Chapter 3

Differentiated Instruction for Gifted and Talented Students: Teaching Gifted and Talented Students With Diversity Responsive Education Method

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ABSTRACT

For decades, teachers, parents, and policymakers have dealt with the question of how to provide quality education for gifted and talented students. Even with increased emphasis and attention along with many diverse programs, the effectiveness of education programs for gifted and talented students have been unproductive and sometimes even wasteful. This chapter seeks to explain the reasons why those programs have been ineffective and provides a set of instructional strategies to educate gifted and talented students effectively based on Price and Nelson’s (2007) educational framework, diversity responsive education model, where they suggest a three-component framework: 1) what to teach; 2) how to teach; and 3) the context for teaching and learning.

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INTRODUCTION

Students are our nation’s most valuable assets and resources for the future. Therefore, providing them a quality education should be at the top of our national agenda. In order to meet the educational needs of students hailing from diverse backgrounds, differentiated instruction has been employed in the classroom allowing students to encounter challengeable learning tasks and achieve academic success. Differentiated instruction has been implemented when teaching gifted and talented students in regular classrooms, giving them the opportunity to complete more advanced tasks, enrich learning contents, and feel empowered to proceed with projects that meet their individual needs (George, 2005). Gifted and talented education has produced a number of positive social benefits, unfortunately, some researchers argue that differentiated instruction programs for gifted students turn out to be ineffective and operate in an isolated and compartmentalized way (Rakow, 2012; Linn-Cohen & Hertzog, 2007).

This chapter will review the reasons why those programs have been ineffective and suggest an alternative perspective based on the Diversity Responsive Education Model in which teachers need to consider three factors when teaching gifted and talented students effectively. These factors are: (1) what to teach (educational content); (2) how to teach (instructional methods); (3) and the context for teaching and learning (classroom environment) (Price & Nelson, 2011). The ‘what to teach’ refers to a structure for planning curriculum content that is relevant and representative of twenty-first century skills and competencies. The ‘how to teach’ concerns instructional methods necessary to address the diverse needs of each gifted and talented student by adopting an inquiry-based educational process in order to improve their skills/competencies as self-regulated learners. The “context for teaching and learning” emphasizes the role of teachers to create an inclusive classroom environment where gifted and talented students are supported and accepted.

Differentiated Instruction in Teaching Gifted and Talented Students

Schools and classrooms in the USA are extremely diverse in terms of ethnicities, learning styles, interests, academic abilities, and intellectual capacities. Differentiated instruction has been a useful and effective strategy in improving
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