BEING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE IN THE COVID-19 ERA
What Gifted Educators Can Do to Maintain an Inclusive Environment During Times of Uncertainty

by Dr. Javetta Jones Roberson

The year 2020 has caused us to view many aspects of our society in a different light. The terms "essential" and "unprecedented" have become a common language when discussing jobs, healthcare, and day-to-day life events. For those of us in education, the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has caused us to create a paradigm shift in more ways than one. To start, virtual learning platforms have become the primary source of instruction. Online teaching and distance learning are no longer an option; they have become a necessity of learning during this global pandemic. Compliance with health and safety guidelines, stable internet connections for students, and Zoom meetings all play a major role in planning for classroom instruction during CO-VID-19. Compliance has been such a focus for educators that issues of equity and cultural responsiveness are the least of worries in schools. In fact, this pandemic has shed light on more inequities embedded in our education system that are consistently changing the face of the 21st-century learning experience.

This issue calls for a question of balance: How can educators shift from planning for compliance only to plan-

ning for the well-being of students with compliance and equity at the forefront? The answer is incorporating cultural responsiveness. A culturally responsive educator incorporates a student's way of understanding and in return, validates, facilitates and liberates ethnically diverse students by simultaneously cultivating their cultural integrity, individual abilities, and academic success (Gay, 2010). Being culturally responsive aims to empower students that are traditionally marginalized in schools and special programs. For gifted educators of racial, cultural, ethnic, and linguistically different (RCELD) students, culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) supports students' academic success. CRP utilizes student backgrounds and lived experiences as a means to make learning more relevant and valuable. Culturally responsive educators in gifted and talented education (GATE) are student-centered; they eliminate barriers to learning and achievement and, thereby, open doors for culturally different students to reach their potential (Ford, 2010). With proper planning and consideration, cultural responsiveness can be achieved during the era of COVID-19. Below are just a few suggestions to consider when journeying through cultural responsiveness in an online learning environment.

Implement Critical Self-Reflection of Current Practices

A key factor in becoming a culturally responsive educator is ensuring that self-reflection is an everyday practice. Being critically self-reflective is a great step toward an inclusive learning environment for RCELD students because educators have an opportunity to examine their current curricular and instructional practices as well as any social/emotional learning being integrated into these practices. Critical reflection is a personal process that involves a deep shift in the way an indi-

vidual fundamentally thinks, feels, and behaves; potentially revealing problems and making visible any hidden ideological assumptions that undergird beliefs (Mezirow, 2003; Moore, 2018). If an educator has an implicit bias or misconception about their students, being critically self-reflective can develop a paradigm shift in their thinking and adjust the classroom environment according to that reflective practice. During a time where education is extremely reliant on virtual platforms, it's important for educators to create culturally responsive online learning opportunities that require rethinking traditional patterns of teaching and learning for pedagogically sound learning design in new environments (Morong & DesBiens, 2016). It is also important that educators support students in a self-reflective practice during learning. If they are experiencing issues with virtual learning, students must be reflective in what they are experiencing and learn to communicate with educators. Requesting help when in need, asking questions for clarification and other areas that arise during online learning must be addressed and students need to know they are supported through this format.

Flexibility Through Multimodal Learning

Every student does not learn the exact same way. We've seen this now more than ever with regard to online learning. Students are in need of multiple forms of online instruction models according to their personal learning. When developing online learning content, educators should provide a variety of learning models that are flexible and based on student need. The existing research on online learning identifies flexibility, context, and learner agency as critical design components (Morong & DesBiens, 2016). Synchronous versus asynchronous, blended/personalized

learning, and independent self-directed learning are examples of technology based instructional strategies that offer an array of options for student learning in the gifted classroom. As educators move through cultural responsiveness in the online classroom, flexibility is a key component that is useful for an optimal learning experience. Flexible scheduling with respect to time and space, choices, and learner input into learning goals, activities, materials and methods are key components of culturally responsive design (Morong & DesBiens, 2016).

Building a Collaborative Learning Partnership

Students need to understand that their learning is a partnership with educators. They must work together and with other peers to share this power in partnering and collaboration; finding the most optimal way learning can occur in a virtual learning format. Collaboration is a noteworthy benefit of integrating technology into the classroom, as it can provide all students with support from peers (Hett, 2012). By collaborating with students, student input is welcomed and included in lesson planning. Their feedback on activities help promote a continuous improvement environment as educators adjust future student needs. Learner feedback and the power shared through student-educator partnership also supports cultural responsiveness. Student goal setting that is relevant to their lives and feedback on learning contributes to culturally relevant learning materials (Pannekoek, 2012) supports the power in a collaborative student-educator partnership.

