

Accelerated and Enriched Learners

Nicholas Colangelo and Ronald T. Zaffrann believe that the terms "accelerated" and "enrichment" actually "describe qualitatively different needs and learning styles of gifted youngsters and not simply methods of how to provide for those needs."³

Accelerated gifted students are interested in mastering and integrating increasingly complex material. They have the ability to quickly learn and recall large amounts of information. They are highly efficient information-processors. They crave new information and harder problems. Their sense of fulfillment comes from mastering higher and higher levels of material and applying it to solve problems of increasing difficulty.

Images of the math student solving a difficult problem come to mind. The historian who remembers and interprets long, complex sequences of events; the poet or writer who quotes passages verbatim with ease; the doctor who generates four hypotheses and cites ten particular cases bearing on her diagnosis—these are adult examples of individuals who process, retain, and apply large quantities of knowledge well.

Often, adolescents and preadolescents with this type of ability simply "do well" in school. They are high achievers in a well-defined discipline such as science or literature, and they succeed in curricular systems which stress knowledge acquisition, linear skill-building, and logical analysis. They may also be wholly indifferent to academic subject areas, but suddenly know "everything there is to know" about the Civil War, Michael Jordan, or Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

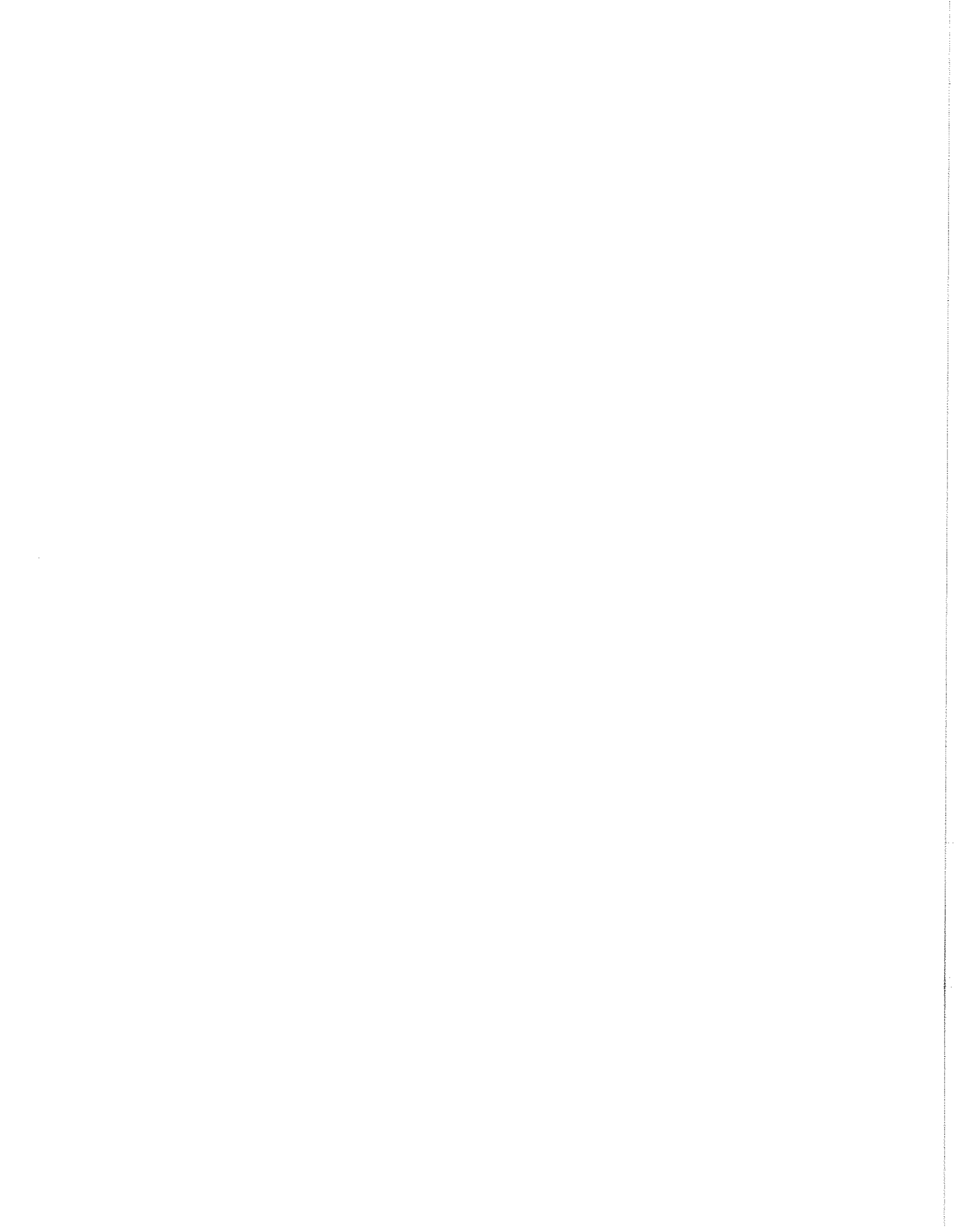
Enriched gifted students, in contrast, have the ability to become wholly involved or immersed in a problem, to "form a relationship" with a topic. These students focus on the problem—their relation to it and the learning process—as an end in itself, rather than as a means to accumulate more knowledge.

