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Identification for Gifted Education in the Early Years (K-3rd Grade)

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What Do I Do With Highly Capable **Young Learners?**

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Best Practices . . .

Know

- Early childhood is a **special time** period in a child's life –
Asynchronous Development!!

Understand

- There are **many ways** to address the needs of diverse young learners in your classrooms.
- The **environment** is critical to nurture talent development

Do – Make an **Action Plan**

- Plan a gifted program for young learners.



It's not impossible --- It's just
complicated!!

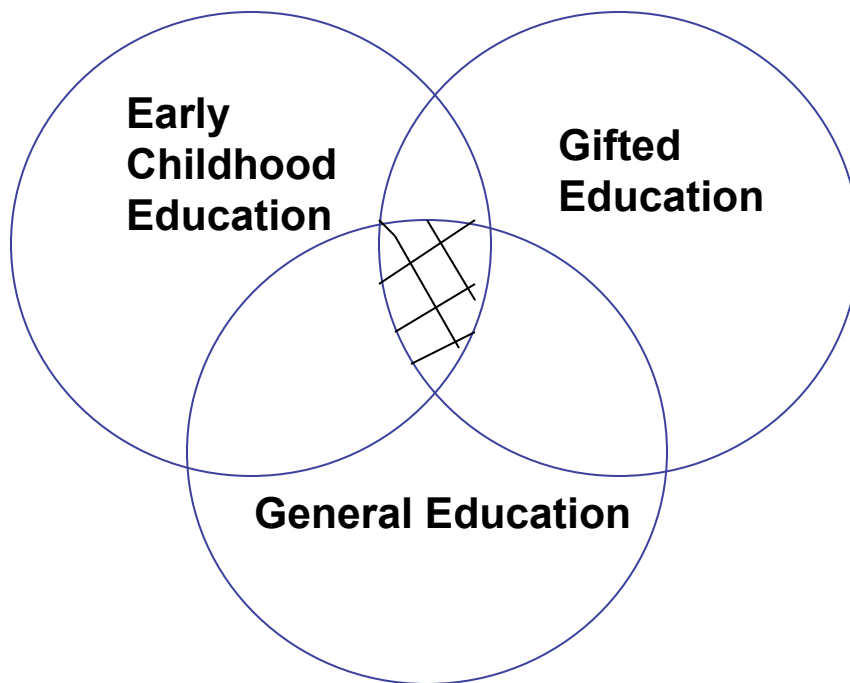


Why?

What makes developing programs for highly capable students so complicated for young students K – 3?

What is the Field of Early Childhood Gifted Education?

