

Gifted Education in the Twenty-First Century

Issues and Concerns

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The Talent Profile as a Curricular Tool for Academics, the Arts, and Athletics

Sandra I. Kay

Monroe-Woodbury Central Schools, Monroe, N.Y.

and Visiting Scholar: Teachers College, Columbia University

In differentiating curricula for the gifted/talented student, the classroom teacher must develop individual learning experiences within a model or framework (Passow, 1982). To make sound decisions in the situation-specific context of their classrooms, teachers need knowledge of various instructional models as well as knowledge of how gifted students differ from the non-gifted (Passow, 1982). The major focus of this paper is on the second of these two knowledge domains. A description of the use of the Talent Profile as a system for communicating knowledge of individual differences which distinguish each student's achievements will precede a discussion of enhancing the role of the classroom teacher as a developer of talent.

The Talent Profile as a Curriculum Planning Tool

Evaluation is a key component in curriculum planning. Without the evaluation of a child's progression along a developmental continuum in the area(s) of talent, classroom teachers are not given adequate information to plan and provide appropriate curriculum modifications that address an individual's strengths or demonstrated talent development. By providing teachers with a cumulative record that describes and visually synthesizes a student's prior exceptional achievements in any field of activity, the Talent Profile directly services gifted and talented students and all those involved with their care.

Goals of the Talent Profile

The need to better recognize and support excellence in all domains is an area of concern in gifted education (Kay & Subotnik, 1994). Although the Marland definition of gifted and talented children, with its recognition of multiple domains of excellence, was nationally endorsed by a majority of educators in 1972, public perception and (too often) practice continue to this day to associate gifted and talented education solely with intellectual aptitudes or general academic talent. Therefore, three major instrumental purposes underscore the conceptual beginnings of the Talent Profile and all stages of its design. First, the Talent Profile aimed to include all outstanding achievements in any field, whether at school, at home or in the community at large, especially when gathering retrospective data. This breadth adds achievements recorded by family and society to the accomplishments recog-

nized in school. The Talent Profile also serves as an instrument that is generously inclusive and comprehensive in recording outstanding achievements at the entry level of a field. Without compromise, the degree of exceptionality reflects advancement of expertise from the novice level. The third underlying purpose was to provide synthesis of the assembled information by creating a Summary that would encourage instant visual identification of talent areas, longitudinal trends, and changes in the degree of exceptionality of the performances. Thus, the Talent Profile integrates information from various contexts, talent fields, and levels of accomplishment to provide a comprehensive longitudinal profile of a student's developing expertise.

The usefulness of the Talent Profile can take many forms. First and foremost, the Talent Profile aims at providing communication and integration of data between and among disciplines. Recording all top-quality performance assessments on one form should offer a level playing field that encourages a language of equivalent accomplishments among academics, the arts, and athletics. Second, as a curriculum tool, it could (a) enrich the teachers' knowledge of their new students; (b) help teachers target some of their learning activities toward individual strengths and interests, thus maximizing student motivation and involvement in academic activities; and (c) provide necessary data for selecting skill groups based on student performance (Hayes-Jacobs, 1996). Additionally, it provides students with feedback and benchmarks, offering high-achieving students the opportunity to continue their improvement. The Talent Profile should help students as well as their parents, teachers, and counselors better assess past trends in talent development and thus identify appropriate short-term and long-term development goals. It should help school and district administrators consider students' special needs related to their academic and nonacademic talent development when they plan a curriculum or do their scheduling. Finally, it should counteract the unfortunate habit of school districts to fill students' files with mostly negative events and exclude the noteworthy positive achievements.

Brief Overview of the Talent Profile

The Talent Profile is a cumulative record set up by a school district to describe and visually synthesize a student's outstanding achievements from Kindergarten to Grade 12 in any field in which children and adolescents are active, whether at school, at home, or in the community. The Talent Profile is composed of two documents—the Descriptive Record and the Summary. A brief description of the content and format of these documents, particularly the Descriptive Record, is useful here.