Enriched students may also be highly emotional, imaginative, internally motivated, curious, and driven to explore and experiment. They tend to be reflective and emotionally mature. Frequently, they have a keen sense of humor. The enriched student becomes passionate about a subject, a project, or a cause, often pursuing it with fierce energy.

Artists, musicians, dancers, writers, and actors tend to fall into this category, although research scientists, political activists, religious leaders, lawyers, and educators are other adult examples. The child who writes, directs, and stars in a play is demonstrating "enrichment" characteristics, as is the student who designs and constructs a futuristic model city, and students who "live and breath" dinosaurs, computers, or entrepreneurial businesses. Enriched students thrive on discovery and experience.

In terms of counseling or emotional need, accelerated learners are most frustrated by lockstep learning. They need to move on and master more material, not do endless drill-and-practice exercises. Because these students have high achievement expectations (for example, they score 100 percent on every test), they may need help setting realistic (or at least humane) goals for themselves. Teachers and parents can "overdrive" achievers in this category, which then reinforces the students' fear of failing. Accelerated learners may also be socially immature compared to their mental peers, and they may need help learning social skills.

Enriched learners, in contrast, aren't especially concerned with achievement (and may never be the top academic performers in a content area), but they invest a significant amount of emotional energy in what they do. In return, they require teachers who are sensitive to their intense feelings of frustration, passion, enthusiasm, idealism, anger, and despair. Enriched students may also need adult support to persist with a single task, or to harness their energies more efficiently.

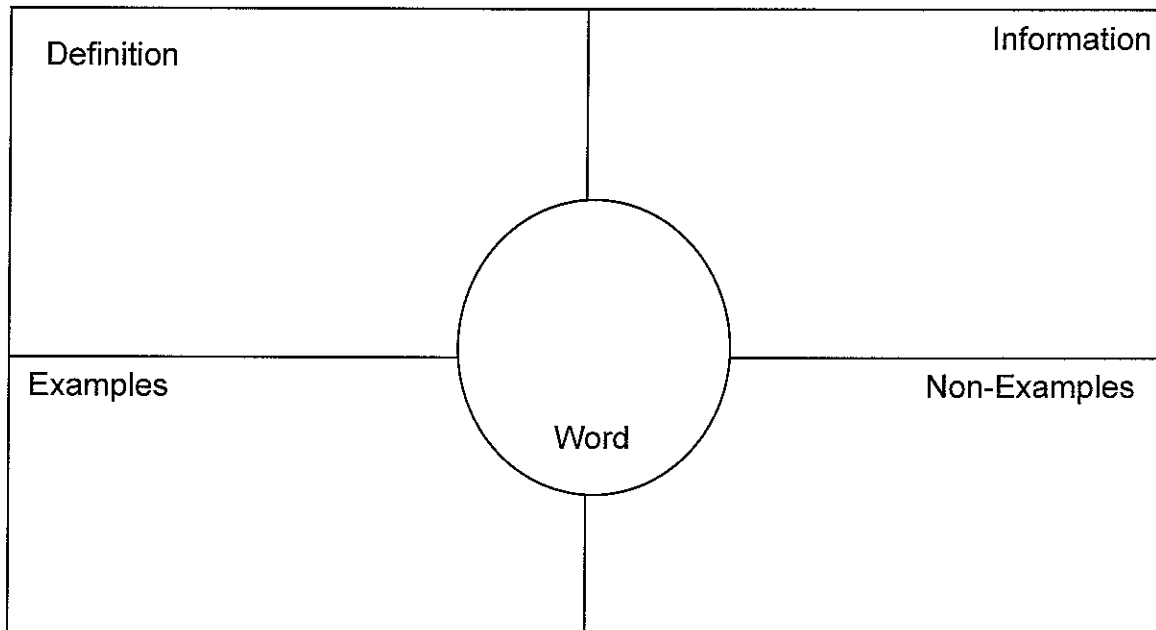
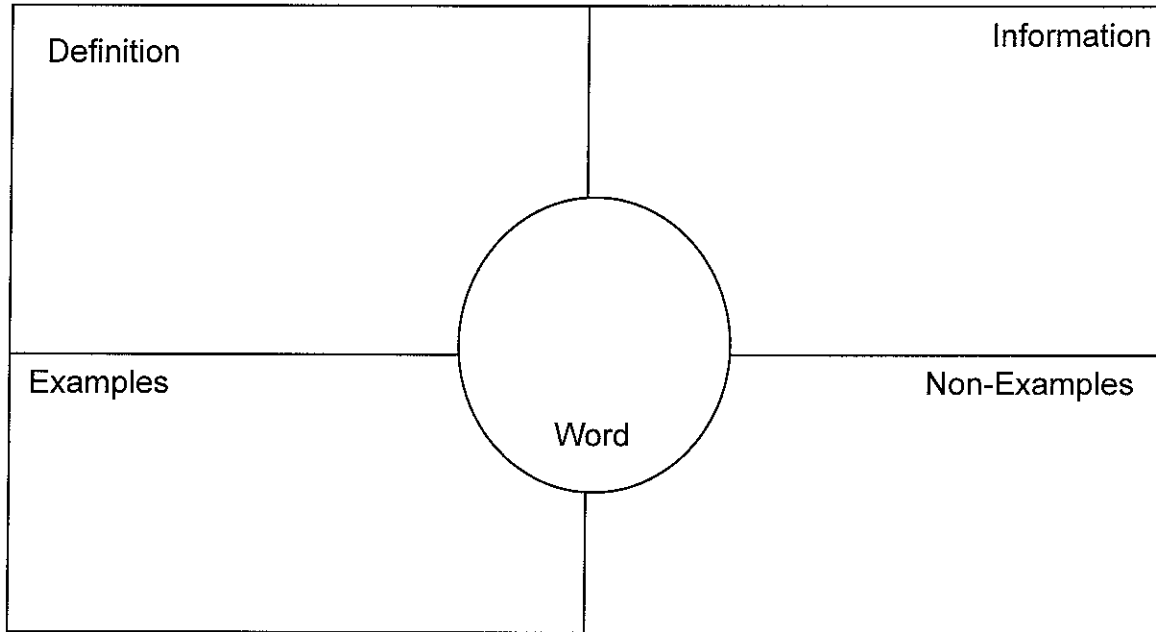


