

Spring 09

CRCRTH/SPEG 646: The Gifted Student (Wed. 4-6:30)

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(617-287-6523) Office hours: Wed. 2-3:30 by appointment

Description:

Gifted and talented students are one of our most underserved populations of learners. This state-of-the-art course is for teachers and others concerned about meeting the needs of high potential learners in the regular and/or special classroom and at home. A broad spectrum of contemporary views on definition, identification and characteristics of high potential learners are explored through lively critical and creative thinking activities and discussion. Examination of further individual differences such as ethnicity, gender, misdiagnoses and dual diagnoses, underachievement and learning disabilities is also addressed.

Creation of learning environments and curriculum and instructional strategies that motivate and challenge high potential learners of any developmental age is also a major focus. This includes problem and inquiry-based learning, creative problem solving, invention, and humor and thinking which are specializations of the instructor. The course culminates with a unique opportunity to practice what has been learned with gifted students who will join us in class for this purpose.

Text: Davis and Rimm, *Education of the Gifted and Talented* (Fifth Ed)

Requirements:

(Individual) Reflective Practitioner's Journal: Educating gifted students is layered with complex but exciting challenges! Especially, it's important for those committed to advancing the field to deeply and continuously reflect on what is known, being learned, needs to be learned, needs to be changed, modified, improved, why and how. Maintaining a weekly journal that reflects on these issues is essential for professional growth and development and for becoming an effective change agent in the field.

(Individual) Exploration of an issue pertaining to the education and psychology of the gifted: Choose something that interests you, whether or not it's covered in the course, for example: how to define and reverse underachievement; what programs are needed for gifted learning disabled

students; a case study analysis and prescription; a survey designed to better understand a specific issue; creative use of resources for cost effective program development; a biographical study of a gifted /talented individual with emphases on “nurture” factors such as the role of parents, siblings, teachers, and mentors.

(Small Group) Development of a unit of study (5-6 lessons):

This is a very creative opportunity to translate theory into practice! Collaboratively, you’ll develop a series of lessons that demonstrate your understanding of how to challenge gifted students based on their special learning needs. You’re free to develop an exciting course of active, deep learning that will motivate and immerse gifted students in discovery and inquiry-based learning. AND-you’ll get to try out some of these ideas with some gifted students who will be your “mini-class” for one session!

Class Sessions:

The topics for class sessions should be considered tentative and flexible. Some topics may take longer than planned and the "flavor" of the course and your interests may warrant modifications as the class progresses. We may want to spend more or less time on pre-selected topics and decide to add or delete certain areas of concern. For each class, please come prepared to contribute your questions, “puzzlements” and perspectives on the readings. Class sessions will be very interactive and comprised of combinations of the following:

- **general discussion** based on reading assignments and supplemental material; make a habit of writing your questions about points that need further clarification or issues with which you agree or disagree
- **unstructured discussion time:** e.g., discussions of your concerns about the course and field as well as the subject matter
- **small group activities** centering on specific problems or issues through simulation exercises, case studies, role-plays and other problem solving activities designed to give your CCT gears a workout!
- **guest presentations** (TBA)
- **small group practice teaching** (based on lesson plan unit)

Jan. 28 **Getting Launched!**

- introductions and course content
- **key question:** what do we know (or think we do) about gifted students?
- important professional organizations and publications

- hw: gifted students/education in the news (bring an article!)
- reading: Chapter 1 (History and Definitions)

Feb. 4 Definitions

- your definition of gifted?
- **key question:** how/ have definitions of giftedness changed over time?
- gifted students/education in the news
- reading: Chapter 2 (characteristics)

Feb. 11 Characteristics

- **key question:** How do we recognize giftedness?
- case study (“Tommy”)
- “different gifts” (characteristic clusters)
- perfectionism (“tip of the iceberg” problem?)
- symbol stories (an exercise in MI ways of thinking)
- teachers of the gifted (generating criteria)
- reading: Chapter 4 ((Identification)