Valuing the Language and Culture of Your Students

In order to build positive culture in a culturally responsive classroom, edu-

cators must learn strategies to incorporate the cultural experiences, language and beliefs of students in learning content. Honoring and highlighting these differences can add value to student learning where students feel seen and not excluded in instruction. They are mirrored in texts, curriculum and activities. This mirroring occurs when educators take time to recognize, understand and incorporate student cultural diversity in the classroom environment. Gay (2010) notes that in order for educators to effectively infuse culturally responsive teaching practices into gifted programming, it is necessary for them to have a comprehensive understanding of cultural topics and events relevant to their student population (Gay, 2010). In the online gifted classroom, educators can adapt instructional supports to align to student home and community culture.

As our world adjusts to the new normal of virtual learning, educators of gifted students can use culturally responsiveness as a holistic approach. We must engage students in critical thinking, problem solving, and rigorous coursework relevant to their lives. ■

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The Efficiency Gains of Online Education for Universities

Angelica Sirotin

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit last March, universities across the United States went through arguably the most comprehensive restructuring in modern history. In a matter of weeks, academic institutions had to scramble together online curriculums for thousands of students. The recent digital reinvention of education has yielded criticism from both students and faculty, regardless of discipline. Claims of inefficiency due to the termination of in-person schooling, and technical errors in remote administra-tion, only scratch the surface of complaints. However, I argue that online education has awakened a new level of efficiency from which universities have never before benefitted.

The first argument discusses efficiency from the standpoint of removing classroom waitlists, hence increasing student access to education while simultaneously mitigating expenditures. For decades, universities have had to utilize waitlists for classes to address the problem of student over-enroll-ment. However, with education going fully remote, there is no longer any need for waitlists, as online environments are not bound to the same constraints as physical spaces like classrooms. Therefore, universities have the capacity to teach far more students than ever before, and can do so without increasing costs. According to a study designed to measure the cost and effectiveness of online learning,

With equivalent learning outcomes, the cost of instruction per one student in blended modality is 15-19% lower, and in the online modality, it is 79-81%

lower, depending on the course. These estimates take into account the costs of developing and maintaining online courses. According to the authors of the study, with online courses universities will be able to teach 15-18% more students at the same cost (Chirikov et al., 2020).

Furthermore, increasing the number of students that a university can instruct will boost the demand for instructors. This will in turn equip budding graduate and Ph.D. students with more opportunities to fulfill their professor-in-training requirements at a faster rate. Students will also no longer have to push their degree progress further and further back as a result of filled classrooms. This simple example demonstrates how eliminating waitlists can solve the problem of wasted time, both on the end of the instructor and the student. Indeed, it is the efficiency gain of time that will be discussed next.

As a student entrepreneur who commuted to campus, wasted time was something that I simply could not afford. After my first week at the University of Minnesota, I realized that I could source all of my lecture materials online, whether it be on YouTube, Khan Academy, or another website. Because of this discovery, in addition to knowing that attendance was not graded, there was no need for me to waste my time commuting in traffic to campus and sitting in a classroom for an hour plus, when I could just as easily complete my work from home on my laptop in half the time. Unsurprisingly, According to Ipsos Connect, "80% of Gen Z teens say YouTube has helped them become more knowledgeable about something, and 68% say YouTube has helped them improve or gain skills that will help them prepare for the future."

What's more, whenever I did show up to campus, the lecture halls always presented the same scene: students dozing off, glued to their phones, listening to music, or chatting with a friend,

rather than tuning into the lecture. After witnessing this time and again, it became clear to me that most students do not want to be stuck inside of a classroom for hours. By doing this, not only are students being unproductive with their time, but so are professors. With the shift towards online education, the efficiency gain of time can be exploited. Students have the freedom to adequately balance their schedules, while professors and instructors have more time to focus on producing research for the university.

