

THE GIFTED EDUCATION REVIEW



The Lunch Bunch

Affective Curriculum for Elementary Gifted Students

by Robin Johnson

As teachers, we often find ourselves bombarded with initiatives to provide our gifted students with challenging and differentiated academic curriculum. However, the emotional development of our gifted students is just as important as developing challenging curriculum. Affective curriculum addresses the areas of communication, feelings, interpersonal relationships and social sciences. Gifted students have characteristics generally not found in the regular population of students. Gifted students are more sensitive, more intense, and more curious. The “mores” experienced by gifted students can be both a blessing and a cause of emotional stress. Affective curriculum helps gifted chil-

dren understand what it means to be gifted and how to deal with the “mores” in their lives. Affective curriculum is not counseling or therapy, but proactive curriculum that prepares gifted students to handle their giftedness.

Affective curriculum can be embedded into classroom curriculum, but is more effective in small groups. Small groups have a family atmosphere, providing students with a safe environment where they can freely express their feelings and concerns. Lunch Bunch is a great vehicle to small group affective curriculum.

Lunch Bunch can be part of a GT pull-out program or administered by a classroom teacher or counselor. Effective Lunch Bunch groups meet regu-

GIFTED EDUCATION REVIEW

www.giftededucationreview.com

Editors

Todd Kettler
James Bishop
editor@giftededucationreview.com

Assistant Editor

Kristen Lamb

Advertising

ads@giftededucationreview.com

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The Gifted Education Review welcomes submissions from teachers and academics in the field of Gifted and Talented Education. Please send queries or submissions to the editors at the address above.

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larly and are a safe place for gifted students to be themselves. In Lunch Bunch, students learn life skills that help them embrace their giftedness. Students are amazed to learn that their personality traits are a normal part of being gifted.

“What happens in Lunch Bunch, stays in Lunch Bunch.” Confidentiality is an important component of Lunch Bunch. Since personal issues are often discussed, students should understand from the beginning that the confidentiality of all students must be respected. When students feel they can trust the members of the group, the group will become more cohesive, and students will feel free to share honestly. It is important to inform students at the beginning that if you, as the teacher, believe them to be in danger, you must do what it takes to keep them safe. A well designed Lunch Bunch group becomes a family of students who understand and depend on each other.

Planning for Lunch Bunch should be flexible. Teachers should always plan a lesson, but be prepared to set the lesson aside for issues that may arise. Meeting social and emotional needs of the students is the top priority. Examples of issues that might arise with elementary students are:

- Students are upset about a student who is bullying the class.
- Students are upset about something the classroom teacher is doing in the classroom.
- Alarming world or community events.
- A tragedy in your school or community.

When students are collectively concerned about an issue, it is important to be an advocate for the students while guiding them to come up with possible solutions and express their feelings. Gifted students have an amazing ability to develop solutions when allowed

time to discuss the situation and their feelings.

Begin Lunch Bunch with a time for sharing, celebrations, or anything the students want to share with the group. Listening is an important skill for teachers to learn. When a student is having problems, teachers should listen without rejecting the student’s feelings, judging, lecturing, or telling personal stories. Teachers should actively listen during sharing time. Sharing can reveal problems that need to be addressed and possibly discussed further. Sharing can also alert the teacher about problems with certain students that warrant further investigation. If a student shares something during Lunch Bunch that concerns you, first talk to the student in private, then make a decision about further action.

Lessons for Lunch Bunch meet the social and emotional needs of your students. Literature is a great way to start conversations with your students. The right story or book can spark honest conversations. If a student can identify with the character in a book, they are more likely to share about themselves. If a student can make personal connections to the lesson, they are more likely to carry skills with them out the door.

My recommended list of books for Lunch Bunch is below. I use these books and find them to be relevant for elementary gifted students.

1st Grade

The Treasure Tree (by John & Cindy Trent and Gary & Norma Smalley). The Treasure Tree is about four friends with very different strengths and talents. The talents of each friend is used to achieve a common goal of finding the Treasure Tree. The book is a good avenue to help students think about their gifts and talents and how to use them to help others.

The 7 Habits of Happy Kids (by Sean Covey). The seven habits are life skills such as planning ahead and putting first things first. At the end of each chapter, there is a parent/teacher guide with questions and activities to reinforce learning. The book has the potential to last as long as you like. Teachers can extend learning with different literature selections. I use the list at the following website to extend lessons: <http://www.edmonds.wednet.edu/cms/lib02/WA01001167/Centricity/Domain/2600/Habits%20Book%20List.pdf>

The Children’s Book of Virtues (edited by William J. Bennett). This book is filled with stories about courage and perseverance, responsibility, work, and self-discipline, compassion, honesty, loyalty, and friendship. This book helps students to consider matters of ethics and morals.

