Introduction to the Gifted and Talented

Syllabus

Course Description

This core course provides a basic understanding of the characteristics and needs of gifted and talented children. Emphasis is placed upon current issues in the study of gifted and talented students and the programs designed to meet their needs.

Competencies

Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to

Know

• Multiple definitions of giftedness
• Names and contributors of key leaders
• Characteristics of gifted learners
• Socio-emotional characteristics of gifted
• Historical events of significance to the field of gifted education
• The meaning of key terms frequently used
• Multiple methods for identifying gifted students
• Varied gifted programming options
• Services for gifted learners (attributes of defensible curriculum, instruction, and assessment)
• Basic information about unresolved issues in the field of gifted education

Understand

• There are multiple perspectives toward defining giftedness
• Attributes of giftedness may manifest differently in diverse groups of students
• There are multiple components that must be considered in the education of gifted learners (e.g., philosophy, definition...)
• These components are interrelated and interdependent
• Decisions about one program component has implications for the other components
• There are various models for gifted programs and curricular
frameworks each of which possess different assumptions about the meaning and philosophy of giftedness

**Be able to**

- Describe traits, attributes, and characteristics of gifted learners (traditional, concomitant)
- Articulate best practices in identifying and serving gifted learners in a variety of settings

**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**

- Boxed In
- Conducting Learning
- Dealing with Data
- The Best and the Brightest

**Course Requirements and Grades**

Close reading of all assigned materials is expected prior to beginning other course requirements listed for each session. Please make every effort to complete assignments by the due date. If you are turning in an assignment late, you must email your instructor to inform him/her that a late assignment has been posted. Points will be deducted from late work at the instructor's discretion.

**Introductory Session (2 points)** – Students completing the outlined requirements of the introductory session can earn 2 bonus points. The Journal and Discussion in this session do not count toward your
Discussion (48 points) - Informed participation in online Discussions led by the course instructor is required. Discussion topics will be posted each session by your instructor. Participation should not be limited to simply answering the instructor's question. Instead, discussions should follow an ongoing process of reviewing and responding to classmates' and instructor's comments in a dialogue fashion. Discussion postings should include application of the session's readings to the issues raised in the discussion prompt. You should log into and participate in the discussion at least three separate times each session. Your first posting must be your response to the discussion question, followed by at least two responses to your classmates' comments. (Please note, your class discussion can be found under the 'Discuss' tab on the top menu bar. The 'Discuss this case' link found within cases is a 'global' discussion area where you can interact with students in other courses. For the purpose of your class discussion assignments, however, please use the top menu bar.) You are required to participate in 8 topics of Discussion and may earn up to 6 points per session, for a total of 48 possible points.

Journal (42 points) – Completion of reflections based upon personal and professional experiences, session readings, and Journal prompts is required. These reflections are to be completed in your online Journal and should use components of the 5-Step Method as indicated in the prompt. To access your Journal, click on the “Journal” button on the top menu bar. This entry can only be viewed by you and your instructor. Your instructor will provide feedback for each Journal posting. Graduate students are required to complete 6 journals from a choice of 8. Each Journal is worth a maximum of 7 points for a total of 42 possible points. The two journals not chosen may be used with prior instructor permission only for make-up or substitution points for a struggling student under unusual circumstances (for example, serious health problem or other family emergency). All Journals have a suggested length of 250 words. See the Case Analysis Rubric (under Course Tutorials) for details on how your Journal will be evaluated.

Workbook (75 points) – The Workbook is intended as a place to apply course concepts to your unique school situation. Graduate students are required to complete three Workbook Assignments as noted in the syllabus. Each Workbook will be worth 25 points, for a total of 75 possible points. See the Workbook Assignment Rubric (under Course Tutorials) for details. Workbooks are accessed from the Talking to Each Other menu. Post your Workbook Assignment there.
following the directions given. (Note: If your Workbook includes images, charts, tables, or other complex formatting, please work in a word processing program and then attach your work to this area. This will ensure that all formatting stays intact). When citing sources, be sure to reference them appropriately using APA style. (See APA Style.org, Electronic References http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html).