Lastly, online education has brought about the efficiency gain of quick adaptability to changing circumstances. With the onset of the pandemic, in just two weeks, my alma mater managed to pool together COVID-19 protocols, resources, and new methods for the administration of online classes to over 50,000 students. In other words, academic institutions have proven the impossible. Moreover, the success of online administration is also due in large part to the adaptability of Generation Z (Gen Z). Imagine you were born into a world where you had no choice but to evolve alongside a rapidly changing digital environment, one characterized by the inception of the internet, the rise of social networks, and the increasing implementation of artificial intelligence. Gen Z was raised in this exact circumstance. Born between 1995 and 2010, Gen Z is now the majority generation on the planet, constituting 32% of the world's population. By extension, they now make up the majority of the globe's university student body. They have been cemented into the history books as the first true digital and artificial intelligence (AI) native generation, equipped with intimate, first-hand knowledge of and experience with rapid digital transformation. Since birth, Gen Z has been adapting to sudden shifts in the world's digital landscape. Therefore, when the Coronavirus forced education to go fully digital, Gen Z was

programmed to embrace and welcome the change.

Digital transformation of society was inevitable. COVID-19 simply accelerated the rate of change. As CEO of Microsoft Satya Nadella stated, "We've seen two years' worth of digital transformation in two months." Because universities have undergone digitalization on a massive scale, and now possess new and improved technological faculties, it is now possible for institutions to fulfill the reality of AI-augmented education. AI-driven education will lead to new efficiency gains, such as personalized learning, smart content, and customized curriculums designed by AI—hence optimizing administrative tasks, saving time, and providing higher quality education for students.

This article has summarized some of the efficiency gains from online education that universities will experience. Although online education has a long road to perfection, it has already proven its benefits to students and faculty.■

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Power to the Young People

Engaging Students in Politics

Allison Russo

Most school-aged students do not see themselves in politics, and have relegated the entire concept to the land of adulthood. Practical adult responsibilities are often mysteries to students as they leave their public education: How do I buy a car? How do I pay taxes? What about voting? Arguably one of the most important responsibilities as an adult American citizen is voting and registering to vote. After all, election results can impact your ability to buy a car and pay your taxes.

We sometimes forget that engaging in politics is more than simply visiting your polling place once you turn 18. Speaking at a town or city council meeting, contacting your state and national representatives, or just staying informed on political news are all ways to engage with the government. Those are also a few ways to get involved with politics before reaching voting age. Besides preparing young

citizens for voting and perhaps someday running for office, getting involved in politics at a young age has wide-reaching benefits. When examining political issues, students can advance their moral development and develop their skills in debate, analysis, argument, and persuasive writing.

We often speak about politics as governmental affairs, but we deal in politics in our personal and professional lives too. It is an unavoidable fact that much about politics is about power - who has it, how they use it, and how they treat people/groups without the same level of power. Any system, formal or informal, denotes these groups or individuals as the powerful and powerless, givers and receivers, haves and have-nots. Knowing how to recognize your power in relation to the people around you and using your power for good is a life skill every person should have, regardless of your

involvement in government.

Classroom Considerations

General classrooms and history or civics classes are not the only place where politics exist. Politics come into play in the arts (protest music, murals), STEM (research funding, bioethics), and English and literature (historical fiction, censorship). It would not be difficult to argue that asking students to fundraise for their after school club is an act of politics. After all, aren't they using their political/social power to bring further power/funds to a cause that is important to them?

For more controversial issues, teachers must consider how political they want to be, while protecting their jobs. There may be topics that your school considers "off-limits" and there may be issues that you feel are worth putting up a fight that may cost you po-

litically, or even your job. It is a personal ethical decision whether to adhere to these policies, defy them, or advocate for changing them. After all, there are politics in your workplace as well. However, keep in mind that you show your privilege by refusing to discuss any political or controversial issue. Unfair, racist, or sexist policies and systems, especially those that affect your students and your classroom, must be called out. If you choose to take up an issue in your classroom that could be controversial, consider if you are better off asking for your supervisor's or principal's blessing first, or asking for forgiveness later.

Another word of warning: You may feel comfortable sharing your personal opinions, but do not push your views on students. They will not respond well, and may see themselves as outsiders in your classroom if they disagree, disconnecting them from their learning. The details of a student's viewpoint or opinion is much less important than fanning the flames of their engagement in an issue and their ability to articulate their position.

Elementary Students

- For the youngest future leaders, recognize and name anytime a student assumes a leadership role, whether formally or informally.
- Emphasize the purpose, power, and responsibilities of the government, not just the roles and systems.
- Harness the power of a child's sense of fairness. If a student points out an unfair system, big or small, that is an opportunity to talk about power, privilege, and change.
- Engage in their burgeoning senses of morality. Older elementary students typically move from pre-conventional to conventional morality. Acknowledge the advancement from a "What's in it for me?" mentality to a sense of broader societal norms.

