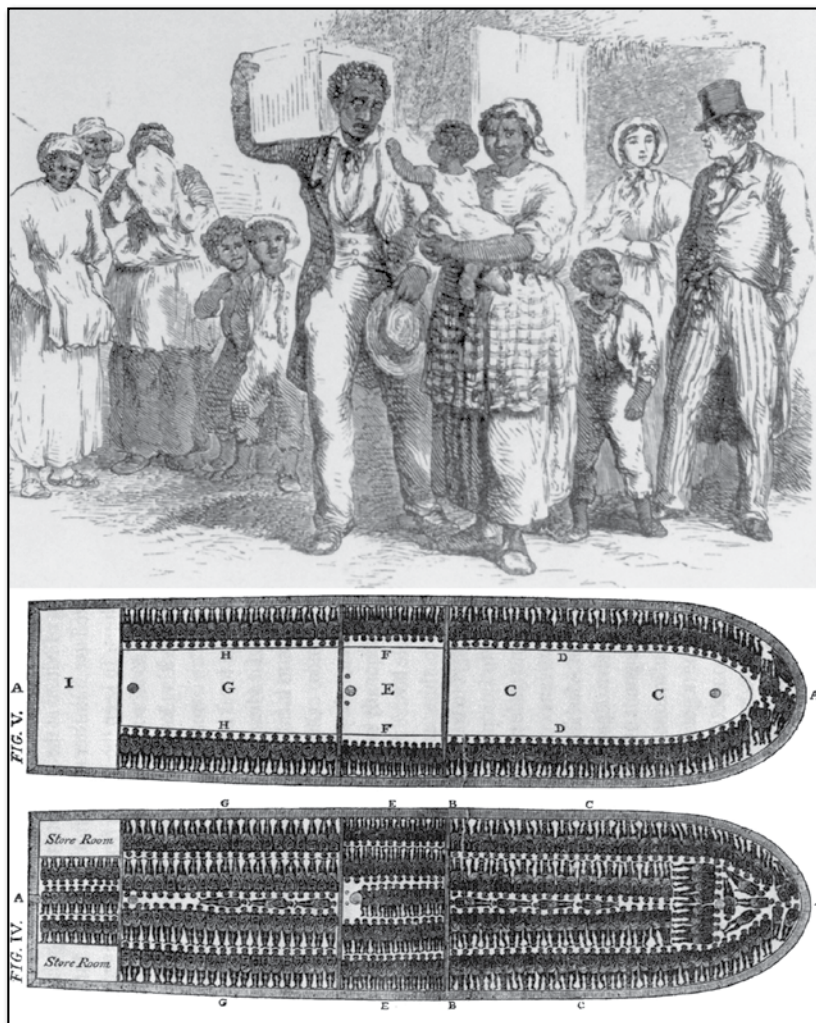
Figure 4.1 On-Grade-Level Students—Slavery Primary Source



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Struggling students and English language learners study a wordless poster showing two scenes: a scene where a slave is separated from his family and a packed slave ship, as seen in Figure 4.2. They have to figure out who would put these two scenes together as well as which image was older and why it had been created first.

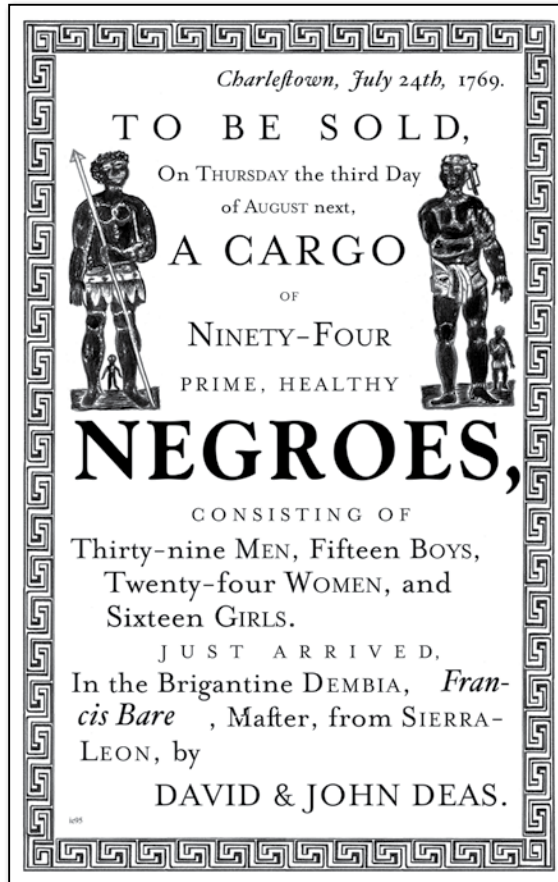
Figure 4.2 Below-Grade-Level Students—Slavery Primary Source



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Gifted students and other above-grade-level learners analyze a slave auction sign, as seen in Figure 4.3. Students have to read between the lines to fully grasp what the creator of this document meant.

