Introduction to Curriculum for the Gifted  
Syllabus

Course Description

The course offers participants the opportunity to explore curriculum models and modifications for gifted students in both self-contained and inclusion classes. Participants will consider the role of pre-assessment in differentiated instruction and will develop sample curriculum and assessment tools that are tailored to the needs of gifted students.

Competencies

Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to
• Design evidence-based curriculum that differentiates for gifted learners and emphasizes the development of practical, creative, and transferable knowledge and skills;
• Integrate relevant theories in curriculum design, including principles of backwards design, teaching for understanding, concept-based learning, interdisciplinary curriculum and the importance of critical thinking;
• Incorporate effective, holistic assessment into all stages of curriculum delivery by pre-assessing gifted learners and then constructing formative and summative assessment tools to measure their progress against appropriate learning outcomes;
• Create a classroom environment that supports the affective needs of gifted students, striking a balance between rigor and student engagement, and incorporating a variety of resources and strategies for students with diverse needs and backgrounds;
• Demonstrate consideration of the intellectual needs and abilities of gifted students when designing learning experiences that are differentiated from the regular academic curricula and paced according to student needs via compacting, independent contracts and tiered assignments;
• Develop multicultural curricula that promote higher-order thinking skills for students of diverse background and ability;
• Explore instructional and management strategies that capitalize on
the strengths of gifted students while addressing and remediating any identified areas of weakness; and

- Explain the rationale for differentiated gifted curriculum, applying theories and research models that focus specifically on the gifted, and explaining the alignment with national, state or local standards already in place.

**Materials**

All materials are accessed via the CaseNEX website using the PIN provided and the user name/password you create.

All readings listed can be found by going to Class Materials ➔ Virtual Library ➔ Readings (Search).

If you do not have the most recent versions of the following software, please download each from the given sites.

- Windows Media Player
- RealPlayer
- Adobe Reader
- QuickTime

**Cases Used**

- Teaching Them All
- Reality Check
- Snowplow

**Course Schedule**

Find session dates by selecting Syllabus on the top menu bar. For typical courses, final Discussions, Journals, and Workbooks are due by Saturday at midnight unless otherwise noted. Please see the News Flash for any alterations of the course schedule posted by your instructor.
**Introductory Session**

*Exploring the CaseNEX Site*

Complete these tasks prior to the beginning of Session 1.

**Readings**

Read the course requirements, paying special attention to the Case-Analysis and Workbook Assignment Rubrics. They will be used by your instructor throughout the course to evaluate assignments where appropriate.

**Discussion**

Post one entry introducing yourself to your classmates. Include reasons why you are taking this course, what you hope to get out of it, and specific areas of strength that you feel you bring to the class. You may also include any professional or relevant personal information, including your experience and interest in gifted education and/or curriculum development.

**Journal**

Describe your philosophy of education. What experiences have shaped who you are in the classroom now and who you hope to become in the future (in or out of the classroom)?

**Note**

Use CaseMail to send a note to your instructor stating that you will be taking this course. To do so, click on CaseMail on the top menu bar and then ‘Click here to create a new message.’ Use the marked link to look up an address. Continue linking down until you see the class list. Select the instructor’s name and then compose your message and hit ‘Post Message.’
Session 1
Understanding Today’s Educational Climate

Standards

4 Instructional Strategies (S1) Apply pedagogical content knowledge to instructing learners with gifts and talents.

7 Instructional Planning (S1) Align differentiated instructional plans with local, state/provincial and national curricular standards

Case
Snowplow

Critical Perspective
Carol Tomlinson on Gifted Education (access under the Class Materials menu)
  • Current Issues
  • A Look at the Future
  • The Curriculum Banquet

Readings
  • Reconcilable Differences? Standards-Based Teaching and Differentiation
  • Take Back the Standards: A Modest Proposal for A Quiet Revolution
  • Will the Real Standards-Based Education Please Stand Up?
  • South Carolina Gifted and Talented Best Practices Manual: Chapter 2

Discussion
Effective curriculum design takes into account both what we teach and how we teach. Take Back the Standards and Will the Real Standards-Based Education Please Stand Up? argue, respectively, for and against the standards, and in Snowplow, Kim works to cover the standard curriculum and engage students in her self-contained gifted classroom. Analyze Kim’s teaching in the case videos and apply the arguments for and/or against standards in her gifted classroom. Does Kim effectively marry her standards-based curriculum model (what she teaches) with instructional model (how she teaches)? Apply suggestions from
“Reconcilable Differences” to improve or change her delivery, considering the needs of gifted students.