Middle and High School Students

- Treat your middle and high school students as voters. According to the Voting Rights Act (2009), regarding the literacy of voters: "any person who has not been adjudged an incompetent and who has completed the sixth grade in a[n accredited] public school in, or a private school … possesses sufficient literacy, comprehension, and intelligence to vote in any election."
- Use a verbal or written debate as part of an assignment, activity, or assessment. Then have students argue the "other side"-- not only to deepen their understanding, but to encourage empathy.
- Politics and policies of the school or district may come to light in your classroom. Dress codes, prom policies, and punishments often come up in students' lives when unfair practices are in place. Encourage students to not just complain, but to take action. If you believe they have the power to make a difference, they will too. For example, if a school program is being threatened, involve students in the school board meetings. They have the most to lose.
- If an issue comes up in local politics that is relevant to your class, have students write letters or emails to their elected officials in support of a cause. For example, a life sciences class could write to the city council defending local wildlife when a new shopping center is being planned. Be careful not to force students to take a certain position-- allow students to abstain or write their own letter. Be aware of any personal connections students have to personal politics; a student's parent could be on city council, or would benefit from the new jobs a shopping center would bring, for example.
- Inspire activism by watching and reacting to the West Wing episode "A Good Day" (Flint & Schiff, 2005) where a group of young activists visits the White House to lobby for child suffrage. It's powerful to see a young person so eloquently and persuasively argue for their rights-- even directly to the president himself. Click **here** for a four-minute smash cut of the relevant scenes.
- The Political Classroom (thepoliticalclassroom.com) has a bevy of resources on politics, particularly useful if law and government aren't your strong suit.

You may feel as though you are walking a tight line with politics in the classroom, but with some planning and research, you can set your students up for real life beyond graduation day and election day. A country of informed and engaged voters benefits us all.∎

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Seven Questions with Mayuri Raja

Interview conducted by
Dr. Laila Y. Sanguras

Mayuri Raja is a software engineer at Google. She was formerly a GT student in grade school and a Turing Scholar honors student at UT Austin, and she wrote a thesis on the inherited trauma of second generation South Asian Americans. In addition to her job, Mayuri is also a community organizer in the local Austin area with a focus on antiracist action. Currently, she is on the steering committee for the Austin Climate Equity Plan, and she is a member of AZAAD Austin, a South Asian leftist collective in Austin. She strongly believes in pushing the boundaries of what's possible and rethinking what the world could look like if we don't cling to racist institutions.

How did you become engaged and involved in local politics? Can you also tell us a bit about ways you are involved?

I started paying attention to politics when I was a freshman in high school, but I didn't actually get involved until college. This was partially because I was so busy in high school with everything else on my plate, and partially because Donald Trump was elected just a few months after I started college. I think most of my opinions started forming in high school, but in college, I finally had the time to act on them.

I started off by getting involved with local community groups that were pushing City Council for changes to the city budget, and over time, that led to me meeting more people and

learning about more opportunities to get involved. I've spoken at city council meetings, attended protests and rallies, and helped register voters. Last year, I was on the steering committee for the city's Climate Equity Plan update process, which was probably the most involved I've gotten.

What can you tell us about challenges and successes you have had related to your involvement?

As far as challenges go, political activism is often intense and draining. You have to move quickly and seize the moment when you have high momentum, so during a campaign, there's often little down time. As a student, it was pretty tough for me to commit that amount of time to anything, so I had to find other ways to support community efforts. I learned pretty quickly that it's important to take breaks and re-energize before diving into a new project.

It's hard to speak to the successes that I've faced because they never feel like enough. Every success is just a stepping stone toward building a city that is equitable and held accountable for their history of racism. Last year, for example, we managed to finally win a decrease in the police budget, but it's not nearly as large as we'd hoped, so there's more work to do. And while I'm pleased with the progress we've made with the Austin Climate Equity Plan, it's only the first step to combining environmentalist efforts with antiracist philosophy.

With the rise in social media coverage and the presence of 24-hour news cycles, we are more and more aware of world events. What advice do you have for teachers and parents for how to support their children in this new era?