- **Best Practices**

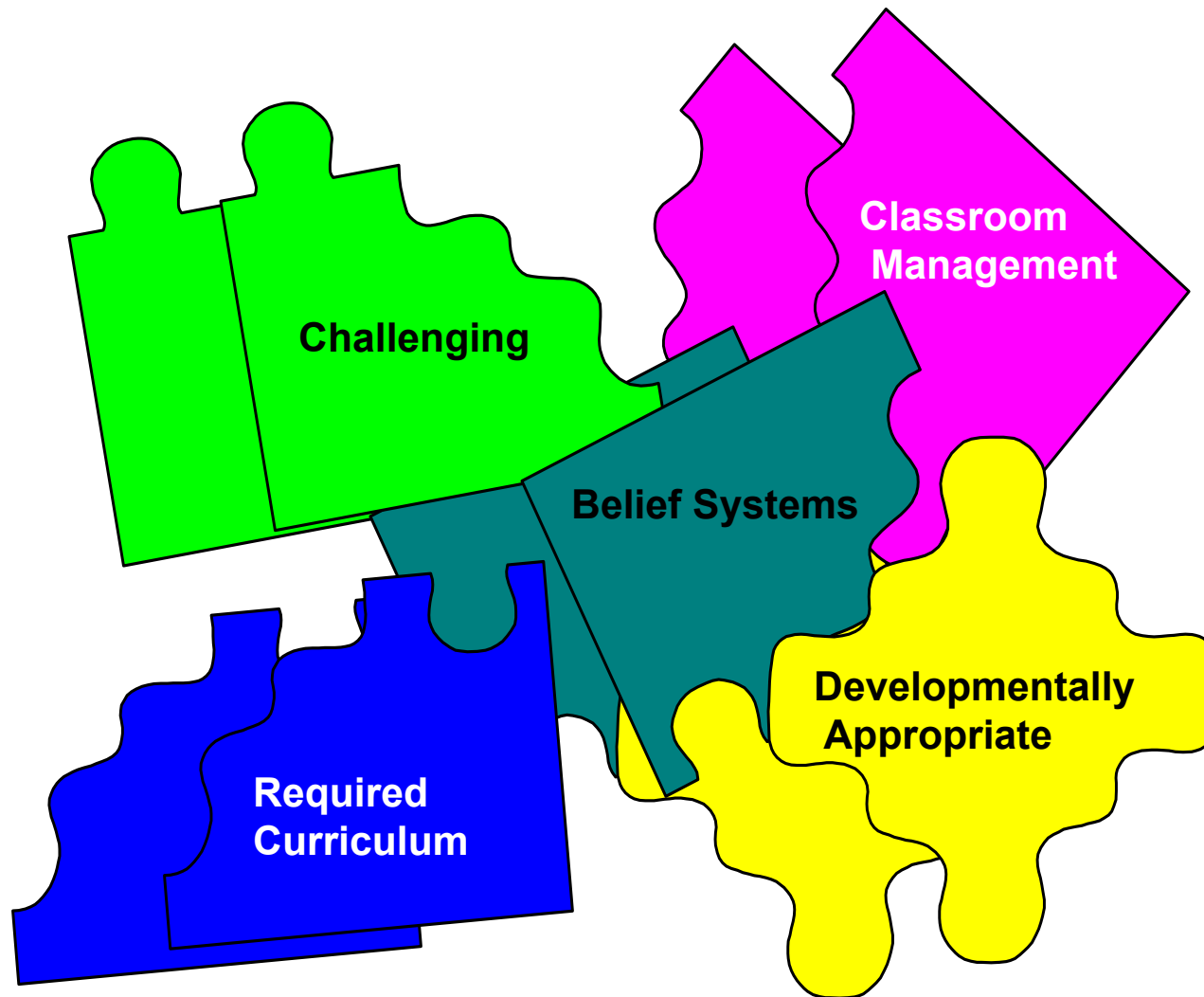


Early Childhood Education

- **Lays the foundation for all future endeavors of young children.**
- **For every dollar spent on preschool, between \$4-\$8 is saved in later social service costs to society**



What is special about early childhood gifted education?



Streams of Thought Core Belief Systems

- **Romantic**
- **Cultural Transmission**
- **Cognitive Developmental Model**

The Streams.....

• Romantic

Child

Teacher

- The child comes upon their own understandings by drifting along through materials and experiences
- The teacher is reluctant to influence the child's thinking too much, and is passive in the learning environment
- Allowing nature to take its inevitable course



The Streams.....

- **Cultural Transmission**



- **The child learns what the teacher teaches using a predictable, established curriculum**
- **Teacher puts information and societal rules into the child**
- **Influencing the nature of the thinking process**



- **Cognitive Development**



- **The child constructs knowledge (and uses it) and is challenged by materials and interactions with the teachers and peers**
- **Teacher facilitates the child's learning, fosters the process, challenges the child, teaches children to think critically**

Teachers must focus on **challenge!**

- **We need early childhood teachers who embrace the cognitive development model**
- **These are teachers who see their role to challenge children!**

The Role of Challenge

“The ability to challenge children intellectually is the critical ingredient that differentiates the ordinary classroom from the distinguished one.”

– (Feinburg & Mindess, 1994, p. 83)

Definition of Highly Capable Students

- Students who perform or **show potential for performing** at significantly advanced academic levels when **compared with others of their age, experiences, or environments**.
- Outstanding abilities are seen within students' general intellectual aptitudes, specific academic abilities, and/or creative productivities within a specific domain.
- These students are present not only in the general populace, but are present within all protected classes according to chapters [28A.640](#) and [28A.642](#) RCW.

Potential - Not Yet!



How do you nurture potential?



Early Interest



Beginning the Journey

- **What is potential?**
- **How do we develop it?**
- **How do we know what affects the development of a child's potential?**
- **How do we know what the child is learning?**
- **How do we produce an "optimum" environment for learning?**



Potential for Showing Exceptional Performance



Why is it so complicated to identify young children as gifted?

- What we know about **intelligence**
- What we know about early **environmental influences**
- What we know about **early childhood programs**
- What we know about **approaches to learning**

What do we know about intelligence?

- Intelligence is **malleable**
 - Brain scans show differences related to different occupations
- Intelligence is **not static**
- **Prior experience matters** in developing knowledge, skills, and dispositions

What we know about environmental influences

- **Poverty** has profound impact on learning opportunities
- Study indicates that students whose families socioeconomic status places them in the top quartile of the population are about **five times more likely** to be in programs for gifted students than are students from families in the bottom quartile.

Students on Free and Reduced Lunch Were Less Prepared for Kindergarten

Area of Development and Learning	State WaKIDS (N = ~20,500 students)	State Free and Reduced Lunch WaKIDS (N = ~14,200 students)	State NON Free and Reduced Lunch WaKIDS (N = ~ 4,900 students)
Social Emotional Development	74%	71%	83%
Physical Development	79%	77%	83%
Language Development	66%	60%	83%
Cognitive Development	71%	66%	85%
Literacy	72%	67%	89%
Mathematics	52%	45%	74%

The percentages represent students who demonstrated the characteristics of entering kindergartners. Percentages have been rounded.

