Advocates for children all want the same thing. We want to see children thrive in environments that value and respect their abilities, provide challenges for growth, and enhance talent potential. We want them to grow into successful happy adults who contribute to society in myriad ways.

Sometimes certain groups of children in their academic journeys through our schools encounter barriers to their learning. Gifted children are one such group. These barriers are often the unintended consequences of best intentions or the results of mistaken beliefs based on a mythology of incorrect information.

One myth that gets a lot of traction is the myth that gifted children do not need any special help. Therefore, GT classes are pulled away or services are “pushed in” to the general classroom where differentiation is to occur even though the general classroom teacher has had little to no training in gifted education pedagogy. As advocates for gifted children, we know that doing nothing to the general classroom curriculum to help it match the needs of these unique learners is actually doing something. That something is to not allow a child the challenge and fun of learning new materials or to make continuous progress. As a result, we have gifted children who may be proficient and yet underachieving.

What do we do to help educators present curriculum and instruction to meet the academic needs of gifted children? We advocate for change. Sometimes our advocacy takes the form of research, as this book has done. The research explores strategies that work not only for the classroom teacher but also enhance the classroom experience for gifted learners. Instructional technology, cluster grouping, creativity, culturally relevant instructional methods, narrative writing, and differentiating instruction have all been found to have a place in the classroom. How the general education teacher translates using them to offer curriculum to gifted children becomes the key to maximizing their potential. Research makes the translation easier.

I applaud the authors for recognizing that the academic needs of gifted children go beyond their primary and secondary education and extend to the gifted adult student at the university level. It is an area to which we give little thought. We “assume” and believe the myth that it is not necessary to provide accommodations for the
adult gifted student at the undergraduate or graduate level. We assume that because they have met the university’s entrance requirements, all is well. By identifying and providing differentiated instruction to gifted adult students who become educators, universities produce classroom teachers who have experienced and practiced the skills necessary to differentiate instruction for their students. These teachers are better able to recognize and integrate activities that meet the needs of gifted students.

This book reflects a commitment to providing tools for the proper matching of curriculum and instruction for all children but especially gifted students. As an advocate for gifted children who seeks changes to mindsets about appropriate educational opportunities for gifted children, I look forward to this book becoming a part of classroom teachers’ libraries. I look forward to knowing that knowledgeable teachers have the means to remove barriers to learning for gifted children.

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Lynette Baldwin is the Executive Director of the Kentucky Association for Gifted Education (KAGE), a non-profit volunteer group of parents, teachers, administrators, educators, and citizens interested in being advocates for appropriate educational opportunities for gifted and talented youth in Kentucky. In her role as executive director, she plans workshops and conferences to inform educators and parents of the needs of gifted children, makes numerous presentations to groups on the topic, lobbies for change with the KY General Assembly, and works with various organizations to affect appropriate educational changes for gifted children. She currently represents KAGE on the Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented Education. Ms. Baldwin is retired from the Paducah Public Schools, Paducah, KY, where she was first an elementary teacher and then teacher/coordinator of the district’s Gifted Talented Creative Program.