Encourage children to moderate how much time they spend looking at the news and social media. I only check social media twice a day: once in the morning, once in the evening. That way, I'm not overwhelmed with information, and I don't get sucked into the wormhole of despair. It's great to be aware of what's going on in the world, but there is such a thing as being too aware.

The other thing I would say is diversify your sources. I mostly pay attention to U.S. news since I live in the U.S., but often, this means I miss what's going on in the rest of the world. I have to intentionally curate what I read to make sure that I'm getting news from other parts of the world.

What do you think teachers can and should do to encourage children of all ages to become involved in world issues? What do you think their role is?

Ultimately, someone is not going to get involved in politics or pay attention to world issues unless they're interested. Teachers can introduce these topics to students to pique that interest and give students resources for if they want to do more research on their own time. Tie current events into your class every once in a while (history and related subjects are the easiest place to do this, but other subjects can refer to current events as well).

A word of warning: assignments that require students to choose an article about a current event and write/reflect on it are functionally useless at the high school level. I clearly remember always choosing the shortest article, skimming it, writing a reflection, and then immediately forgetting what I'd read about. You have to expect that your students are on auto pilot; small group discussions are one way to break this barrier, but I'll admit that it's a really tough problem to grapple with and I don't have all the answers.

What about parents? What is their role?

Parents can also encourage their kids to pay attention to world events, often by just turning on the TV to watch the news. I wouldn't force your kids to watch the news or anything, but if it's on in the background, they'll take notice every once in a while. Kids tend to shy away from anything that parents push in a heavy-handed manner, so you have to straddle the fine line between encouragement and force. For younger kids, it can be effective to have discussions with them about what's going on (in simpler terms) and then ask them what they think; for older kids, this tactic isn't as effective because it feels like forced conversation.

The other thing I'll say here is that when I got to high school, my parents started bringing up the news during our family dinners, and I often purposely did not engage. Why? Because I didn't want to go through the work of changing my parents' minds. The lesson learned here is that you have to be openminded and willing to listen to your kids' points of view, or they'll just shut you out.

How do you balance your passion for a topic with taking care of your mental health?

This is a tough question. I try to moderate the amount of time I spend thinking about politics and community activism because ultimately, it doesn't do anyone any good. I do a lot of writing when I feel overwhelmed to try and release some of that anxiety and tension. As I mentioned earlier, I also limit my news intake.

In many of my circles, I'm the person that people turn to when they want to understand what's going on in politics. That's a lot of pressure on one person, and sometimes, I have to put myself first and step away from political conversations for a while so I can recharge. In particular, I like to alternate between reading academic/nonfiction work about systemic oppression, actively participating in local movements, and discussing current events and opinions with my family and friends. Doing more than one of these things at once takes a huge toll on mental health over time.

It's a lot of work to push for change, and results are slow. It's easy to get tired. You have to take breaks, or your passion will turn into disillusion.

Is there anything else that you would like to share with our readers?

Kids are never too young to learn about politics. I think that's the biggest misconception I see. Talk to elementary school kids about racism, about class discrimination, about gender roles and compulsive heterosexuality. They'll understand more than you think. ■

BAYLOR UNIVERSITY'S

CENTER FOR GIFTED EDUCATION AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT

The Center provides:
- educational opportunities for gifted and talented students in Grades 1-12;
- professional development for teachers, counselors, and administrators of gifted students and programs; and
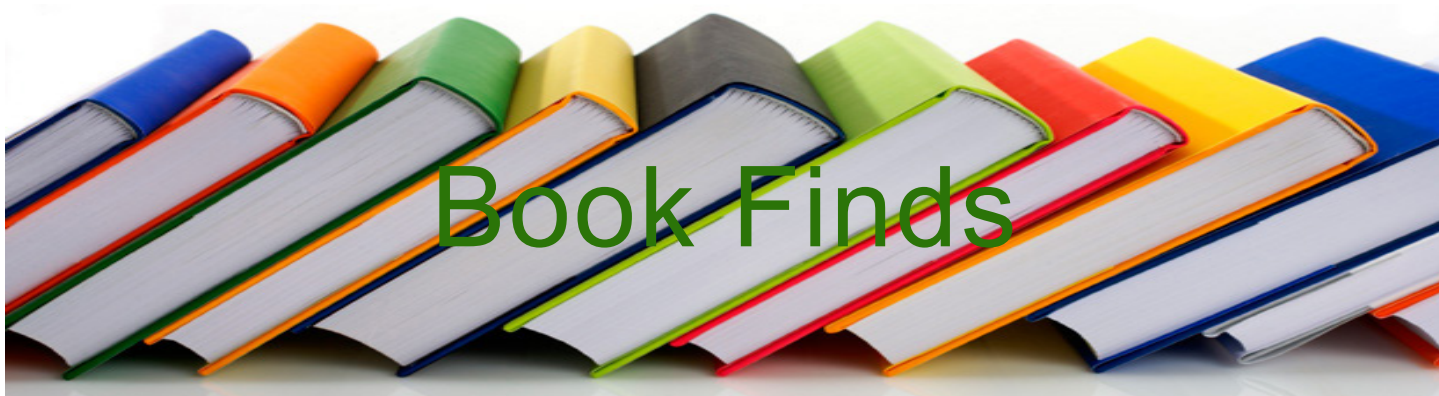- support for parents of gifted and talented students.