Figure 4.3 Above-Grade-Level Students—Slavery Primary Source




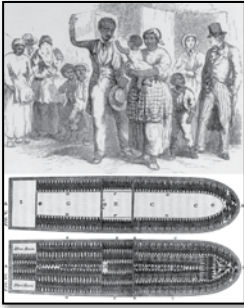
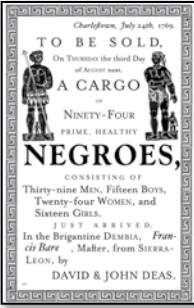
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While they work, all three groups have to answer these driving questions:

- What was the author's purpose in creating this primary source?
- What does this primary source tell us about that time in history?

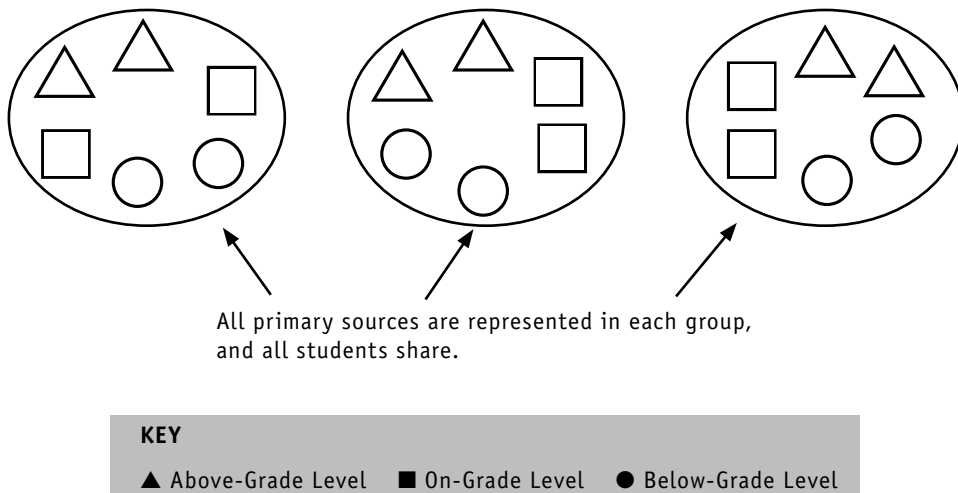
The same graphic organizer (Figure 4.4) is distributed to each student to keep track of what he or she learns.

Figure 4.4 Slave Poster Graphic Organizer

 <p>RUN away from the subscriber <i>Sandy</i>, in <i>Albany</i>, a Malacca slave called <i>Sandy</i>, about 25 years of age, his features in colour dark, inclining to copperance, and his complexion light; he is a housekeeper by trade, in which he sets his wife to work principally, can do some carpenter work, and is something of a back jockey; he is greatly addicted to drink, and when drunk is infamous and disorderly, in his conversation he swears much, and in his behaviour is cruel and knavish. He took with him a white horse, much fitted with traces, of which it is expected he will endeavour to dispose; he also carried his stock and tools, and will probably endeavour to get employment that way. Whoever catches the said figure to me, in <i>Albany</i>, shall have six shillings, if taken up within the county, and if elsewhere within the colony, and so on. In any other colony, from THOMAS JEFFERSON.</p>		 <p>Charleston, July 24th, 1789. TO BE SOLD, On TUESDAY the third Day of August next, A CARGO OR NINETY-FOUR PRIME, HEALTHY NEGROES CONSISTING OF Thirty-nine MEN, Fifteen BOYS, Twenty-four WOMEN, and Sixteen GIRLS. JUST ARRIVED In the Brigantine <i>DEMBIA</i>, <i>Francis Bare</i> Master, from <i>SIERRA-LEON</i>, by DAVID & JOHN DEAS.</p>
<p>Creator's purpose in making this source:</p>	<p>Creator's purpose in making this source:</p>	<p>Creator's purpose in making this source:</p>
<p>What does this say about that time in history?</p>	<p>What does this say about that time in history?</p>	<p>What does this say about that time in history?</p>
<p>Select any detail and tell the meaning behind it.</p>	<p>Select any detail and tell the meaning behind it.</p>	<p>Select any detail and tell the meaning behind it.</p>

The groups are instructed to read their posters, discuss these questions about the posters, and then record the answers in the appropriate columns on their graphic organizers. After some time, the groups are mixed up so that the students become part of mixed ability groups, as seen in Figure 4.5. In these new groups, students share their particular slave posters and information. While together, everyone completes the whole graphic organizer and walks away with a good understanding of all three posters.

Figure 4.5 Jigsawing Groups with Tiered Content



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The gifted students in this example studied just one poster, not several. The content of this poster was challenging. These students answered the same questions as everyone else and completed the same graphic organizer as everyone else. If they struggled to understand their poster, the teacher was nearby to offer any needed support. As a result, these students not only stayed engaged and learned something new, but they didn't feel like they had to do extra work!