

Frequently Used Terms in Gifted Education

Academic Learning Standard - The *minimum* academic material, by grade level, as set forth by the state, which every student in a grade is expected to know by the end of that school year. The MCAS tests are designed to test the knowledge of the students compared to those standards. They are considered the *minimum* level of achievement for every student at a grade level.

Accelerated Learning - Acceleration is an educational intervention based on progress through an educational program at rates faster or at ages younger than typical (Pressey, 1949). It is ideally suited to academically gifted students – young people who have an enhanced capacity to learn. Acceleration practices provide the appropriate level of challenge and reduce the time necessary for students to complete traditional schooling (NAGC, Position paper, 1972). There are many forms of acceleration, these are a few;

- Grade-skipping (whole-grade acceleration)
- Subject matter acceleration (e.g., math only)
- Curriculum compacting
- Advanced Placement
- Early entrance to college

Advanced Placement (AP) - A program developed by the College Board where high schools offer courses that meet criteria established by institutions of higher education. In many instances, college credit may be earned with the successful completion of an AP exam in specific content areas. (Note: Individuals interested in policies related to earning college credit should contact the college or university of their choice for specifics.)

Aptitude - An inclination to excel in the performance of a certain skill.

Assessment - Pre-Assessment - The process of assessing students' prior knowledge, ability, interest, and achievement in a given area before a teacher attempts instruction in that area.

Benchmark -Growth Assessment - Testing done to determine the growth of a student's achievement over time.

Asynchronous Development – A term used to describe disparate rates of intellectual, emotional, and physical rates of growth or development often displayed by gifted children.

At-Risk - Gifted students have some unique risks due to being gifted, which can be exacerbated by lack of appropriate learning environment. A few of these are; perfectionism, social/emotional issues, unidentified learning disabilities, behavior problems stemming from lack of challenge and putting them in danger of underachieving or dropping out.

Scheduling - Organizing the teaching schedule of multiple classrooms so each separate subject is taught at the same time in those classrooms. For example, all classes will have Math at the same time and all will have Language Arts at the same time. Scheduling can be done at each grade level or at the whole school level. This type of scheduling makes it possible to effectively group students by ability between classrooms and provides a structure whereby students of special needs don't get pulled out of one subject to receive support in another one, as has commonly been done.

Bright or Academically Advanced Student - A student who has above-average ability and can achieve at high levels academically.

Creativity - The process of developing new, uncommon, or unique ideas.

Critical Thinking - A persistent effort to examine evidence that supports any belief, solution, or conclusion prior to its acceptance. The ability to think clearly, to analyze, and to reason logically for purposes of decision making. This includes using specific attitudes and skills such as analyzing arguments and reaching sound conclusions.

Curriculum Compacting – After showing a level of proficiency in the basic curriculum, a student can then be allowed to exchange instructional time for other learning experiences.

Differentiation - Modifying curriculum and instruction according to content, pacing, and/or product to meet unique student needs.

Enrichment - Activities that add or go beyond the existing curriculum. Activities may occur in the classroom or in a separate setting. Enrichment can be horizontal, exposing students to a broader range of material, or vertical, exposing students to material that is more advanced or complex.

Gifted and Talented Students - The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act defines gifted and talented students as “Students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities.” [Title IX, Part A, Definition 22. (2002)] Many states and districts follow the federal definition.

Grouping - Many grouping practices are possible to help target the learning needs of gifted students. Here are a few that are commonly implemented to facilitate better instruction for gifted and academically advanced students.

Ability Grouping - An instructional strategy whereby students of similar potential, ability, performance or achievement levels are placed together in a setting that offers curriculum and instruction geared to the abilities, readiness or learning styles of the individuals comprising the group. Grouping allows gifted children access to learning at the higher level, depth, and complexity they need.

Flexible Skill or Strategy Grouping – An instructional strategy where students are grouped together by need for skill or strategy to receive appropriately challenging instruction. True flexible grouping permits students to move in and out of various grouping patterns, depending on the course content and their changing levels of readiness. Flexible ability grouping can take place in heterogeneous classrooms or in homogeneous classrooms.

Between Classes – Homogeneously organizing students into separate classes, according to their content needs for each individual subject, into learning groups that are fluid to meet the changing needs of students. Flexible groups can be reorganized to reflect learning differences between students, and reflecting their relative academic growth over time.

Cluster Grouping (Flexible Ability Grouping within a class) - A grouping assignment for gifted students in the regular heterogeneous/mixed ability classroom. Typically, five or six gifted students with similar needs, abilities, or interests are “clustered” in the same classroom.

Heterogeneous Grouping – Grouping students by mixed ability or readiness levels.

Homogeneous Grouping – Grouping students so that there is uniformity in a group according to a specific criterion.