Content

Although there are a variety of theoretical models of talent development in which the Talent Profile may be useful, Gagné's model of talent development was chosen as a close fit to the Marland definition of gifted/talented populations (1972). This model is sensitive to the developmental nature of children, clarity between translation from general observations to a position on the theoretical model, the fact that early achievements may not appear in a linear sequence, and the concept that some children achieve in a variety of domains.

The outstanding achievements in the Talent Profile are classified in two

different ways: a) according to a particular ability domain or talent field; and b) according to a particular level of "outstandingness." Working with individuals unfamiliar with the field of gifted/talented education, Gagné's differentiated model of giftedness and talent provides cogent operational definitions that translate easily in all disciplines:

Giftedness is formally defined as the possession and use of untrained and spontaneously expressed natural abilities (called aptitudes or gifts) in at least one ability domain, to a degree that places the child or adult at least among the top 15 percent of his or her age peers *talent* is formally defined as the superior mastery of systematically developed abilities (or skills) and knowledge in at least one field of human activity, to a degree that places a child's or adult's achievements within at least the upper 15 percent of age-peers who are active in that field or fields (Gagné, 1995, pp. 106–107).

Domains of gifts and fields of talents. Two major sets of categories are distinguished on the Summary form of the Talent Profile: gifts and talents, that is natural abilities and systematically developed ones. The domains of giftedness or aptitudes identified include Intellectual (IN), Creative (CR), Social (SO), Affective (AF), and Physical (PH). Results from tests as well as anecdotal evidence of advanced functioning in these domains provide teachers with a clearer understanding of the difference between aptitude and achievement. A physical fitness test, perfect pitch assessed in music, and an intelligence test provide educators with a context in which to professionally view this information. The seven fields of talent described by Gagné (1995) were honed and revised to include a general category and subdivisions for each field. The talent fields are listed on the Summary page with a detailed description reported elsewhere (see Kay & Gagné, 1997).

Levels of outstanding achievement. Although varying degrees of exceptionality are acknowledged in the literature (Gross, 1995), no formalized method of communicating these individual differences to the public at large exists. Without a structure or normative system of identifying degrees of exceptionality, educators are left with personal definitions or perceptions. The variance is as great in methods of identification of students for inclusion in G/T programs. Thus, some schools will service students in the top 3%, others the top 5–7%, and another services the top 10–15% of the population in one or more aptitudes and/or talent fields.

An inclusive approach to developing expertise was taken as we chose to single out the achievements that place the students within the top 15 percent of those who are active in that field of activity are recognized (Kay & Gagné, 1997; Renzulli, 1986), performances that exceed the threshold of +1 SD. Based on standard deviations noted on the normal curve (Gross, 1995), a framework was established by adopting Gagné's (1995) proposal of five levels where the ubiquitous standard deviation (SD) units (+1, +2, +3, etc.) are used to fix the approximate cutting points for the successive levels. Other classification systems that approximate the progressive selectiveness of the SD units (e.g., ratios within the general population, above grade achievement, as well as the well-known geographical system of levels of competition and excellence used in sports) were developed to facilitate the task of assessing the degree of exceptionality in fields where standardized measures are not available as in the arts, sports, or business (see Table 1).

Table 1. Levels of Talent Expressed in Different "Units"

Categories	SD	Rate	Academics		Sports
5—Basic	+ 1	15%	Classroom	+1 grade	Local particip.
4—Moderate	+ 2	2-3%	School/District	+2 grades	Local award
3—High	+ 3	1-2 / 1 000	County	+3 grades	Regional
2—Exceptional	+ 4	3-4 / 100 000	State	+4 grades	State award
1—Extreme	+ 5	1-2 / 1 million	Nation	+5 grades	National honor

Format

The Descriptive Record. The outstanding achievements placed in the Descriptive Record are organized according to three successive sequencing criteria: (1) chronologically, starting with the first year that an outstanding achievement was observed and excluding any year in which no achievements were observed; (2) according to the giftedness or talent category, following the order given in the Summary document; (3) according to the level of talent, starting with the most outstanding achievements within a given category. The descriptions themselves begin with the performance level (e.g., percentile, IQ, rank), followed by the identification of the test or the description of the activity.