Feb. 18 Identification (guest panel: TBA)

- **key question:** What makes identification of the gifted so complex?
- a simulation
- standard identification procedures: pros and cons
- benefits of identifying gifted students? drawbacks?
- differences between a matrix approach and a talent pool approach?
- reading: Chapters 5/6 (Acceleration, Enrichment, Grouping)

Feb. 25 Acceleration, Enrichment, Grouping (AEG)

- **key question:** What’s myth and what’s reality?
- advantages and disadvantages of AEG
- commonly used enrichment strategies if no program exists
- case study: which option is best and how to know?
- simulation (curriculum compacting: how to find out whether to accelerate a student)
- reading: Chapters 5/6 continued
- reading: Chapter 7 (Curriculum Models)

Mar. 4 Acceleration, Enrichment, Grouping, Curriculum Models

- **key question:** What’s good for the gifted – good for all students?
- reacting to the question (carousel brainstorm exercise)
- types of curriculum models

Renzulli Enrichment Triad and Revolving Door
Renzulli Schoolwide Enrichment
FPS and Odyssey of the Mind
The Parallel Curriculum
Differentiated Curriculum

- reading: Chapters 9, 10, 11 (Critical and Creative Thinking)

Mar. 11 CCT Instructional Strategies (Guest panel: TBA)

- **key question: What is critical and creative thinking? (Aren't gifted students automatically good at this?)**
- doing creative thinking (skills/dispositions)
- doing critical thinking (skills/dispositions)
- doing confluent thinking and problem solving (PBL)
- begin small group unit development
- reading: Chapters 9, 10, 11 (Critical and Creative Thinking)
- unit development meeting
(first reflective practitioner's journal due)

Spring Break: March 14-22

Mar. 25 CCT Instructional Strategies continued

- **key question: What is critical and creative thinking? (Aren't gifted students automatically good at this?)**
- unit development meeting
- hw: bring cartoons!
- reading: Chapter 13 (Underachievement: Diagnosis and Treatment)

April 1 Special Populations (underachievement)

- **key question: Why do gifted students underachieve in school and what can be done to address this?**
- cartoons metaphors
- case study/role-play
- diagnosis and treatment
- unit development meeting
- reading: Chapter 14 (The Cultural Underachievement of Females)

Apr. 8 Special Populations (gifted females)

- **key question: Gifted females have come a long way – or have they?**
- environmental contributors to the underachievement of gifted females

- unit development meeting
- reading: Chapter 15 (Gifted Children with Disabilities)

Apr. 15 Special Populations (misdiagnoses and dual diagnoses)

- **key question: Why do so many of our brightest, most creative children and adults are receiving so many *diagnoses*? (e.g., Asperger's; ADHD; learning disabilities; mood disorders; anger disorders)**
- case study
- differentiating gifted behaviors from pathological behaviors
- types of programs gifted students with disabilities need to achieve
- unit development meeting
- reading: Chapters 3 and 18

Apr. 22 Program Planning and Evaluation

- **key questions: Fundamentals of effective program planning and evaluation criteria?**
- **role-play: GT planning committee meeting**

(second reflective practitioner's journal due)

Apr. 29 Program Planning and Evaluation

May 6 mini-class teaching and group unit plan due

May 13 Taking Stock as reflective Practitioners!

- **key question: What have we learned, what still needs to be learned about educating gifted students?**
- individual projects due and sharing!

Optional Resources:

Renzulli and Reis: *Schoolwide Enrichment Model* (Creative Learning Press, Mansfield, CT)

Piirto, J. *Understanding Those Who Create* (Gifted Psychology Press, 1998)

Miriam Adderholt and Jan Goldberg *Perfectionism: What's Bad About Being Too Good* (1999)

V&M Goertzel: *Cradles of Eminence: Childhoods of More Than 700 Famous Men and Women*