Total points: 165

A  148 - 165
B  132 - 147
C  115 – 131

**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. You may choose to describe your professional background and experience, relevant personal information, or why you are interested in gifted education. (100 words or fewer)

**Journal**

What do you find inspiring and challenging about your working with gifted students? (100 words or fewer)

**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 Giftedness and Its Indicators

Case
Boxed In

Readings
- Definitions of Gifted and High Potential Students
- What We Have Learned About Gifted Children
- The History of Gifted and Talented Education
- State Definitions, Laws, and Resources

Discussion

In “Definitions of Gifted and High Potential Students,” some modern definitions and characteristics of giftedness are presented. Briefly discuss the definitions presented in this reading. Which characteristics best support Pauline’s positions on Becky’s and Allyson’s gifted status in Boxed In?

Journal

Based upon your professional experiences and knowledge gained from this session’s readings, present your own definition of gifted learners. Then, discuss creativity as a type of intelligence. Does the gifted program at your school recognize creativity as a form of giftedness? What are the consequences, positive and negative, of including students who exhibit creative intelligence in a traditional gifted program?

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
Identifying Gifted Students

Case
Boxed In

Readings
• Intelligence Testing and Cultural Diversity: Pitfalls and Promises
• The identification of Children Who Are Gifted
• IQ Tests and Gifted Children

Discussion
Review Scene 3 of Boxed In. In your opinion, which of the three students discussed do you think shows the clearest indications of giftedness? Which do you think would qualify for gifted services in your district? Does your opinion on this question match your district’s criteria? If not, in which ways do they differ? Be sure to justify your opinion by incorporating knowledge from this session’s readings throughout your discussion.

Journal
Review your district’s gifted education eligibility requirements, procedures, services, and percentage of students served. Summarize the issues and relate them to the readings. Based upon this analysis, list what you see as reliable indicators of giftedness, and describe specific actions that could be taken to improve gifted eligibility requirements, identification procedures, and resulting services.

Workbook
None this session
Session 3
Gifted Programming Alternatives

Case
The Best and the Brightest

Readings
• Defining Giftedness and Its Goals
• Exploring the Conflicts Involved with Ability Grouping
• Choices for High School: IB and AP

Discussion

Focus on the Best and Brightest. Based upon your knowledge of the demographics of the school and the classroom featured in the case, how might the advanced English class be perceived by students and families in this school? Drawing upon the readings, discuss the potential consequences of servicing gifted students in this way along with actions that could be taken to address both equity and excellence in this setting.

Journal

How have the experiences of gifted students in the regular classroom prompted the call for special classes in your school or district? Reflect upon the issues that have arisen based upon resulting grouping of gifted students.

Workbook

Evaluation of Instructional Strategies

The readings for this session provide examples of programming options for meeting the needs of gifted learners. Focus on three students you know and provide an overview of at least four different program options for addressing their higher-level learning needs. List what you believe to be the pros and cons of each option. Consider your own teaching environment. Which of these would you feel most comfortable implementing? Consider the perspectives of students, families, and administrators. Would you have support for your choices? This assignment should be no longer than 750 words.
Due by the end of Session 4
Session 4
Providing Options for Differentiated Instruction

Case
Conducting Learning

Readings
- A Teacher’s Guide to Differentiating Instruction
- Differentiating Instruction: Rethinking Traditional Practices
- The Rationale for Differentiated Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms

Discussion

Focus on Conducting Learning. Assuming that Martha’s class contains a handful of students with high-average abilities who need much more structure and direction than Megan and drawing upon the readings, describe differentiation strategies Martha might use to broaden her reach and support this range of students.

Journal

Focus on one class or subject that you teach and draw upon this session’s readings. Which differentiation approaches do you think might best match the needs in your class? How might you begin to use them to meet the needs of your students? What obstacles or issues might prevent you from the successful implementation of these approaches? What actions might you take to address these?

Workbook

Evaluation of Instructional Strategies Assignment from Session 3 is due by the end of this session.
Session 5
The Consequences of Being Gifted

Case
None this session

Readings
- Many Ages at Once
- Asynchronous Development
- Consequences of Being Gifted (use the links to connect to all four sections of the article)

Discussion

Use your knowledge from the assigned readings to discuss asynchronous learning in gifted students. What is asynchronous learning? How can this phenomenon affect the identification or the appropriate placement of gifted students?

Journal

Reflect upon the following quote from this session’s readings:

"Being highly intelligent can be a mixed blessing..."