Journal

Reflect upon the current state of gifted education as presented by the South Carolina Gifted and Talented Best Practices Manual and Carol Tomlinson as well as the arguments presented in Take Back the Standards and Will the Real Standards-Based Education Please Stand Up?. Identify the issues in gifted education as you see them. Describe specific actions you will take in your classroom to bridge the gap between covering the mandated standards and providing meaningful and genuine learning experiences for all students, including gifted learners.

Note

Check your CaseMail (linked from top menu bar) and News Flash (on the right when you login) for notes from your instructor every time you log on to the site.

Workbook

None this session
Session 2
Brain Research and the Implications of Standards-Based Learning

Standards

4 Instructional Strategies (S2) Apply higher-level thinking and metacognitive models to content areas to meet the needs of individuals with gifts and talents

7 Instructional Planning (S2) Design differentiated learning plans for individuals with gifts and talents, including individuals from diverse backgrounds

Case
Snowplow

Readings
• 12 Brain/Mind Learning Principles in Action
• Preserving the Child in Every Learner
• Underachievement Among Gifted Students of Color

Discussion

In what ways has Kim’s instructional approach supported brain-based research, and in what ways can she add to or enhance her instructional model so that it further supports the principles of brain-based learning? How do the culturally responsive teaching strategies presented in “Underachievement Among Gifted Students of Color” support or refute the theories of brain-based learning?

Journal

Page 5 of the article “Preserving the Child in Every Learner” has a seven question survey. Consider the perspective of your students, parents or administrators, and take the survey as they would. Summarize the types of answers you felt would be provided by the person you chose. Then reflect on the changes you could make to your instructional model to address any issues that arise.

Workbook
None this session
Session 3
Concept-Based Curriculum

Standards

4 Instructional Strategies (S3) Provide opportunities for individuals with gifts and talents to explore, develop, or research their areas of interest or talent.

7 Instructional Planning (K1) Theories and practices that form the basis of curriculum development and instruction practice for individuals with gifts and talents.

Case
Reality Check, Scene 2

Readings
- Quality Curriculum and Instruction for Highly Able Students
- How Do I Implement a Concept-Based Unit of Study? Eight Step Concept-Based Model

Discussion

In the case “Reality Check”, George Augustine, the gifted coordinator, heads an initiative to integrate concept-based instruction in every classroom. In what ways does a concept-based curriculum embody the “quality curriculum” ideals set forth in “Quality Curriculum and Instruction for Highly Able Students?” How does this meet the goals for Curriculum for Academically Gifted Students introduced in Chapter 2 of the South Carolina Gifted and Talented Best Practices Manual? What specific steps do the teachers and administrators in the case need to take to implement a concept-based approach to teaching and learning? Describe any successes or challenges you’ve faced (or could foresee) in regards to concept-based teaching and learning.

Journal

How might you and other teachers in your school use essential understandings to integrate the curriculum across the disciplines? Use knowledge gained from the readings to include ways in which your existing curriculum (or your school or district’s mandated curriculum)
might be modified to become more concept-based. How might a concept-based curriculum, with its focus on essential understandings and connections among subjects, help students develop a deeper level of understanding?

**Workbook**

Concept-Based Curriculum Unit

Choose a topic from your own curriculum and create a detailed outline for a concept-based curriculum unit. Use the assigned reading, “How Do I Implement a Concept-Based Unit of Study?” as a guide for this assignment. Be sure to label clearly the eight steps (listed in the article) for creating your unit. For the lesson plan section of the unit you should provide a one or two sentence description of each lesson.

Due by the end of Session 4
Session 4
Rethinking Curricular Structure

Standards

4 Instructional Strategies (S4) Preassess the learning needs of individuals with gifts and talents in various domains and adjust learning based on continual assessment.

7 Instructional Planning (S5) Select and adapt a variety of differentiated Curricula that incorporate advanced, intellectually challenging, in-depth, distinctive and complex content.