2nd Grade

What Do You Stand For? A Guide to Building Character for Kids (by Barbara Lewis). *What Do You Stand For?* helps students build good character traits and become good citizens. Chapters can be chosen according to the needs of your students. My favorites are caring, citizenship, cooperation, relationships, and respect.

3rd Grade

101 Success Secrets for Gifted Kids (by Christine Fonseca). This book is a favorite of mine. Topics include what it means to be gifted, school and homework issues, friends and families. This book is also a great resource for parents and teachers.

More Great Reads for Lunch Bunch

The Dot (by Peter Reynolds). *The Dot* teaches about perfectionism and



overcoming challenges.

Ish.... (by Peter Reynolds). *Ish...* teaches students to follow their dreams and not let other people discourage them.

Franklin the Turtle books (by Paulette Bourgeois). These books are great conversation starters as Franklin faces similar challenges experienced by students.

The resources listed above will help lay a good foundation for gifted students to draw on as they encounter problems. As students mature, the literature list and needs will change. I believe that giving them a good start in elementary school will greatly enhance their ability to solve problems in the future.

Gifted students like other students are not equipped to solve all problems on their own. Small discussion groups help both teachers and students by providing students with tools for their toolbox and helping teachers to recognize when gifted students need help and guidance.

I have been meeting with Lunch Bunch groups for several years. I meet with each group once a week during their lunch time, and for many of my students, Lunch Bunch is their favorite time of the week. ■

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The Reading Level Problem

Advanced Readers and Meeting Standards

Emily Villamar-Robbins

If you have taught gifted students in a mixed-ability classroom, you have probably faced the Reading Level Problem. Research shows that gifted students learn differently: not only do they understand texts usually tackled by much older students, they need to work with harder reading material to learn. As a result, the range of Lexile scores in an elementary or middle school classroom can be extreme. Reading curriculum for general education students is designed to meet typical age appropriate needs, and from the school's perspective, the teacher's priority is to help struggling learners. So, what should teachers do with gifted-identified students – the ones whose comprehension level scores don't fit the curriculum plan?

Gifted students deserve to continue developing their vocabulary and analytical skills, and they can suffer

several negative effects if they are not challenged in school (Moon, 2008). When parents suggest that their gifted kindergartener needs harder reading material or when a first grade student pulls Harry Potter out of her backpack—teachers need a new approach. To address the needs of higher-level readers, try these strategies:

Explore acceleration. If a gifted student appears to be above level in all subject areas, or above level in a single area, approach the school's gifted specialist about the possibility of subject or grade acceleration. Research shows acceleration is an appropriate and safe option, in both academic and social/emotional areas, for gifted students who meet certain criteria (Assouline, Colangelo & VanTassel-Baska, 2015). Acceleration should be an explorable option that can provide benefits for our gifted students.

Differentiate based on readiness: give pre-assessments. Some students may have already mastered the grade-level standards for an upcoming unit. Teachers can use commercially available screening tools, or they can work with schools to create their own assessments for pre-testing students' knowledge. Pre-assessments can also help with instructional grouping and planning, and they can be used in all four core subject areas. For gifted students demonstrating mastery, skills can be extended with higher-level complexity, or teachers can facilitate flexible pacing and allow students to move on to more advanced skills (Fogarty, 2016).

Is there an aspiring author in the classroom? Consider dedicating an area of the room to a library of student works, provide themes or writing guidelines to encourage the use of

higher-level thinking skills, and offer incentives to students who “publish” creative writing for the library.

Differentiate levels of questions.

In a few cases, gifted students may need more complexity but may not be able to tackle significantly higher Lexile texts. Teachers can help readers dive deeper into a passage by differentiating their comprehension questions. Tiered discussions and activities can help gifted readers engage in higher-level analysis and extrapolations. They can even be adapted to fit individual student interests.

Differentiate materials. This is an effective strategy, and perhaps the most important for vocabulary development. *Mindset theory* suggests all students need high standards in a nurturing environment (Dweck, 2006). When gifted students work with texts at their individual ability levels they are more likely to stay engaged, feel that their abilities are valued, and develop the study habits necessary for coping with future academic challenges.

Common objections to differentiation. Differentiation may not be common practice at some schools and it may even be met with resistance from some teachers. However, these objections should not prevent teachers from meeting the needs of gifted readers. Below are some common objections to differentiation and how to overcome them.

Concerns about standards. Some teachers feel tied to state standards, are not yet familiar with using higher-level texts with lower grade-level concepts, and are reluctant to try assigning different texts to different students. *Try this:* Teachers can work on the same standards with the entire class while using different tier-leveled texts. Students can be grouped by reading level, though in cases of extreme difference, working at an appropriate level may result in the gifted student working individually. To facilitate

whole-class discussions despite the use of different materials, teachers can tie instruction and assignments to a single theme or abstract concept, such as change, equality, or justice. For a list of 200 abstract concepts, see *Advancing Differentiation: Thinking and Learning for the 21st Century* by Richard Cash (2011). For help with locating higher-level books addressing a chosen theme, consult the campus reading specialist, differentiation specialist, campus librarian, or an ELAR teacher for the grade corresponding with a gifted student’s Lexile score. Administrators: To facilitate ELAR differentiation, consider assisting teachers with making connections, and ensure that the school’s literacy library and ELAR curriculum include a variety of materials for advanced reading needs – including Lexile scores beyond the school’s grade levels.