DIFFERENTIATING FOR THE GIFTED

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|------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| What am I teaching? | | | | |
| | Kids | How do I Know | What will I do? | Who can help? |
| Who already knows it? | | | | |
| Who can learn it faster? | | | | |
| Who needs greater complexity and abstraction? | | | | |

Fruyer Diagram

The Fruyer Diagram can be used for a pre or post assessment.



Considerations When Differentiating for the Gifted

What am I teaching?

KUD

What will my students **K**now, **U**nderstand, and be able to **D**o as a result of this unit of instruction? How does it relate to the KUDs in other content areas?

Who already knows?

Some students come to the learning experience with a vast level of prior knowledge. Their readiness level is beyond what we plan to teach.

How will we determine this?

What will we do about it?

How do we document student learning?

Who can learn it faster?


Research shows us that gifted children learn in 1-3 repetitions what it may take the average child 10 or more repetitions to learn. In fact, in math and science, too many repetitions or too slow a pace in learning may actually cause students to lose the learning or mislearn concepts.

How do we pick up the pace for these students? What will they do with the time they "buy"?

Who needs greater depth, complexity, and abstraction?

Sometimes students have a cursory level of understanding and want the opportunity to explore the concepts and content at great length. They crave depth in their learning and are ready to move beyond the concrete to higher level, more abstract learning. This is a great place to use Bloom's Taxonomy and higher-order questioning.

DIFFERENTIATING FOR THE GIFTED

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|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What am I teaching? | Clearly identify the Know, Understand, and Do for the unit of instruction. | | | |
| | Kids | How do I Know | What will I do? | Who can help? |
| Who already knows it? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design pre-assessment aligned with KUD • Listen to kids' conversations and contributions to class discussion • Assess informally; e.g., KWL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single subject acceleration • Curriculum compacting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the essential collaborators across subject areas or grade levels. • Work together to develop replacement activities |
| Who can learn it faster? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe those kids who seem to get it when you say it • Try Most Difficult First • Who has the assignment done before you finish giving the directions? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum compacting • Most Difficult First | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the specialists in the building who will understand the students. |
| Who needs greater complexity and abstraction? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who asks in-depth questions? • Who has interests atypical for age? • Who always wants to know more about a topic under study? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tiered assignments • Adjusting core curriculum using Bloom's Taxonomy • Open-ended assignments |  |