Case
Reality Check

Readings
• Concepts and Themes: A Learning Odyssey
• The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners (Chapter 6 and Chapter 9)

Discussion

In a differentiated classroom, the structure of curriculum must change and adapt to the needs of the learners. Discuss the ways in which a concept-based curriculum might be a vehicle for effective differentiation, using the chapters from “The Differentiated Classroom” to cite specific ways curriculum could be differentiated for gifted learners. What objections from parents, teachers and students might arise when implementing this curriculum, and how would you address them?

Journal

Effective concept-based teaching is integrated and longitudinal; that is, connections to other subjects are identified, and the curriculum stretches past one unit, term or year. Look at the curriculum standards for your subject and one other, and identify two or three possible concepts to develop units around. Consider the consequences, positive and negative, of implementing this type of curriculum in your classroom; what issues might arise as continue to apply concept-based curriculum throughout the year?
Workbook

*Concept-Based Curriculum Unit* Assignment from Session 3 is due by the end of this session.
Session 5
Understanding by Design: A Curriculum Model

Standards

4 Instructional Strategies (S5) Pace delivery of curriculum and instruction consistent with the needs of individuals with gifts and talents.

7 Instructional Planning (S3) Develop scope and sequence plans for individuals with gifts and talents.

Case
None this session

Readings
• Understanding By Design: A Brief Introduction
• Rubric for the 6 Facets of Understanding
  http://faculty.fullerton.edu/npelaez/SCED55x/ubdrubric25pts.htm
• Teaching for Understanding
  http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=1309
• South Carolina Gifted and Talented Best Practices Manual: Chapter 3

Discussion

In “Understanding by Design,” Wiggins and McTighe define the difference between “thinking like an assessor and thinking like an activity designer.” Why is this distinction important when using backwards design, and how is this approach similar or different from the concept-based approach to curriculum design? What are the implications for this type of curriculum design in the classroom? How do these ideas relate to the ideas about student assessment and evaluation presented in the South Carolina Gifted and Talented Best Practices Manual?
Journal

Research on Teaching for Understanding indicates that “The design of assessments is critically important. Proper assessment requires that teachers be well versed in the content domain being studied, and that they use assessments that reveal the depth of students’ understanding. Assessments may include methods like interviews, problem-solving tutorials, and journaling.” When teaching for understanding, the design of the curriculum and the design of the assessments will necessarily change. Identify any concerns that could arise from the perspective of a student or parent, using knowledge gained from the readings from this session.

Workbook

The Six Facets of Understanding

Select a culminating, performance-based activity that you currently use in your classroom and design a rubric that assesses the Six Facets of Understanding for that project. Use the rubric provided as a model, but tailor the rubric to your grade level and specific task. Provide a thorough description of the project (including a brief schedule for how students will complete it) and a rationale for using this rubric in your classroom.

OR

Implementation Analysis Using the 5-Step Method

Imagine that your school district has adopted Understanding By Design as a new model for curriculum design. Use the 5-Step Method to analyze the impact that the implementation of the UBD model might have on curriculum design in your own school. Address the following:

• What might be some of the issues that arise with the implementation of this model?
• What might be some of the consequences, positive and negative, associated with using UBD as a model for curriculum design?
• Consider the perspectives of the teachers, parents, and administration in your analysis.
• What actions can the administration and the district take to create training opportunities that will improve the facilitation of the UBD model?
• Use knowledge from the readings to predict the level of
comfort that teachers might feel in using the new model.

Refer to the Case Analysis Rubric under the course tutorial to help guide your thinking.

Due by the end of this session
Session 6
The Parallel Curriculum Model

Note: Due to the introductory nature of this course, this session is designed to provide an overview of this very complex model. For a more comprehensive study of the model we recommend the following texts:


Standards

4 Instructional Strategies (K2) Curricular, instructional, and management strategies effective for individuals with exceptional learning needs

7 Instructional Planning (S4) Select curriculum resources, strategies, and product options that respond to cultural, linguistic, and intellectual differences among individuals with gifts and talents.

7 Instructional Planning (S6) Integrate academic and career guidance experiences into the learning plan for individuals with gifts and talents.