Skill gap fears. Teachers unfamiliar with current research on gifted learners may worry that acceleration or above-level reading will result in missed skills. *Try this:* Research shows that academically gifted students can succeed when accelerated in their areas of strength, and most gifted students are likely to fill any skill gaps. To learn more about research on acceleration and recommendations for successful strategies, see publications by the Acceleration Institute, Belin-Blank Center, University of Iowa (<http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/>).

Access to materials. Some teachers lack easy access to higher level texts which can be aligned with concepts in lower grade-level standards. *Try this:* If the materials on campus do not extend to the reading level needs of gifted students, speak with the principal and librarian about expanding the literacy catalog or facilitating loans between schools in the district. If the school or district has an active PTA or gifted parent support group, consider working with parents to add higher-level ma-

terials to existing campus resources. Giftedness is a learning difference, and gifted parents usually recognize that their children have different learning needs. Parent groups may wish to initiate a fundraiser or book drive to help support all special learning needs on campus.

Mature content. Educators may fear that higher-level content will be inappropriate for younger readers. *Try this:* Mature content is a legitimate concern; however, several available resources can help teachers provide challenging material without inappropriate themes or language. Maturity level can be assessed by consulting with school librarians, through campus or online book reviews, and by careful use of book search tools. To match advanced reading level needs with content appropriate for younger readers, try these resources:

- **Lexile NC code:** “The NC code is useful when matching high-ability readers with a book that’s still at an appropriate developmental level” (Lexile.com). Web searches can be narrowed by code and Lexile level.
- **Accelerated Reader Bookfinder:** Website searches can be narrowed by both Lexile level and “interest level” which “indicates age group appropriateness” (AR Bookfinder).
- **Content review websites:** Common Sense Media and Compass Book Ratings offer specific ratings using factors such as violence, sex, profanity, and mature themes.
- **Online courses:** Courses for gifted students reading at middle-school levels may offer book lists with titles appropriate for younger readers. Parents, schools, or parent groups may be willing to purchase online course subscriptions to supplement the reading curriculum of gifted students.

- *Mensa for Kids Excellence in Reading Program*: Offered by the Mensa Foundation, this resource includes a book list organized by level. Participants are encouraged to “read to the level of your ability or interest, regardless of your age or grade level” (Mensa Foundation).
- *Other resources*: For titles that appeal to gifted readers, see *Some of My Best Friends Are Books: Guiding Gifted Readers* by Judith Wynn Halsted, book lists on Hoagies’ Gifted Education Page and the GT-World/GT-Families e-mail lists, Byrdseed.com, and “The Book Whisperer” blog through *Education Week*.

There is no reason to hold back above-level readers. When teachers differentiate to gifted students’ ability levels, the benefits are enormous: students are more engaged, more motivated, and more likely to succeed in school.

Preparing a differentiation plan for a gifted student requires an investment

of time initially, especially if strategies are new for a teacher or a campus. However, help should be available within schools and districts if teachers and administrators seek it out. Planning efforts can be used to help additional teachers and future students, which strengthens the entire school and district. Most importantly, the positive effects of reading differentiation will impact gifted students for the rest of their lives. ■

Sources and Further Reading

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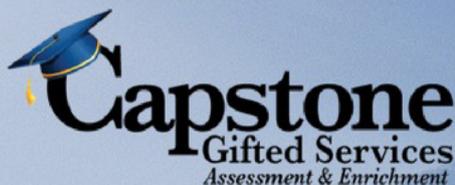
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Free Swag? Don't Mind If I Do!

The NAGC Annual Convention Experience from a Curriculum Coordinator's Perspective

Mattie Oveross

Every year around the first part of November in a new city, there is a gathering of minds. Sweater vests reunite, witty remarks are encouraged, and inspiration is given out like free samples and branded swag at a conference. Oh wait...

The yearly gathering I am referring to is, of course, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) annual convention. If you are not familiar, NAGC is an organization whose mission is to support stakeholders who serve the growth and development of gifted children. NAGC has a membership of more than 20,000 and over 2,300 of these members attend the annual conference each year. Attendees at this convention include, but are not limited to, classroom teachers, school and district administrators, university faculty and graduate students, parents, gifted education publishers, curriculum companies, and top researchers and leaders in the field of gifted education. I am going to share

with you my sample-seeking, inspiring experience at this year's NAGC annual convention.