The Summary. The Summary is a one-page table with rows corresponding to the different ability domains and subdomains and columns to the successive years from K to 12. Within each cell is placed a number from 5 to 1 corresponding to the *highest* level achieved that year in that particular ability domain. A cell is left blank if there is no particular achievement in a given domain for a given year. This Summary will allow a quick survey of (1) areas of strengths, (2) the moment of appearance of new fields of talent, (3) the sudden disappearance of talents, and (4) a change in level—increase or decrease—for a given talent over the years.

The Reference Set. The operationalization of levels of talent in each talent field requires the knowledge of experts in the specific area as well as careful examination of the criteria of each award. A reference set of potential accomplishments for each talent field with the level of ratings on the 1-5 scale determined for each categorical achievement was essential to application of the complete system. The ranking of any entry in any field of achievement needed to be analyzed. Although a massive effort, the collection of specific details on the pool of potential information opened dialogue between disciplines and areas of expertise. This laid a foundation of support while establishing validity of the instrument. For example, district curriculum coordinators and directors were instrumental in accurately ranking accomplishments in music, athletics, et al. Also, criteria for awards were examined carefully. Academic honors such as the Presidential Recognition Award for Academic Achievement can be deceptive. This impressively titled award merely requires an 85 average on two consecutive report cards. An award that, at first glance, appears to rank at the national level (1) actually reflects less than a level-5 achievement.

Discussion

The Talent Profile provides communication and integration of data between and among disciplines. The physical quality of a form that provides

information on all areas of accomplishment offers a "level playing field" figuratively and literally. When the field is level, academics can rise to the stature of music and sports in the minds of some and the arts can rise to the level of academics in the minds of others. As part of the formal student records, all teachers would be provided with a record of student strengths (aptitudes) and talents as evidenced by their level of accomplishment in areas outside of school as well as within the academic world. This comprehensive identification of advanced talent development promotes a striving for excellence for the child when acknowledged and celebrated by others.

The implications for curriculum planning are numerous. At a meta-analytic level, review of the sum of many Talent Profiles would inform scheduling/program planning to reduce conflicts. For example, knowing the number of athlete/scholars or musician/scholars would assist secondary administrators in arranging time to accommodate all talents or to highlight the priorities available to students. Also, this review would identify the curriculum gaps and the need for varied opportunities in a variety of domains for curriculum coordinators. Its usefulness is most apparent in highlighting the degree of curriculum modification necessary for advanced individuals. Choices of degree of acceleration or enrichment opportunities become more obvious based on the level of attained accomplishment. For example, where one student with a 99 average in an eighth grade advanced science class may be accurately placed in a ninth grade advanced course, another may best be served by skipping directly to AP physics in ninth grade. Thus, the Talent Profile may be a tool for determining more accurate placement in accelerated or honors classes or modifications of classroom curriculum.

At the most basic level, the insights gleaned from the Talent Profile would offer teachers pertinent information for planning curriculum modifications and enrichment opportunities specifically geared to the individual's strengths. For example, the child who has won the third grade essay contest in a district could be encouraged by the fourth grade teacher to pursue opportunities in creative writing. This usually occurs when a student remains in the same school with seasoned teachers who are aware of the previous year's winners. However, this progression is left to chance if the child encounters a new fourth grade teacher or moves to another school. Additionally, the middle school or high school English teacher would benefit from knowing that a child received, some years before, district recognition for creative writing. This fact might be used to rekindle a flame that is smoldering until encouraged again. At the very least, teachers would be given the opportunity to acknowledge students for their previous accomplishments in fields not necessarily recognized in school. Whether we have an Olympic skier in our midst or a child who maintains a professional acting career while attending school is a circumstance that would enlighten most teachers' delivery of instruction.

