

Acceleration is Top Intervention

There is more research that supports acceleration of gifted students as a best practice than any other literature on the gifted. The National Association for Gifted Children in its position paper on acceleration lists three purposes of acceleration as a practice for gifted students.

1. Adjust the pace of instruction to meet a student's capabilities and ensure a sound work ethic.
2. Provide appropriate challenge to avoid boredom from repetitious learning.
3. Reduce the time period necessary for students to complete traditional schooling. (NAGC)

A variety of acceleration options are available to advanced students in Colorado depending on the school district.

- Content acceleration, mixed-grade or mixed age classes, curriculum compacting, telescoping, and tutoring in advanced content are all options for acceleration.
- Early Access for highly advanced, precocious gifted children under the age of six has been a provision for early entrance into Kindergarten and first grade since the passing of House Bill 08-1021 in 2008.
- The Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act, which was passed in May 2009, allows students in grades 9-12, who qualify, to concurrently enroll in secondary programs.
- The International Baccalaureate® lists 85 schools in Colorado that offer this accelerated program at various levels, primary through high school.

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Mind the GGAP (Gifted Growth and Performance) with Heart (High Empathy for Affective Results Too) is this year's focus for gifted education. .

Getting to the "Heart" of Underachievement

According to Dr. Sylvia Rimm, Gifted children are vulnerable to underachievement not so much based on genetics theories of intelligence, but early environmental influence. Rimm's clinical experiences with gifted children suggest that regardless of socioeconomic status, these children have at least one adult in their early childhood committed to providing enrichment that supports their intellectual development. In some cases these powerful one-on-one relationships can result in the gifted child becoming too dependent on the adult and accompanying attention or too dominant from the authority granted by the adult. Early school experiences can also reinforce underachievement if the student perceives individualized programming changes to accommodate his or her needs as a result of personal power over adults.

In response to her clinical observations, Sylvia Rimm developed the Trifocal Model for Reversing Underachievement Syndrome. The duration of time needed to complete the six-step process outlined below is dependent on the intensity of the underachievement, the student's age (which determines how long he or she has had the problem), and if peer pressure is part of the equation.

1. **Assessment** in a variety of quantitative and qualitative forms is necessary to determine the child's potential compared to performance; and to identify the student's underachievement type.
2. **Communication** among teachers, parents and the student helps to reverse Underachievement Syndrome most efficiently.
3. **Changing Expectations** of the student, parents and teachers to a new level of achievement is crucial to the process. Improvements must be recognized by all parties (including siblings and peers), and old (**Underachievement** continued on page 4)

Assessing Understanding

In compliance with legislation, Colorado joined the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortia as a governing member in August, 2012. PARCC is a multi-state assessment consortium that has developed shared English language arts (ELA) assessments in grades 3-11, mathematics assessments in grades 3-8, and three high school assessments. PARCC has also developed college and career-ready determinations that will be based on the assessments given in 11th grade.

It is anticipated that the PARCC ELA and mathematics assessments will replace the TCAP reading, writing and mathematics assessments in the spring of 2015. (Visit <http://www.parcconline.org/> to better understand the PARCC assessment design model and view [sample assessment questions](#).) Teachers who have viewed the assessment samples find them to be very rigorous and concept-based. Teaching to the test can only be accomplished by making sure students can apply concepts to problems, texts and situations, which they have not seen or experienced before.

At the National Association for Gifted Students Conference this fall, Joyce VanTassel-Baska, offered the following suggestions for teachers as they adapt lessons and create interim assessments to measure progress towards depth of understanding and concept mastery of the ELA Common Core Standards for gifted students. (Colorado adopted these standards in 2010, but they are now referred to as the Colorado Academic Standards for Reading, Writing and Communicating.)

1. Don't assess text you have already taught. Assess the students' ability to transfer what you have taught to a different text. This will ensure you are assessing the standard not recall of a specific text.
2. When designing your own assessments for gifted and advanced readers include any or all of the following:
 - More complex text
 - Key themes
 - Key lines
 - Key concepts used
 - Creation of a new title with rationale
3. When adapting lessons for gifted and advanced readers based on standards be sure to use the following:
 - Pre-assessment
 - Practice and assessment that allows for creative production
 - Focus on concepts, issues, and themes, NOT details specific to a text
 - Allow for adjustments in instructional pacing
 - Depth and complexity



I didn't fail the test, I just found a 100 ways to do it wrong.