With my sweater vest packed, tablet stylus secure and ready to take notes, and work duties squared away, this excited curriculum coordinator left her apartment at 5:30 AM to catch the early morning flight to Orlando. (This year's conference happened to be at Disney World- EEEK!). While in the airport and as I was riding the magical express shuttle to the hotel, I couldn't help but review the NAGC convention app and again get excited about what I would soon learn.

From the moment I arrived, I could see the ideas and passion in the smiles of attendees, neurons firing in vibrant conversations everywhere from the bathroom to the line in the food court. My first partial day and evening, I simply soaked this in. I kept thinking to myself "*This* is where I need to be. *This* is what I need to help my school. *This* could quite possibly really be the

most magical place on earth". Below I have outlined the three main highlights of my experience at the NAGC 2016 annual convention.

The Exhibit Hall

A kid in a candy store, a 4-year-old boy at Lego Land, and a Labrador retriever at a tennis match are all accurate analogies to describe this curriculum coordinator's experience at the NAGC exhibit hall. The exhibit hall experience consists not only of free pens and notepads, but also one-on-one time with publishing company representatives and even access to discounted materials and books. I am not ashamed to say I probably spent more total time in the exhibit hall than I did in the breakout sessions (don't judge me). And now, I will attempt to rationalize this decision.

As a school administrator and curriculum coordinator, I tend to spend a large amount of time "on the hunt". I

am hunting for meaningful tools that I can share with teachers and use in professional development. I am hunting for evidence-based curriculum resources and programs that will meet the needs of gifted students and which I can implement within the structure of my school. When I arrive at NAGC every year, the pressure to hunt is gone. I can put down my crossbow and pick up my trusty *free* conference bag. It is time to gather. The top publishing companies in gifted education are right in front of me. All kinds of learning companies are at my fingertips. From language arts curriculum to math manipulatives, it is all there. In addition, representatives from these companies are available as well as books I can

look through and read. I cannot think of another time or place in which so many resources and answers in gifted education are so close together and available for our utilization. Throughout the conference, I gathered and gathered. More than fifty pamphlets later, and with a conference bag so full that the handle ripped, I was one happy curriculum coordinator.

Exhibitor Workshops

One could think of the exhibitor workshops as an extension of the exhibit hall. Each of these sessions is one hour long and consists of various specific resources that are available for purchase in the exhibit hall. The

company selling the item conducts the workshop and the ultimate goal is just to get an inside look into the product (well and of course their goal is to get you to actually make the purchase). This is an exciting part of the conference because you can see the product in action, whether it be an online curriculum unit or an interactive robot. Conference tip: Oftentimes attendance at one of these workshops equals a free trial of the product they are trying to sell.

Theory to Practice Sessions

One thing I've noticed as a multi-year attendee at NAGC is the clear divide between the research and theory

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EPSY 5110 - Social and Emotional Aspects of the Gifted and Talented (3 hours)

EPSY 5120 - Planning Programs for the Gifted and Talented (3 hours)

EPSY 5130 - Methods and Curriculum for the Gifted and Talented (3 hours)

Students who do not want a masters degree immediately, but seek preparation in gifted education, both individuals within Texas and those from other states or countries, should apply to the UNT Graduate school as Graduate Academic Certificate in Gifted Education (GAC-GATE) candidates.

For more information, contact program coordinator *Dr. Anne Rinn*

Anne.Rinn@unt.edu

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and the practitioners. This divide is evident in the titles of the presentations, the type of evening events that take place, and the conversations that occur. I do not see this divide as inherently a bad thing, but I do appreciate efforts to help bridge the gap when appropriate. While we read about the big names in our gifted education textbooks and cover numerous theories and frameworks during our time in higher education, I assure you that Olszewski-Kubilius and Gagne are not “household” names while we are trying to run a school and getting our hands dirty teaching gifted children.

However, without names such as these, gifted education would not have the foundation or continuous growth in evidence-based teaching strategies, knowledge of the gifted learner,

or even a strong voice in policy and legislation advocacy. Sessions that were purposely structured to present a theory, framework, or model and how it looks in the classroom were sprinkled throughout the convention and critically inspirational and helpful to someone who attempts to merge research and practice on a daily basis.

Conclusion

While picking up a Disneyworld frame magnet in the Orlando airport on my way out of town, I reflected on the previous few days. Below are my concluding reflective thoughts:

- The exhibit hall at NAGC is a force to be reckoned. The convenience of concentrated materials as well as the wealth of

answers makes the exhibit hall a must-have experience for any gifted curriculum coordinator.

- There is a place for theoretical talk and a place for practical classroom strategies and materials. NAGC just happens to be both of those places.
- I will never be able to accurately and eloquently describe the feeling of hundreds of passionate stakeholders in gifted education gathered in one place.
- Finally, sweater vests and Orlando in November aren't a good combination.

