

Education should never be one size fits all.

Here are some tips for customizing learning for youth with a gifted profile or twice exceptional youth (2E). Educators are encouraged to implement these strategies and utilize their training and experience to adapt it to each youth.

Gifted students should be provided with opportunities to increase the depth and breadth of their learning. The *quality* of their work, not the quantity, should be the focus. The main ways in which academic work can be adapted are by changing the content, process, and products.

Examples of Content adaptations:

- Changing the “depth and breadth” of curriculum content to meet the learner’s needs
- More challenging or supplemental reading materials and math problems
- Ask higher level questions (after acquiring the knowledge and comprehending the material, move to analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information)
- Focus on overall trends, concepts, larger ideas, patterns, and themes, instead of small details and facts within subject learning
- Study problems that do not have one right answer or a clear solution
- Have the student extend the work to real life problems and situations
- Increase the complexity by adding additional variables, other considerations, different sources, and alternate viewpoints
- Make connections between subjects
- Many textbooks and teachers' guides provide follow-up or extension activities as time allows
- An alternative way of establishing the baseline skills in subjects could be to assess for mastery prior to the lesson (e.g., give the spelling test prior to teaching the spelling words) and permit them to skip material that they have already mastered (e.g., they move on to the next approved task).

The five R’s of teaching for gifted development:

being *resourceful*, *reasonable*, *receptive* to changes, *respectful* of students’ feelings and abilities, and *responsive* to their questions.

-Dona J. Matthews

Examples of Process adaptations:

- Encourage risk taking and creativity
- Emphasize the inquiry processes and increase the diversity of problem solving opportunities
- Permit flexible pacing, where student can complete some objectives quicker and spend more time on other objectives in order to enable a deeper or more advance exploration, or moving them forward in the curriculum to their appropriate start point rather than refreshing or relearning previous acquired skills. Being able to move more quickly through mastered curriculum is sometimes referred to as "*curriculum compacting*"
- Have the student engage in tasks that involve finding "many answers" and the "best answer"
- Flexible groupings of student work (e.g., individual, pairs, small groups)
- Project based learning and guided independent study
- Have the student create their own learning objectives for a task that they can use to "grade" their own learning
- Specialized or differential grading criteria, such as being required to use additional sources for their essay
- Teach study skills and research skills for independent learning (how to research information, organize self on complex topics)

Make use of the library!

Some children may benefit from access to the library (and librarian!) to pursue passion project or independent learning. Youth may also benefit from having access to the library when curriculum tasks are completed, to read at their own discretion things of interest or work on library research assignments.

Examples of Product adaptations:

- Permit the student to demonstrate their learning in other ways, such as powerpoint presentations, performances, creating real-life products, etc. These alternatives should provide a broader range of experiences and expand how they express themselves.
- Assign authentic tasks for a real audience. For example, ask them to watch several TED Talks and then outline a TED Talk they could give.
- Allow your learners choice in which method they use to demonstrate their learning (video, report, etc.).
- Have the student share their learning with peers by creating a learning centre that their peers can explore
- Use a learning log to share how they have gained knowledge or experience related to their area of interest. This would permit them to make connections between extracurricular hobbies and interest that occur outside of school

Peer Coaching

- Sometimes, we can encourage gifted children to support their peers in class on mastered academic tasks. Peer coaching has many benefits. It can help consolidate skills and support the development of social skills, however, for peer coaching to work well, each participant must gain something from the activity, and not defer the gifted youth from the opportunity to spend time extending their own learning.
- Peer coaching should be used with intention, and not as a way to simply occupy the gifted student's time.

Enrichment Clusters

- Gifted students benefit from being grouped with other gifted/bright students (also called an "enrichment cluster"). This does not solely need to occur within segregated gifted classrooms. If there are other same-aged peers who are either gifted and/or high achieving academically, it would benefit them to be placed together in the same class, grouped together for assignments, and ideally pulled together for withdrawal support if available. The [Davidson Institute](#) says that academic competition is important for gifted students to learn how to deal with both success and defeat.
- When educating within gifted clusters, consider arranging for a mentor, tutor, older student, or specialists to work with the student(s) in the areas of interest. The student(s) and the teachers should work together to set the parameters and expectations for group process (how, when, where the work takes place; materials required, who is involved) and group product (how they will be marked or demonstrate their learning).

Sources and Recommended Readings

WEBSITES

- **ABC Ontario guide to Gifted IEPs:** https://www.abcontario.ca/images/pdfs/iep_guide_rev_april_20.pdf
- **Ministry of Education Special Education Companion for IEPs:** www.oafccd.com/documents/SpecialEducationCompanion2002.pdf
- **Davidson Institute:** www.davidsongifted.org/resource-library/gifted-resources-guides/
- **Hoagies' Gifted Education Page:** www.hoagiesgifted.org/educators.htm

BOOKS

- **Being Smart about Gifted Education: Empowering Parents and Kids Through Challenge and Change** by Donna Matthews and Joanne Foster
- **Parents' Guide to IQ Testing and Gifted Education: All You Need to Know to Make the Right Decisions for Your Child** by David Palmer
- **Teaching Gifted Kids in Today's Classroom: Strategies and Techniques Every Teacher Can Use** by Susan Winebrenner

**Need help implementing these recommendations?
WonderTree has psychologists, educational consultants/advocates, and tutors to support
gifted and 2E children.**