Case
None this session

Readings
- The Parallel Curriculum Model (PCM); The Whole Story [http://www.casenex.com/casenex/PCM_article.pdf](http://www.casenex.com/casenex/PCM_article.pdf)
- The Parallel Curriculum Model as a Tool for Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners [http://clties.people.wm.edu/PCM_Shelby_short.pdf](http://clties.people.wm.edu/PCM_Shelby_short.pdf)

Discussion

Review the following definition from this session’s reading:
Ascending levels of intellectual demand is the process that escalates one or more facets of the curriculum in order to match a learner’s profile and provide appropriate challenge and pacing. Prior knowledge and opportunities, existing scheme, and cognitive abilities are major attributes of a learner’s profile. Teachers reconfigure one or more curriculum components in order to ensure that students are working in their zone of optimal development.

Put the definition of ALID into more practical terms. What does this term mean to you, and how does it apply to your classroom? How can you design lessons that address Ascending Levels of Intellectual Demand for all students?

**Journal**

The Parallel Curriculum model is a set of four interrelated parallels that can be used to redesign or modify existing curriculum. The PCM provides a qualitatively different curriculum through the four parallels: core, practice, connections, and identity. Using your knowledge from the readings for this class, provide a brief description for each of the four parallels. How does this model help to redirect the instructional focus from facts to a focus on deeper understanding?

**Workbook**

Parallel Curriculum Unit Plan

For this assignment you are to use the Parallel Curriculum Model as a tool for examining and revising current curriculum for advanced learners.

- Choose an existing unit of study and then use your knowledge of the four parallels (core, connections, practice and identity) to modify this unit.
- Be sure to show how you will design the new unit with a plan for Ascending Levels of Intellectual Demand.
- You should include the following information about your unit:
  - Grade level
  - Content area
  - Topic
  - Unit objectives, related to state standards
  - Unit lessons: Include a one- to two-sentence description of each lesson.
✓ Assessments

• It may be helpful to organize the unit plan in chart form, listing the information about the existing unit in one column and the information about the revised unit in the other column.

Due by the end of Session 8
Session 7  
*Gifted in the Mixed-Ability Classroom*

**Standards**

4 **Instructional Strategies (S6)** Engage individuals with gifts and talents from all backgrounds in challenging, multicultural curricula.

7 **Instructional Planning (K3)** Curriculum emphases for individuals with gifts and talents within cognitive, affective, aesthetic, social and linguistic domains.

**Case**  
Teaching Them All

**Readings**
- What Differentiated Instruction is and Isn’t
- Tiered Instruction: Beginning the Process
- Tracking, Ability Grouping and the Gifted

**Discussion**

Based upon your professional experiences and information in Teaching Them All and this week’s readings, describe the steps you need to take to differentiate in today’s mixed ability classes. What challenges might you face when designing learning experiences for students of diverse ability? What strategies can you use to ensure high expectations and rigorous curriculum for gifted learners and to meet the South Carolina accepted models?

**Journal**

Consider this quote from the National Association for Gifted Children:

> Gifted learners must be given stimulating educational experiences appropriate to their level of ability if they are to realize their potential. Each person has the right to learn and to be provided challenges for learning at the most appropriate level where growth proceeds most effectively.

What **issues** arise when differentiating instruction for gifted students? Discuss possible **consequences** of a curriculum that lacks rigor from
the **perspective** of a parent and a gifted student.

**Workbook**

*Parallel Curriculum Unit Plan Assignment from Session 6 is due by the end of Session 8.*
Session 8
Curriculum Modifications for Gifted Learners

Standards

4 Instructional Strategies (K1) School and community resources, including content specialists, that support differentiation

7 Instructional Planning (K2) Features that distinguish differentiated curriculum from general curricula for individuals with exceptional learning needs.

Case
Teaching Them All

Readings
• You Can Make Flexible Grouping Work!
• Individual Instruction Plan Menu for the Gifted Child
• Curriculum Compacting: A Necessity for Academic Advancement

Discussion

Based on the readings for the past two sessions, which curriculum models do you feel are most appropriate for gifted students in both a self-contained program and an inclusion class? What challenges might educators face when implementing these models in both settings, and how can they be addressed?

Journal

How do the gifted education services presented in this course compare to gifted program offerings in your school and district? Speculate about the perspectives of gifted students, their families, your colleagues, other students, and community members about your district’s offerings. How might they view these instructional programs, and what changes might they suggest for their improvement? What changes will you make in your classroom as a result of what you’ve learned?

Workbook

Parallel Curriculum Unit Plan Assignment from Session 6 is due by the end of this session.