They say Disneyworld is the most magical place on earth. But for a gifted administrator and educator, the magic of the NAGC convention, wherever it may be, comes in a close second. ■

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Recommended Reading for Gifted Students

by April Walker

Remember that student I mentioned previously – the one who has read everything in your class library as well as every other class library within reach? There are few things I enjoy more than helping to match a student to a new book. However, with gifted and advanced readers, this can be a constant struggle. You may help them discover a new book, and they come back the next day ready for another one...or maybe even by lunchtime. How do you constantly help them find new books to read? One strategy is to help students understand what elements they enjoy most in a book. For

example, do they look for certain types of characters, an adventurous plot, a descriptive setting, a plot-twist, humor, or witty dialogue? Helping them think about their favorite genres can also help them discover new reads. In my own reading life, I often enjoy finding books that engage my imagination. I want to escape when I read and go away to new worlds. As a result, realistic fiction is one of my least favorite genres. I also prefer to find books that are part of a series or authors who have published multiple books. This helps me keep a steady list of books for my to-be-read pile, without con-

stantly having to start over.

In this installment of *Book Finds*, you will find that a few of the recommendations listed below are the first book in a series or trilogy. I have intentionally provided some of these because if your student enjoys the first book, there are more to follow. A series of books allows a student to build a longer relationship and connection with a world or with a set of characters. The books are arranged by general age level, but please feel free to make your own decisions about which books your students (or yourself) will enjoy most.

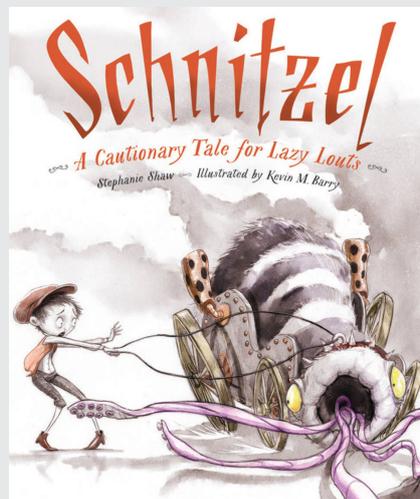
Early Elementary

Schnitzel: A Cautionary Tale for Lazy Louts

Written by Stephanie Shaw
32 pages; Sleeping Bear Press

This tale grabbed my attention as I strolled through the children's fiction section of the library. Imagine a classic tale retold in picture book form with illustrations reminiscent of Tim Burton. In this retelling of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, young Schnitzel is known as a lazy lout who does not want to do his chores. A vacuum salesman offers to solve his problems, but this is no ordinary vacuum salesman. The tone and

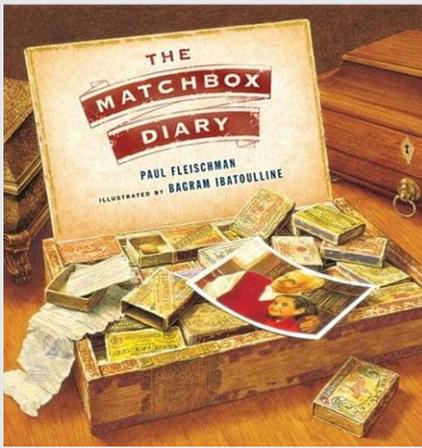
mood of the illustrations and story also remind me of the picture book version *The Spider and the Fly* redone by Tony DiTerlizzi. The illustrations and the story will capture your imagination.



The Matchbox Diary

Written by Paul Fleishman
40 pages; Candlewick Press

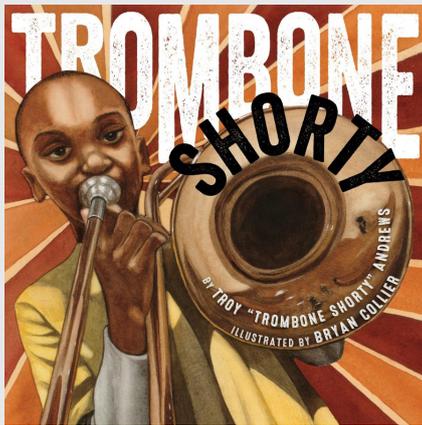
Paul Fleishman is an excellent author who can tell a beautiful narrative. A little girl visits with her great-grandfather, wanting to know the stories of the objects in his home. She discovers a collection of matchboxes that served as his diary. They walk through the story of each object found in the matchboxes as they detail the story of his journey from Italy to a new country. In this rich dialogue, she gets to hold his memories in her hand. This is a story that will make you want to sit and collect the oral history of



your own loved ones and maybe consider the different ways stories can be captured and remembered.