Curriculum Modifications

Whether or not they have formally studied curriculum design, teachers develop implicit understandings of curricular options as they strive to meet the needs of various students throughout the years. Accustomed to an intuitive trial-and-error approach when seeking alternatives to meet the needs of their students, teachers have a repertoire of possibilities that they feel comfortable offering students with special needs. Utilizing this prior experience

of the classroom teacher provides an entry level for expanding teaching strategies for curriculum differentiation. Recognizing and identifying what the teacher already knows within a set of curricular frameworks or instructional models offer a secure foundation on which to build a structure large enough to accommodate the needs of all learners.

A closer look at classroom teacher's responses to the Talent Profile provides some insight for translation to daily practice. During a graduate course entitled *Differentiating Instruction for Talent Development*, classroom teachers without a background in gifted education were given the following exercise:

These Descriptive Records profile observed talents in real children. Imagine this tool as part of a child's cumulative folder and that these children will be in your class next year. What curriculum modifications might you consider to tap into these students' talent areas?

Interpretations of a Talent Profile: Academic Modifications

For the purpose of this exercise, the categories of talent fields and the level of achievement in that field were left blank. As you may surmise, Talent Profile #1 (see Table 2) describes the emerging potential of a creatively gifted child.

Talent Profile #1			Descriptive Record
Name: _____		Birthdate: 6/13/88 Gender: M x F	
Year(grade)	Categ.	Level	Description of outstanding achievement
1995 (1)			Report Card: "wonderful writer"
1996 (2)			SOI: 3 out of 3 Gifted (semantic, symbolic, spatial) 94% MA Iowa Math

In first grade, the teacher noted on the report card that he showed skill for writing. (When completed, this type of anecdotal evidence would be listed under the field of academics [AC] with the subcategory of language [AC.l] and receive a score of 5 unless the reference to writing was specifically addressing creative writing only. If this is the case, the field identified would be the Arts with the subcategory of writing [AR.w].) In second grade, the Structure of Intellect (SOI) Creativity test was administered. Out of the three subtests given for divergent production of ideas (semantic—words, symbolic—numbers, spatial—figures), this student performed at the gifted level on all three. (This entry would be identified as creative aptitude [CR] and given a level-3 rating.) Also in second grade, this student was in the 94th percentile on the advanced mathematics subscore (MA) of the Iowa test of mathematical achievement. (The coding for this achievement would be AC.m at level 4.)

Immediate feedback to this exercise by classroom teachers yielded a variety of written responses:

Teacher 1: "For this student, I would have him create a Class Math Diary. Each week he would have to pick a new activity/concept we have

learned, write a brief description of it and provide his own example of each concept (one he has created). It can be an open-ended question so that children of the class could solve it. This diary could be printed monthly and the new activities added to it. By the end of the year we would have a diary with 40 math activities created by the student."

Teacher 2: "A child with immense creativity and writing ability. For this child, I would provide additional time for him to take part in an on-going Internet writing project. The project would allow him to interact with various students locally as well as globally while being engaged in a cooperative project with students who have similar strengths."

Teacher 3: "I would like to pair this boy with a wonderful artist to create LA [language arts] products. I would have him share some of his favorite books (good writers are good readers) with the class. Doing people study of favorite authors, reading several books by the same author, comparing one author's books, comparing favorite authors' books, etc. I would also give him 'names' for some of his skills in writing that he may have but not know what they are called—alliteration, metaphors, similes, analogies, etc. Then let him look for these same techniques in other writings. Which techniques are used in literature and nonfiction writing?"

As he has good skills in math concepts, he may be very good at creating story problems for classmates and/or younger students; writing a 'math novel,' counting books, mystery story with numbers, etc."