Reflect upon the positive and negative consequences of the following: being a gifted learner, being the parent/guardian of a gifted learner, f being the teacher of a gifted learner? What actions can students, family members, and teachers take as a group to create an optimal learning environment?

Workbook

None this session
Session 6
Understanding Equity, Diversity, and Indicators of Giftedness

Case
Dealing with Data

Critical Perspective
Carol Tomlinson on Gifted Education
- Reaching Out to Students
- Becoming Bicultural

Readings
- Equity and Opportunity: Profoundly Multicultural Questions
- The Challenge of Bilingual and Limited English Proficient Students

Discussion
In Dealing with Data, the school’s demographics are shifting. What actions might the staff take to better understand the variables that may mask indications of giftedness among the school’s minority students? How might the school refine its identification of gifted students in order to make gifted services available to all students who should receive them? Propose concrete actions that may support the concepts presented by Carol Tomlinson in her critical perspective. How might students and family members perceive the suggestions made by your colleagues?

Journal
Do you think the assessment tools used in your district, school, and classroom add to achievement gaps between social classes and cultural/ethnic groups? If so, propose changes that might help provide more equitable assessment and learning opportunities for all. If not, reflect on the aspects of these assessment tools that you think provide equitable measures of student achievement and abilities. How might the perspectives of students and their families compare with yours?

Workbook
None this session
**Session 7**  
*Addressing Diversity in Gifted Programming*

**Case**  
Dealing with Data

**Readings**
- Different Strokes for Little Folks: Carol Ann Tomlinson on Differentiated Instruction
- Twice Exceptional: Meeting the Needs of Students Who Are Gifted/LD
- Strategies for Teaching Twice-Exceptional Students

**Discussion**

Consider the knowledge presented in this session’s readings. Which of the ideas presented do you think might be helpful to the teachers and students in this session’s case, particularly Michael and Mrs. Escobar? How might the faculty approach shifting instructional approaches to address an increasingly diverse student body while also targeting improving scores on standardized assessments?

**Journal**

Reflect on a student you know or have known that reminds you of Corinna or Michael from this session’s case. What strategies do you think might help stimulate this student and others like him/her so that families may be motivated to stay in your school rather than look for more challenging alternatives? Use the knowledge from your own experience and from the readings for this session to formulate your suggestions. Focus on practical ideas that may be implemented by classroom teachers.

**Workbook**

Modifying Instruction to Meet Varying Needs

The readings in this session present ideas for addressing and valuing individual differences in the classroom. Although these readings focus on dual exceptionalities, the ideas presented may be applicable to other students. Focus on one student in your class or school whom you feel needs a boost. Using the suggestions in the articles as a starting
point, brainstorm a list of strategies you can try to engage this student (and others!) during an upcoming unit or lesson. From your list, select at least two of your strategies to develop further. Describe your chosen lesson or unit, the student you have targeted, and one modified version of your lesson or unit for each of your two selected strategies. Consider your students’ perspectives on your original lesson or unit versus your modified plans when making your decisions. Implement at least one piece of your plan and reflect on the results before the end of this session.

Due by the end of this session
Session 8
Addressing Your Teaching Situation

Case
None this session

Readings
• The Pitfalls of Identifying a Gifted Child
• Tips for Teachers: Successful Strategies for Teaching Gifted Learners

Discussion
Using the knowledge gained from this class, discuss some of the actions that you might take to improve identification procedures and the overall services that you provide for gifted learners in your school and classroom.

Journal

Now that you have nearly completed this course, reflect on the definition of giftedness that you presented in session one. How has the knowledge gained in this course changed your thinking? Update your definition of giftedness. Be as precise and accurate as possible. Reflect on any shifts in your thinking since the course began. How might any changes in your thinking influence the actions you may take with your students? If your definition were to be adopted by your school or district, what changes in gifted education services might result?

Workbook

Authentic Case Analysis and Action Plan:

Focus on a situation involving a student in your class or school in which issues similar to those presented in this course have arisen. Describe the situation in two or three paragraphs. Then, apply the 5-Step Method to this situation, detailing the relevant issues, perspectives, knowledge, actions, and consequences. Refer to the Case-Analysis Rubric under the Analyzing Cases Tutorial to guide your thinking.
Include a timeline for implementing your plan, notes about other staff or volunteer support you may require, and any other details that will help you fully implement your ideas. (750 words or fewer)

Due by the end of this session