Trombone Shorty

Written by Troy Andrews
40 pages; Harry N. Abrams



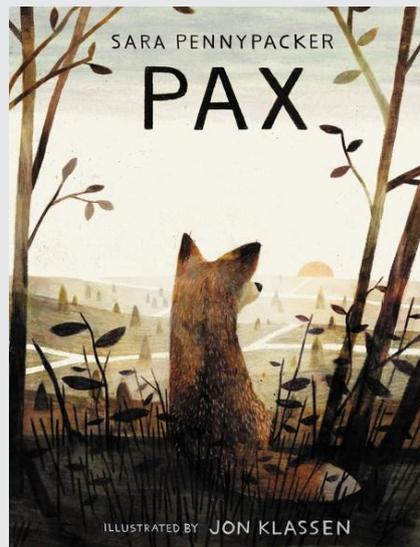
Trombone Shorty tells the story of Troy Andrews, known as Trombone Shorty. He earned his nickname by wielding a trombone twice as big as he was and leading his own band by age 6. Let the pages fill your soul with music as you dance through a young man's journey of music, culture, and dedication to following one's passion. It is worth noting that *Trombone Shorty* is a 2016 Caldecott Honor Book and Coretta Scott King Award Winner.

Upper Elementary

Pax

Written by Sara Pennypacker

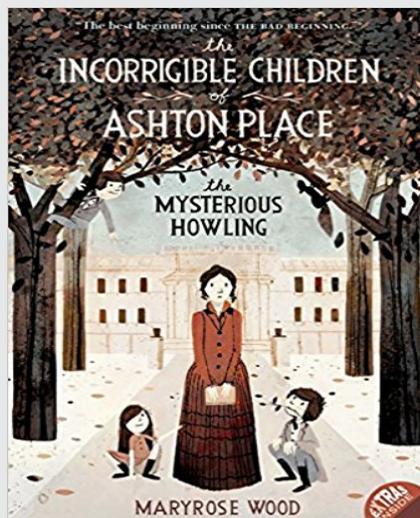
288 pages; Balzer & Bray



Peter is a young man who has built a powerful connection with a fox named Pax that he has raised since he was a baby. Peter's father joins the military and forces Peter to leave Pax out in the wild. This novel tells the journey through the alternating viewpoints of Pax and Peter as they set off on a journey to find one another. This beautiful story made it to the National Book Award Longlist for 2016 and is well worth the read.

The Incurrable Children of Ashton Place: The Mysterious Howling

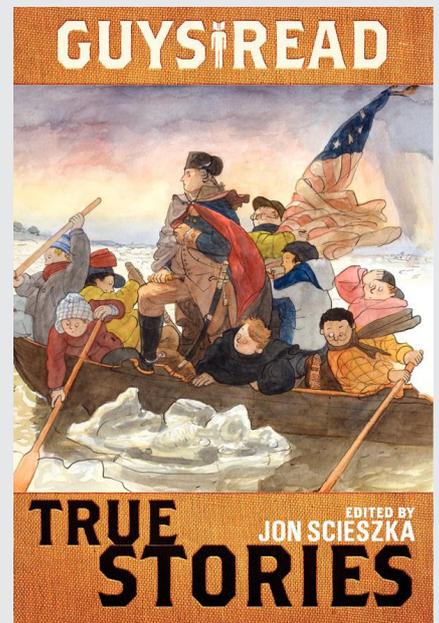
Written by Maryrose Wood
288 pages; Balzer & Bray



Fans of *A Series of Unfortunate Events* and *The Mysterious Benedict Society* will enjoy being introduced to the incorrigible children of Ashton Place. Imagine what happens when a young, new governess sets out for her first interview to discover her new charges have been raised by wolves. Not only must she teach them basic history and mathematics, but she must also shape their tendencies to howl and chase squirrels. This series is filled with fun characters, adventure, an overall mystery that drives the entire series, and a witty narrator. Children that enjoy a playful use of language and narration will enjoy this series; the audio version is also very enjoyable.

Guys Read: True Stories

Written by Jon Scieszka and Jim Murphy
272 pages
Walden Pond Press



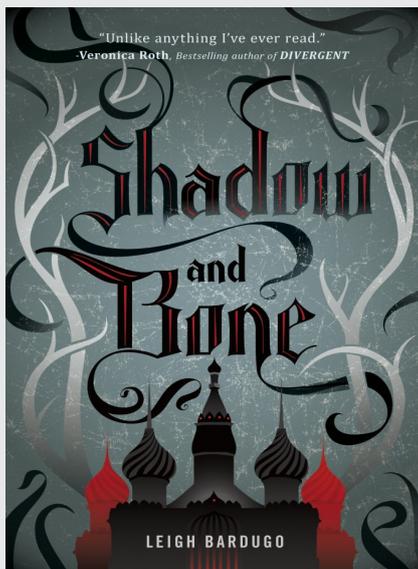
This is only one installment of a great series done by Jon Scieszka written to engage boys in their tweens. The entire series is written with humor and usually includes contributions from multiple well-

known authors. This installment does not disappoint with an engaging collection of true stories. While the series is written with boys as the main audience, all readers can enjoy this series.