Benjamin Franklin and a million gifted students

If you work with gifted students who set high expectations for achievement that often result in constant self-pressure to excel along with stress and test anxiety, consider addressing those issues through social-emotional goals written as part of the ALP. [The Study Guides and Strategies Website](#) offers the following strategies for taking a test:

- Relax: you are in control.** Take slow, deep breaths.
- Don't think about the fear.** Pause: think about the next step and keep on task, step by step.
- Use positive reinforcement for yourself.** Acknowledge that you have done, and are doing your best.
- Expect some anxiety.** It's a reminder that you want to do your best and can provide energy. Just keep it manageable.
- Realize that anxiety can be a "habit"** and that it takes practice to use it as a tool to succeed.
- After the test, review how you did.**
 - List what worked, and hold onto those strategies as building blocks to success.
 - List what did not work for improvement.
 - Celebrate that you are on the road to overcoming this obstacle

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Casting a Wide Net:

Using a Universal Screener to Assist in the Identification Process

Screening, in medicine, is a strategy used in a population to identify an unrecognized disease in individuals without signs or symptoms. In the same vein, universal screening for gifted potential involves screening all students at a particular grade level(s) to help identify giftedness in those students not showing behavioral or performance *signs* that would normally indicate giftedness.

The term *casting a wide net* is often used when referring to the use of a universal screener. Consider a fisherman that casts a wide net with the goal of catching only Prawns. When the net is pulled in the fisherman immediately tosses the sharks and Yellow Fin Tuna back into the ocean because they are so obviously not Prawns. Then he sifts through the remaining contents to sort out and keep only those species that have the specific characteristics he is looking for. He may have to go through several layers of the sorting process to first distinguish between the Prawns and Black Tiger shrimp, then between those Prawns that are food grade or not up to those standards, and then again by size. He might toss the smaller Prawns into a separate pool and look at them more carefully before sending his final catch off to market.

When using a universal screener to assist in the identification process of gifted students, the 95th percentile is not the determining factor as to whether the student is in or out of a program. In fact, percentile ranks are often lowered (80-85th percentile) to include a broader range of students who might show *signs* or *symptoms* of giftedness as a result of further investigation. For those students who do score at the 95th percentile or higher on the universal screener, the score can be used as a qualifying data point to include in the student's body of evidence. For those students who do not score at the 95th percentile or higher, more data is collected, questions are asked, and possible interventions are put into place before a final gifted identification recommendation is made.

Casting a wide net in gifted education is not about tossing out, but carefully sifting and even dredging through the data to uncover any hidden potential.

The ALP Experience: Procedures that Work in Small Districts

Many districts across the state have found innovative ways to make the Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) process collaborative and meaningful. Much of what makes the following district processes possible is the way gifted coordinators' positions are structured and funded. The consensus from all interviewed was that the process is a work in progress. All coordinators would like to be able to put more time into direct services to teachers and students within their budgetary and time constraints.

Johnstown Milliken Schools Weld RE-5J (3,100 students K-12)

Stacey Yost is the gifted education district coordinator for Johnstown Milliken. She is also a GT Coach in the elementary school at which she teaches full time. Every building has a GT coach who receives extra duty pay for fulfilling the following responsibilities:

- Collect identification data and be a member of the identification team for the district
- Support classroom teachers with suggested teaching strategies
- Write ALPS and coordinate collaborative efforts in the process

At the elementary level ALPs are developed collaboratively with the GT Coach, classroom teacher and student. Parents provide input at parent teacher conferences when the document is finalized and signed. For fifth-grade students leaving elementary school and transitioning to middle school another conference is held in the spring with the elementary and middle school GT coaches, classroom teachers and parents.

At the middle school and high school levels the ALP process is not as formal and parent involvement is often limited to a signature.