Honors Class - A secondary level course specifically designed to be advanced in content, process, and product. Traditionally, students who meet prerequisite criteria are accepted into these courses.

Inclusion – The concept codified in the "Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act" (IDEA) which requires that students with certain special needs receive accommodations for their needs so they may be educated, whenever possible, in the general education setting.

Independent Study - A self-directed learning strategy where the teacher acts as guide or facilitator and the student plays a more active role in designing and managing his or her own learning.

Individualized Instruction – Custom instruction designed for and delivered to an individual student, reflecting and addressing the specific learning needs of that student, including prior knowledge, ability, skill level, learning style, learning rate, and interest.

Learning Styles - Preferred way(s) in which individuals interact or process new information across the three domains of learning identified in the taxonomy of education objectives: cognitive (knowledge), psychomotor (skills) and affective (attitude). An individual’s preferred learning style is how he/she learns best.

Learning Need – That knowledge, skill, instructional approach, or learning accommodation which a student requires as the next appropriate step in that student's individual learning path.

Learning Path – A path of knowledge and skill acquisition that's acknowledged as being both effective and efficient in intellectual and academic growth within subject areas.

Multiple Intelligences - The theory that intelligence can be expressed in a variety of ways. It is commonly associated with Howard Gardner identifies at least seven intelligences: linguistic, musical, spatial, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal.

Norm-Referenced Testing - An assessment that compares an individual’s results with a large group of individuals who have taken the same assessment (who are referred to as the “norming group”). Examples include the SAT and Iowa Tests of Basic Skills.

Peer Modeling – The process by which a student, through observing another student's success in the classroom believes he, too, can learn the concept, accomplish the task, or meet the goal because of the model's success in that goal. Research shows that modeling is **only effective when the modeled student is considered by the subject student to be a true academic peer**, either at or very close to his own level.

Portfolio Assessment - An alternative or supplement to traditional measures of giftedness, portfolios offer a collection of student work over time that can help to determine achievement and progress. Many of the elements found in portfolios cannot be captured by a standardized test.

Pull-out Program (for gifted students) - A program which takes a student out of the regular classroom during the school day for special activities such as critical thinking, creative problem solving, or extension of the general curriculum for more complexity and depth.

Readiness - A term used to describe a student's predisposition to be able to learn a new topic or material. Also called Readiness to Learn. Teachers typically use pre-assessments to determine individual students' readiness before beginning a unit. Students need to be taught material they are appropriately ready to learn, not material beyond their readiness, nor material they have already mastered.

Social-Emotional Needs (for gifted students) - Gifted and talented students may have affective needs that include heightened or unusual sensitivity to self-awareness, emotions, and expectations of themselves or others, and a sense of justice, moral judgment, or altruism. Counselors working in this area may address issues such as perfectionism, depression, underachievement, or career planning. They require curriculum modification, time with intellectual peers, and sensitivity to their individual situations as well to avoid underachievement or behavior difficulties.

Standards –

Content standards - The specific academic knowledge, skills, and abilities that all public schools in this state are expected to teach and all pupils are expected to learn in each of the core curriculum areas, at each grade level.

Performance standards - Standards that define various levels of competence at each grade level in each of the curriculum areas for which content standards are established. Performance standards gauge the degree to which a student has met the content standards and the degree to which a school or school district has met the content standards.

Talent Development - Identifying and focusing on students' specific aptitudes, developing those talents to the fullest through progressive challenge and complexity as well as support and encouragement, and overcoming barriers to the expression of abilities. It involves a process in which parents, school personnel, and the students themselves recognize, understand, and work together to facilitate the development of the students' unique talents.

Testing –

Achievement Testing - testing done to determine whether a student already achieves at a certain level. An achievement test attempts to gauge what material a person has already learned, not to discover what a person is capable of learning.

Intelligence Testing - Testing done in an attempt to assess a person's capacity to acquire knowledge (i.e., learn and understand), apply knowledge (solve problems), and engage in abstract reasoning.

Intelligence testing measures a potential whereas achievement testing measures an accomplishment. A person measured to have a high IQ may or may not be a high achiever. A high achiever may or may not have a high level of measured intelligence.

Tiered Assignments - A differentiated instructional strategy in which all students work toward the same goal, but activities are geared toward each student's level of understanding and need for complexity.

Twice Exceptional - A student who is gifted and also has a disability—a learning disability, behavioral or emotional disability or physical disability, for example. Some gifted children are twice exceptional. They are exceptional both because they are gifted and because they have one or more disabilities.

Underachieving or Underachievement - A discrepancy between recognized potential and actual academic performance. The causes of underachievement may be from social, emotional, physical, and/or academic factors.

Vertical Teaming - Educators from different grades at the elementary, middle, and high school levels working together as a team to develop a curriculum path that provides a seamless transition from Kindergarten through grade 12.