Middle School

Shadow and Bone (The Grisha Trilogy)

Written by Leigh Bardugo
416 pages; Square Fish



Alina Starkov is a soldier who has never been very good at anything. One day her regiment is attacked, and while trying to protect her best friend, she reveals a long dormant power. When her power is discovered, she is shipped away to become a member of an elite group called the Grisha, ruled by a dark leader. Her entire kingdom may depend on her learning how to use her power, but she must learn to navigate this new world as well. This trilogy is filled with intriguing characters, good world-building, and an engaging plot.

Etiquette & Espionage (Finishing School Series)

Written by Gail Carriger
336 pages; Little, Brown Books for

Young Readers



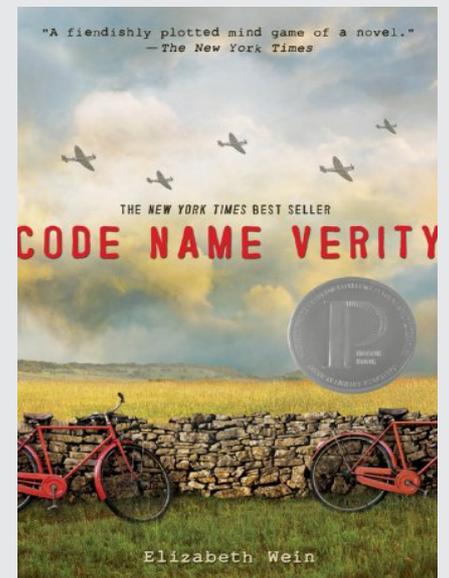
Enjoy an introduction to the world of Steampunk with spirited characters and a witty dialogue. Sophronia's mother doesn't know what to do with her; she wants nothing more than for her daughter to become a proper young lady. However, Sophronia would rather climb trees and take things apart. At her wit's end, her mother enrolls her at Mademoiselle Geraldine's Finishing Academy. Sophronia quickly learns that not all is as it seems. While the young ladies certainly learn about etiquette and dance, they also learn about the art of espionage.

High School

Code Name Verity

Written by Elizabeth Wein
368 pages; Disney-Hyperion

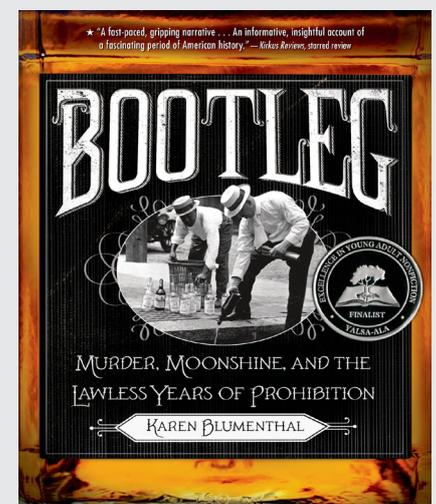
During WWII, a young woman named Verity, working as a British spy, crashes in Nazi-occupied France. She is captured and faces a spy's most difficult decision: face execution or tell her story. As she weaves her narrative, the reader wonders what will happen to Verity and the others in her story.



This novel captures the reader from page 1 and does not disappoint at any point in the novel.

Bootleg: Murder, Moonshine, and the Lawless Years of Prohibition

Written by Karen Bloomenthal
176 pages; Square Fish



Does legislation change behavior? Prohibition was started as a movement to outlaw alcohol to remove the negative impacts of alcohol on the family. Instead of fixing the problem, it ushers in a period of lawlessness, gangsters, and moonshine. This book highlights this period of history and is filled with photographs and engaging anecdotes from the time. ■

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Current Research in Gifted Education

by Jaret Hodges

In this section of the Gifted Education Review, we discuss selected pieces of recent research and articulate the implications for practitioners and administrators in the field of gifted education. This installment includes three articles. Each of these articles is either a meta-analysis or systematic literature review. These sorts of works are particularly powerful, because they take the findings of many smaller studies to paint a broader, more generalizable picture. The substantive topics of the articles include identification practices, the impact of enrichment programs, and strategies for gifted students in underserved populations.

Mayes, R. D., & Moore, J. L. (2016). Adversity and pitfalls of twice-exceptional urban learners. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 27, 167-189. doi: 10.1177/1932202X16649930

Gifted students can have learning disabilities. Schools have become increasingly proficient in identifying learning disabilities in students to better meet these students' needs. The intellectual ability of these students identified with learning disability vary just like the general population of a school. Mayes and Moore (2016) explored the challenges in meeting the needs of twice-exceptional learners in an urban school district. The authors found eight artistically gifted Black students who were also diagnosed with learning dis-

abilities. Through interviews with these students and their parents, Mayes and Moore were able to understand the difficulty that these students faced in their schools.

The authors found that the twice-exceptional label created a mixed self-image in students. Although the students and their parents associated positive feelings with being labeled as gifted, they also felt stigmatized and isolated as being identified with learning disabilities. The students stated that they wanted their teachers to focus on their strengths and not to ignore them. The students and their parents wanted teachers who could give them goals, believed that they could pursue their artistic talents professionally after school, but also accommodated their special needs.