ANNUAL EVENTS HOSTED BY THE CENTER

- Fall GT Conference
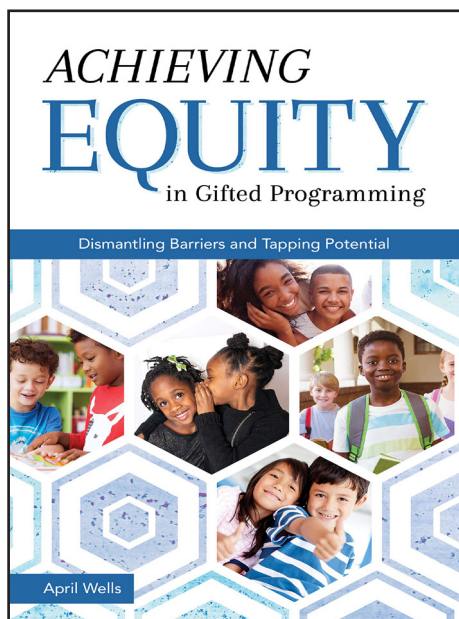- Spring GT Parent Conference
- University for Young People (June)

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Book Finds

Achieving Equity in Gifted Programming: Dismantling Barriers and Tapping Potential — by April Wells

Reviewed by Reanna Fulton

If you are looking for methods to promote equity in gifted education, then look no further. In *Achieving Equity in Gifted Programming,* Wells (2020) gives an overview of the causes and impact of selecting students into gifted programs, which largely excludes black or ESL students and those from low-income families. Speaking from experience, Wells (2020) shares her involvement in restructuring Chicago's District U-46 following findings of a lawsuit claiming discrimination in their gifted education program.

While brief, this book provides many examples and talking points, even for educators not involved in gifted education. With that being said,

the book's visual leanness should not be confused with a lack of content, as there is plenty of information providing food for thought. This book would serve as a great resource for professional development on educational equity with teachers and administrators, even in the least diverse of districts. Personally, I began to reflect on how my own child was evaluated for gifted education services in my local school district by taking an intelligence test. Wells helped me see how antiquated the use of that intelligence test was, which coincidentally was the same testing method used on me 30 years ago.

Wells (2020) explains how privilege and biases in education can lead to microaggressions that we may not even recognize. A significant number of diverse students and those who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are left underrepresented in gifted programs.

Awareness, proposed by Wells (2020), would allow previously marginalized students to benefit from being challenged instead of being viewed through the lens of deficiencies by educators. Wells (2020) also suggests that students' potential be tapped and that every child receive enrichment in the classroom, no matter their learning level. Using these strategies, schools can move forward providing students with rigorous educational opportunities, ensuring that all students, even those who were previously overlooked, are challenged.
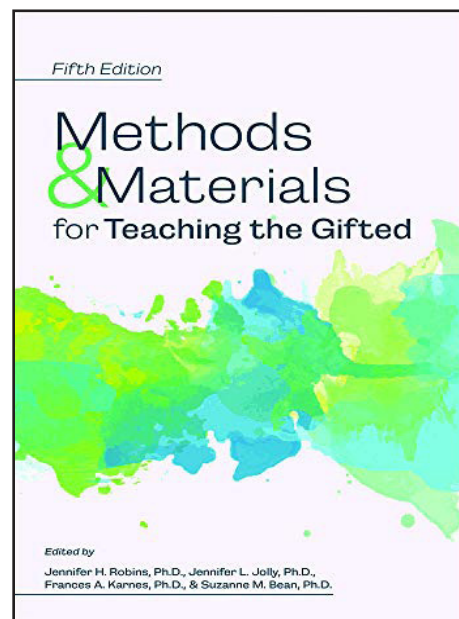
Methods & Materials for Teaching the Gifted (5th ed.) — by J. H. Robins, J. L. Jolly , F. A. Karnes, and S. M. Bean