Haxtun School District RE-2J (320 students K-12)

The GT Coordinator for Haxtun is Joan Bogan. She works 30-35 hours per month over a 12-month period at a certified teacher rate. She oversees the Gifted and Title 1 programs K-12. Her GT Coordinator responsibilities include:

- Submit paperwork and collect data for AU reports
- Administer CogAT screener
- Coordinate leadership meetings for identification
- Oversee funding requests from teachers and students
- Organize and facilitate parent nights and Renzulli Learning System for students
- Write ALPS and coordinate collaborative efforts in the process

ALPs are written for gifted students in grades 3-12. The GT Coordinator sends an email to the teacher stating who the gifted child is and the area of identification. Sample affective and academic goals are also included in the email. Teachers write the ALP, then conference with students and parents to finalize goals. At the end of the year the ALP is submitted to the GT Coordinator with information on how and when the goals were met along with the student's signature. (ALP continued on page 4)

The Challenger

Calendar

State Advisory Committee (SAC)	Director's Meeting	Twice Exceptional Trainings	Gifted Learners Online Modules
March 7	April 25-26	http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/trainend.htm	http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/trainend.htm
May 16 Lowry Conference Center (both dates)	Doubletree by Hilton I-225 and Iliff	Level I Online Training March 25-May 5, 2013 Register	Developing Mathematical Thinking in Gifted Learners; March 1-April 26, 2013 The Gifted Learner; March 4-April 26, 2013

(ALP continued from page 3)

Elizabeth School District C-1 (2,600 students K-12)

In Elizabeth, Diane Marsten is the GT resource teacher and coach for two elementary schools. Her full-time position is divided equally between the two schools with the following responsibilities at each:

- Identify gifted students, which includes administering and scoring the CogAT screener.
- Provide pullout enrichment for third grade advanced students; co-teach cluster groups for math and reading in grades 4 and 5.
- Write ALPS and coordinate collaborative efforts in the process

The resource teacher, classroom teacher, parent and student collaboratively write the ALP for all fourth graders. The resource teacher meets with parents at parent-teacher conferences to also discuss how the student was identified. Fifth-graders set ALP goals with the resource teacher and then parents discuss and sign the document.

Lisa Hughes, a retired teacher, works as the GT resource specialist at the middle school for approximately 3 hours per week. Her responsibilities include:

- Facilitating discussion groups with students once a week during their advisement period
- Disseminate information to teachers about ALPs, enrichment activities, ACT and Explore testing, etc.
- Write ALPS and coordinate collaborative efforts in the process

Students are first taught how to write SMART goals and then they meet with the GT resource specialist for about 20 minutes to write their goals.

Students are encouraged to meet and exceed their goals, which are shared with the classroom teacher.

At the high school level, students meet with principal Dr. Greg Wieman to write their goals. The document is then mailed home for parent signatures.

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- Across the state, thirty-five different Advanced Placement classes are offered by districts as a form of acceleration. Total state enrollment approaches 68,000.
- Whole grade acceleration is a collaborative decision between the school and parents with recommended use of the Iowa Scales of Acceleration to guide the decision-making process.

To ensure that all students receive an education that best serves their needs, Reps. Carol Murray, R-Castle Rock and Rhonda Fields, C-Aurora, have introduced House Bill 1023. If passed, the bill would require all school districts and institute charter schools to implement an acceleration policy for their high ability students. HB 1023 passed the Colorado House of Representatives and has moved to the Senate for further consideration.

ACCELERATION RESEARCH & RESOURCES:

[What Does the Research Say About Acceleration Options for Gifted Students?](#)

[What Parents and Teachers Should Know About Academic Acceleration](#)

[Proceedings of the Academic Acceleration Poster Session at the 2008 Wallace Research Symposium on Talent Development](#)

(Underachievement continued from page 1)

levels of achievement can no longer be accepted as status quo.

4. Role Model Identification is important in providing an example to underachievers of the new behaviors they want to adopt. These models are often parents, if they are positive and achievement oriented. Parents must make their achievement efforts visible to their children as they can only copy what they see. "For children without appropriate role models, teachers fill an important vacuum." (Rimm 231) Teachers influence underachievers in positive directions when they help the student build skills and confidence.

5. Correction of Deficiencies is necessary to fill in any gaps in educational skills (related to reading, writing, language and math), correct special skill deficits and address anxiety issues related to those deficiencies.

6. Modifications at Home and School (Treatment Plan) are based on the child's underachievement type: Conforming and Nonconforming Dependent, Conforming Dominant and Nonconforming Dominant.

Rimm, Sylvia. *Why Bright Kids Get Poor Grades*. New York: Random House, 1995. 161-241. Print.