A teacher take-away from this article is that twice-exceptional learners can succeed through support from a caring teacher. The students interviewed stated consistently that the teachers who encouraged their strengths in art while providing patient support in their areas of weakness were the teachers who positively affected their lives. Further, the students all shared a common theme of negative experiences: teachers who lost their patience with the students when they struggled academically or who ignored their artistic strength and only focused on their academic weakness. With standardized tests always on the horizon, it can be

easy for teachers to believe that what students need most is help in their areas of deficiency. Mayes and Moore demonstrate that for, twice-exceptional learners to succeed, a teacher cannot forget their students' gifts.

Baudson, T. G., & Preckel, F. (2016). Teachers' conceptions of gifted and average-ability students on achievement-relevant dimensions. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 60, 212-225. doi: 10.1177/0016986216647115

A teacher's perceptions of a student can affect how that teacher works with the student, from the expectations they hold to the patience they are willing to give to that student. Certain stereotypes can affect a teacher's perceptions of a group of students negatively. Baudson and Preckel (2016) examine how general education teachers perceive gifted students and what stereotypes they might hold.

The authors created an experiment where they had 129 primary and 126 secondary general education teachers look at a set of eight different student vignettes and then rate the students on intellectual ability, motivation, social ability, and maladjustment. The vignettes were identical but different in three aspects: the name of the student (stefan or stefanie), age (8 or 15), and ability (average or high ability). What they found was that the teachers' conceptions of gifted children greatly

varied. Though the group of teachers rated the gifted student vignettes as having higher ability and motivation than the average ability vignettes they also viewed the gifted students as having less social ability and being maladjusted. The authors conjectured that since the general education teachers did not have experience to draw upon, they used media representations to conceptualize gifted children.

The teacher takeaway from this article is for a gifted teacher to keep in mind that the conception they might have of their gifted students might differ from their general education peers. The authors strongly suggest not to try to change teacher peers' perceptions from the ground up but to approach what they know that is aligned with research and then move forward. Variations of the experiment used by the author have been used successfully for professional development workshops on gifted students. A teacher interested in bringing awareness to peers should consider using the experimental framework for their own school's professional development.

Dimitriadis, C. (2016). Nurturing mathematical promise in a regular elementary classroom: Exploring the role of the teacher

and classroom environment. *Rooper Review*, 38, 107-122. doi: 10.1080/02783193.2016.1150375

Teachers and classroom environments matter in developing academic talent in students. Teachers can support and nurture a student with developing mathematical promise or squelch that talent. Similarly, a classroom environment dominated by rote practicing for standardized tests can be an environment where a child will never learn to love mathematics and thus never want to develop their talent. Dimitriadis (2016) provided a case study of one elementary general education classroom where he examined how a teacher can nurture and develop mathematical talent.

The author examined an elementary classroom that had just begun to implement cluster grouping. The teacher had begun to group students by ability in her classroom. The author observed the teacher bringing challenging and individualized learning opportunities to her students due to her training, subject expertise, and confidence. The author noted that one factor that set the teacher apart was her ability to notice talent in her students due to her training in gifted education. Further, the teacher had masterful

control over her classroom. She could leave an ability group of students unattended with their work, trusting that they would work diligently. In essence, it was not just the teacher's training in gifted education that mattered, but also the teacher's fundamental skills in managing a classroom.

The teacher take away from this article is the importance of creating a structured environment as a foundation of a gifted classroom. Though pedagogical knowledge and training are important, classroom management cannot be ignored. The teacher was able to implement an advanced pedagogical technique in her classroom (cluster grouping) but this was done through an established framework of routine and more routine.

One other teacher take away from this article is to remember that even though the students are high ability, they are still students (and thus learners). The teacher gave her gifted students a task she felt they could do by themselves to focus on a different ability group. Though the students worked diligently, they still struggled on the task. Sometimes, when focusing on students with more perceived need, a teacher can forget the needs of the rest of their students, including their gifted students. ■

The Authors

Robin Johnson is the Challenge Lab teacher at Live Oak Learning Center, in Rockport, TX. Robin is working on her master's degree in Educational Psychology with a specialization in Gifted and Talented at the University of North Texas.

Emily Villamar-Robbins is a graduate of Harvard Law School, the mother of two gifted sons, and a gifted education advocate. Emily is

also a contributing writer for website TheFissureBlog.com, an innovative resource on education and the evolution of learning.

Mattie Oveross is a doctoral student in Educational Psychology at the University of North Texas and curriculum coordinator at E.A. Young Academy in North Richland Hills, Texas.

April Walker is an upper elemen-

tary and middle school teacher and an avid reader of fiction and nonfiction for children and young adults. To see what April is currently reading, you can follow her at <https://www.goodreads.com/ideabackpack>.

Jaret Hodges is a graduate assistant and doctoral student at Purdue University. His research interests include at-risk gifted students and gifted English language learners.