Reviewed by Celeste D.C. Sodergren

This revised edition of *Methods & Materials for Teaching the Gifted* accomplishes one of the most challenging feats in education: bridging theory and practice in a way that is accessible to the newest of gifted education practitioners without glossing over the complexities of the most up to date research in the field. Each of the 21 chapters is full of straightforward, practical application of research and honest discussions of the disagreements within the field over how each might be applied. The book is divided into five sections.

Section one focuses on describing the latest issues in gifted educa-

tion research, including a new focus on developing diverse and inclusive practices. These include chapters on twice-exceptionality, cultural responsivity in the gifted classroom, psychosocial skill building, and how to guide program decision making under diverse state plans utilizing essential truths about gifted education. Section two examines gifted programming standards and how to integrate those with content standards from the different content standards prevalent in education systems to date. The authors also offer detailed advice on how to utilize those standards to develop effective curriculum and programs.

In section three, the editors turn attention to what to do after those standards are in place, and the curriculum development is ready to begin. This section covers designing curriculum, effective differentiation, creating sustainable differentiated environments, grouping strategies and other strate-

gies and tools that might be used to support gifted learners: acceleration, grouping, critical thinking skills, problem-based learning, and research skills. The fourth section is perhaps one of the most valuable as it includes detailed examples of how to collaborate with and support teachers and administrators to enhance the gifted student experience in their general education classes as well. The fifth and final section is aimed at the talent side of the gifted and talented paradigm, including talent searches, developing talent inside and outside of the classroom, and understanding how to read, utilize and apply research in gifted and talented education at the granular level in the classroom.

This book is not meant to be a quick and easy read, but truly is a comprehensive guide to building and sustaining a quality gifted and talented program in a school or district. It is especially useful for program de-

signers, or teams looking to evaluate and improve their programs. If a district is conducting a curriculum audit, or preparing for one, this is an excellent place to start. This guide is far more than lists of tips and tricks, but includes tools, models and specific scenarios to help a gifted specialist to improve their support of others. The gifted coordinator's chapter even includes suggestions for collaborative goals depending on the administrator addressed.

Many gifted program administrators, superintendents, and district specialists are currently seeking clarity on how to build relevant, culturally responsive programs that will challenge students to face an increasingly globalized world with a future that is still unimagined. This book offers specific supports, the latest research made tangible for practitioners, and a wealth of information for both new and experienced gifted leaders. ∎

FROM THE EDITOR

Hello everyone. I trust each of you had a wonderful holiday season. As we put 2020 behind us, let's all hope that 2021 will be a better year.

This issue of *Gifted Education Review* reflects some the challenges that our current educational environment presents us. In Dr. Javetta Jones Roberson's featured article, she explores the question of how we can address equity and cultural responsiveness in the classroom during the pandemic. And in the second article of this issue, Angelica Sirotin discusses the challenges that universities faced having to ramp up online learning at such an unprecedented pace, and she predicts that universities will ultimately become more efficient as a result.

Finally, I want to take a moment to offer some professional observations I have made during the

current school year - and particularly during the last few months. As a counselor, I have observed the increasing toll that the pandemic has taken on students. A steady stream - no, more of a flood - of parents have come to my office seeking help with children who are failing or seriously struggling in classes due to a lack of motivation or a general malaise. Most of the issues appear to be class assignments that are incomplete or not turned in at all, resulting in failing grades. And while a majority of the struggles involve students in virtual educational environments, even the children attending school in person are struggling with these issues.

Another issue I see is the effect of long-term social isolation and distancing. I see more children struggling with depression and anxiety because they have gone too long without traditional face-to-face socialization. Even those at-

tending school in person are feeling these affects, because in most cases, they are limited to seeing only those students who are in their classes. And if their friends are attending in person but not in their classes, they are prevented from seeing them.

These are the two major issues I see currently in my clinical practice, but the overall effects of the pandemic on the psychological and educational welfare of students will last for years. A generation of kids have been transformed by this experience, and it will be some time before we can truly see what the long-term effects will be.

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