Given the same amount of time to reflect on the same problem, three different solutions were presented. While the first teacher concentrated on enriching mathematical content by employing the student's ability in writing, the second teacher focused solely on the child's writing talent. One could comment that any enrichment is better than none and that the Talent Profile initiates possibilities. In fact, this is true. All of the teachers welcomed the insights provided by this tool.

However, the qualitative difference of the response of the third teacher merits discussion. The first two responses (from a seasoned and a first-year teacher, respectively) provide one answer to the question whereas the third response (from a special education teacher) lists a variety of modifications to the content, processes, and products potentially available to enrich the child's curriculum. The fact that content modifications include the study of people and the need to address the organization of content by providing "names" for specific writing skills such as metaphors is juxtaposed with requiring the student to use higher-level thinking skills when identifying these techniques in various contexts. Sharing the result of the student's efforts with real audiences and inviting the student to explore a product transformation (Kanevsky, 1996) by writing a "math novel" are also learning strategies applauded in gifted education. This awareness of multiple layers necessary to the modification of the students' curriculum is a qualitative difference in teacher perception.

Academics and the Arts

Another Talent Profile (#2) presented to classroom teachers highlights the academic and artistic achievements of an entering third grader (Table 3). The most common teacher response in reviewing this Talent Profile was the need to enlist the expertise of art specialists in planning for this child's year. Although contemplation of the delight of special area teachers as their

Table 3.
TALENT PROFILE #2 Descriptive Record
 Name: _____ Birthdate: 6/13/88 Gender: M F x

Year(grade)	Categ.	Level	Description of outstanding achievement
1994 (K)			1st place: Visual Arts: Reflections contest
1995 (1)			PTA Reflections School Winner: 1st place: music 1st place: visual arts 1st place: photography 2nd place: literature
1996 (2)			Reflections STATE winner SOI 1 out of 3 gifted (semantic) 128 V COGAT (IQ) 123 Q COGAT 150 NV COGAT 99% DRP 96% MA: Iowa Math 97% MA: Iowa Math

ideas for curricular considerations are solicited is a pleasant and powerful thought, the academic talents of this child were, at first glance, overlooked by most. Again, the teacher trained to address individual differences with curriculum modifications presented multiple ideas that attended to pacing of academic content, variety of learning processes, and unusual products for real audiences (e.g., photograph angles throughout the school and group into obtuse, right, and acute or use them to make up problems for classmates.) In addition to these adjustments, this teacher also mentioned seeking the expertise of art specialists to assess and adequately address the next step in the development of this child's artistic talents.

Several general observations surfaced through discussion of the small sample of Talent Profiles. Quite emphatically teachers remarked on their surprise to find these students so different from each other. Exposure to only a few profiles yielded recognition of the heterogeneity of these high-end learners. (A perfect example of the adage: Show me and I understand.) Most of the teachers commented that this was the first time standardized test scores held some meaning and purpose for their classroom practice. In fact, several teachers hesitantly admitted that they didn't find these tests significant other than as a tool for placing students in appropriate remediation when performance levels were too low. Some teachers stated they now better understood the difference between aptitude and achievement tests. Their lack of understanding of the use of an achievement test as an authentic measure in a content area (for some students) may explain the trend or desire to exclude these tools from the repertoire of information about a student. If the application of this information is missing from practice, the usefulness of national normative data is highlighted with the Talent Profile system especially when rankings of these achievements are included. Raising the level of awareness of teachers is a worthy goal in and of itself. But the truly invigorating response was the energy these teachers directed at meeting the needs of these students as they embraced their role as a developer of talents.

Addressing athletic talent development in the regular classroom

There are some talent fields that appear too unrelated to the academic classroom to be incorporated in a meaningful way. When teachers raised questions regarding the lack of connection between athletic talent and the classroom environment, the Talent Profile of a sixth grade gymnast was reviewed. General concerns were brought to a focused discussion as the needs of this state champion were hypothesized. The Descriptive Record also yielded information regarding music and academic achievements. This girl is achieving in three talent fields with accomplishments at the state level in music as well as gymnastics. On paper, everything looks fine. However, conversations with this highly organized perfectionist yield insights as to the frustration level attained when state competitions occur simultaneously with large classroom projects that were not assigned well in advance. Her parents reflected this concern as well. Yet, most teachers were unaware of this student's other life and the strict schedule she maintains in order to accomplish all she sets out to do. Perhaps the most important schedule modification needed by this child is a sensitivity to her organizational needs. To have a teacher who knows that she plans a schedule a month in advance and is willing to address the need of this unusually organized person would be her dream come true. Of course, the Talent Profile does not report this specific need. It does provide the information that would open the conversation between student and teacher or parent and teacher. Facilitating a student's academic schedule to reduce conflict with another talent field is a significant contribution. It is not trivial.

Beyond facilitation of a child's athletic talent development, the encouragement of the classroom teacher to make connections or allow the students to build bridges between the curriculum and their developing expertise adds depth and breadth to the learning environment. Brainstorming possible relationships, teachers quickly developed the flexibility to make connections between gymnastics and the academic grade-level requirements. For example, the fact that the sixth graders study the human body in science brought on a flood of possibilities. One fourth grade teacher became enthralled with the associations between this area and his science unit on movement and energy. The opportunity to study the history of gymnastics as a research topic for social studies would have delighted this student as it was the self-selected topic in her enrichment class.

The strength of the Talent Profile increases with age. An example of the Talent Profile of an eighth grader magnifies the alteration of curriculum planning strategies when knowledge of an individual's talents are available. Typical of information currently available in school records, Table 4 lists only this child's *academic* Talent Profile. A teacher reviewing this academic profile would usually focus on the relatively high level of achievement in reading and accelerate this content area by offering advanced reading material. However, if a teacher sees these academic achievements within the context of this student's talent development in music (Table 5), another, very different set of ideas enters the pool of potential curriculum modifications for the same student. Relationships between science and music (e.g., study of wind); biographies of musicians; writing assignments or research related to musicianship, competition, et al.; historical movements in music are ideas for a

Table 4.

TALENT PROFILE #3A

Descriptive Record

Name: _____ Birthdate: 12/09/82 Gender: M F x

Year(grade)	Categ.	Level	Description of outstanding achievement
1990 (1)			96% Iowa Vocabulary 99% Iowa Reading
1991 (2)			120 COGAT Q Straight A's on report card 93% Iowa Vocabulary
1992 (3)			91% Iowa Math ps
1993 (4)			124 COGAT V 127 COGAT Q 94% DRP
1994 (5)			92% DRP
1995 (6)			120 COGAT V
1996 (7)			90% DRP
1997 (8)			"A" Honor Roll

series of possible projects entertained by the classroom teacher to suggest to the student.

As evidenced by this example, a synthesis of student achievements in various fields enriches the decision-making processes in planning curriculum and instruction. As mentioned earlier, decisions regarding the degree of acceleration in a content area may also be enlightened by noting the level of accomplishment. For example, if a seventh grader participated in a national talent search such as the one sponsored by Johns Hopkins and scored within the top 1 percent of high school seniors taking the SAT, one would not consider a mild modification such as designing math problems for classmates a reasonable solution. A more radical approach to differentiation such as skipping course work or mentoring with a mathematician would be in order. With this type of achievement receiving a ranking of 1 (extreme) and other students' accomplishments ranked at level 4 (moderate) or 5 (basic) as shown in Table 1, teachers would become sensitized quickly to the need for different degrees of differentiation within the same talent field. An individual's skills as evidenced through achievements cannot become any more authentic. Using this authentic assessment to develop appropriate instruction within the given parameters of policies (informal and formal) regarding grouping and acceleration enhances opportunities to meet individual needs.

Introducing instructional models and expanding teaching strategies

The joy and satisfaction of teachers engaged in connections between the curriculum and individual talents make for an exciting initial stage. The creative enterprise of matching curriculum with student interest is natural for concerned teachers with or without specific training in talent development. To go beyond these minor revisions or enrichment activities, teachers need to know various instructional models (Passow, 1982) as it is difficult to see beyond one's own teaching styles and learning preferences. A repertoire of teaching strategies fosters growth of expertise in teaching, which reduces

Table 5.

TALENT PROFILE #3B

Descriptive Record

Name: _____ Birthdate: 12/09/82 Gender: M F x

Year(grade)	Categ.	Level	Description of outstanding achievement
1990 (1)			96% Iowa Vocabulary; 99% Iowa Reading
1991 (2)			120 COGAT Q; Straight A's on report card; 93% Iowa Vocabulary
1992 (3)			91% Iowa Math ps
1993 (4)			124 COGAT V; 127 COGAT Q; 94% DRP NYSSMA Level 1: outstanding 2nd place Reflections: Photography Tournament team award: softball
1994 (5)			92% DRP; NYSSMA Level 3: outstanding All-county Band: 1st chair; French horn Best Musician award: Band 1st place Reflections: Music composition selected for 6th grade band; Select chorus
1995 (6)			120 COGAT V; NYSSMA Level 4: outstanding Best Musician award: School Select chorus; Peer mediator
1996 (7)			90% DRP All-county Band: 1st chair; French horn High School pit orchestra for <i>The Sound of Music</i> ; Chamber chorus; Middle School wind ensemble; Peer mediator
1997 (8)			"A" Honor Roll; Chamber Chorus; MS wind ensemble; Pre-college Program for French horn; Invited member Pre-college wind ensemble (youngest member); Peer mediator; Organized an in-school chamber music group

the danger of thinking that minor enrichment modifications will meet all of the needs of all gifted/talented students.

One of the most cogent ways of infusing new approaches is to provide teachers with examples and have them identify their current strategies. An exercise using VanTassel-Baska's tabular comparison of curriculum models for the gifted (1994) provides teachers with an aerial map of the territories. In my experience, most teachers choose to provide students with an in-depth experience on a selected topic. For the most part, the topic is also selected by the teacher. With exemplars and focused discussion of various curriculum models, perceptions are enlarged and the circle of possibilities is widened.

This knowledge inevitably leads to questions regarding choices of what to use when. How does a classroom teacher decide what type and what degree of curricula differentiation are needed for a child? Pulling ideas out of one's head, like pulling the rabbit out of a hat, is the strategy of a novice.

Familiarization with a pool of options based on VanTassel-Baska's (1994) chart of instructional models invites teachers to consider three potential avenues to chart for a student. Once a teacher engages in choices from several options, he or she transfers the choice of approach to the student. Excellent strategies for determining curriculum modifications based on students' learning preferences (Kanevsky, 1996) are important as teachers

develop skills as facilitators of learning. Although this step is sometimes the most difficult one for many teachers, fostering the skills needed by self-directed learners is a sign of the teacher's advanced expertise. Student choice of a learning activity or self-selected topics lets students develop problem-finding skills (Kay, 1994) necessary to future producers of ideas (Tannenbaum, 1983).

Conclusion

Everyone within the educational community (regardless of their opinion of gifted education) celebrates with pride any major achievement children accomplish. One of the joys most administrators describe is their routine of announcements to the entire school of the honors received by a team or individuals. Faculty rooms buzz with discussion of recent victories or accolades received by a member of that school's community. Where, then is the gap that severed the celebratory relationship between gifted education and the educational mainstream? One answer may be found when the initial observation leads to the realization that gifted education has not focused on evaluation of developing expertise and communication of useful information regarding the evolution of talents. As long as the field lacks a system of recording and evaluating the abilities and accomplishments of students pursuing excellence in various domains, there is no language of equivalent accomplishments to raise the conceptual understandings and empower the educational community to foster excellence in all domains.

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