Achievement Gaps Start Young

- **Vocabulary development – key factors**
- **Children from low-income homes hear an average of 8 million fewer words per year than those from wealthier families**
- **30 million fewer words by the time child is 4.**



Identifying strengths

- **Majority of poor children of Hispanic Origin**
- **Best Practices for English Language Learners --- Support home language**
- **These children no less gifted, less intelligent, or have fewer aspirations to become eminent**
- **Drawing attention to and nurturing at-risk children's areas of strength offers a promising alternative to the all too typical characterization of this population as deficient.**

Practices No Longer Defensible

- The **practice of labeling young children** as gifted through standardized tests, in particular IQ tests
- The use of behavioral checklists that include curiosity, persistence, and attentiveness to label young children gifted. **We know that these skills** can be taught and should be part of all early childhood learning experiences
- The **practice of separating young children**—determining some are gifted and others not—does not take into account influences of early learning experiences and unwittingly serves to widen the opportunity gap.
- Children learning English should be gaining a foundation in their first language as well as acquiring a new language. Pulling them out of instruction in their own language to attend special programs (e.g., gifted programs) should be done with caution.

Defensible Conclusions

- Young children have potential for talent development.
- Early life experiences greatly impact later achievement
- Poverty has a profound impact on children's learning experiences.
- Building a foundation in children's first language helps them to acquire English.
- High-quality early learning environments challenge young children and **address their individual learning needs.**
- The social-emotional skills and positive approaches to learning that enhance peer relationships and later achievement can be taught.



Practical Programming Suggestions for Early Childhood Gifted Education

1. Identify strengths in young children by ongoing assessment to inform instruction – ***Young children are moving targets***
2. Redefine what is meant by “**A Gifted Program**”
3. Focus resources on professional development for teachers – **teachers key** to engagement and challenge
4. Focus on environments where children are **appropriately challenged**
5. Develop and maintain **ongoing positive relationships with parents** – parents know their young children.

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Early Child Gifted Programs

A Model for Nurturing and Developing Talent

1/20/14

In Your Program Plan

Defensible Practices

Program Component

Identify strengths in young children by ongoing assessment to inform instruction – *Young children are moving targets*

Ongoing Assessment

Developmental Checklists
Curriculum-Based Assessment

Redefine what is meant by “A Gifted Program”

Collaborative Resource Teacher

More individualized and small group instruction – Higher teacher/student ratios

Focus resources on professional development for teachers – *teachers key* to engagement and challenge

Professional Development

Inquiry-based teaching practices
Asynchronous development
Classroom Management
Differentiation of Instruction

Program Components in Defensible Early Childhood Gifted Programs

Defensible Practices

Focus on environments where children are **appropriately challenged**

Develop and maintain **ongoing positive relationships with parents** – parents know their young children.

Program Component

Emergent curriculum;
Value creativity, inquiry, and representation
Appropriately challenging curricular materials
Choice Time – Relate to student Interests;
Inspirations from Reggio Emilia

Parent Education Programs
Parent conferences with teachers
Parent Book Clubs related to gifted education

- **IDENTIFICATION**
- **OF STRENGTHS AND TALENTS**
- **OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE ALREADY MASTERED THE CURRICULUM AT THEIR GRADE LEVEL**

Why Ongoing Assessment?

- **Developmentally appropriate, ongoing,**
- **Observation-based assessment occurs when teachers are observing children during regular, everyday activities on a continuous basis throughout the year.**
- **Formal or standardized assessments offer a narrow picture of a child's ability at a given moment, ongoing assessments offer a broad, more meaningful picture of development.**

Ongoing Assessment

- **Happens during regular, everyday activities**
Implemented on a continuous basis throughout the year
- **Helps teachers meet children where they are**
- **Helps children meet challenging and achievable learning goals**
- **Provides a broader and more **meaningful picture of development****

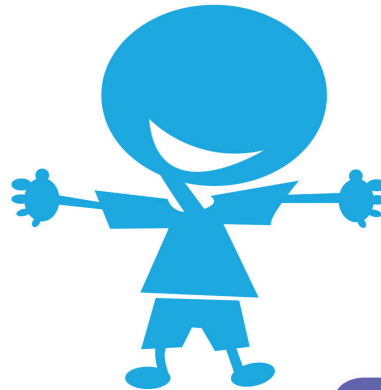
WaKIDS: Connecting Key Adults in a Child's Life

Family Connection

Teachers welcome families and students individually to school as partners in their children's education

"Whole Child" Assessment

Teaching Strategies GOLD measures six areas of development and learning



Early Learning Collaboration

Kindergarten teachers and early learning professionals share information and expertise

WaKIDS: A Kindergarten Entry Transition Process

- **Cross-Sector Partnership**
- **First state K assessment and only one to be observational, strengths-based and whole child-focused**
- **Formally recognizes:**
 - **Parents as partners**
 - **Collaboration of early learning and K–12**
- **Process and product**

Identify Strengths: WaKids Transition Process PreK - K

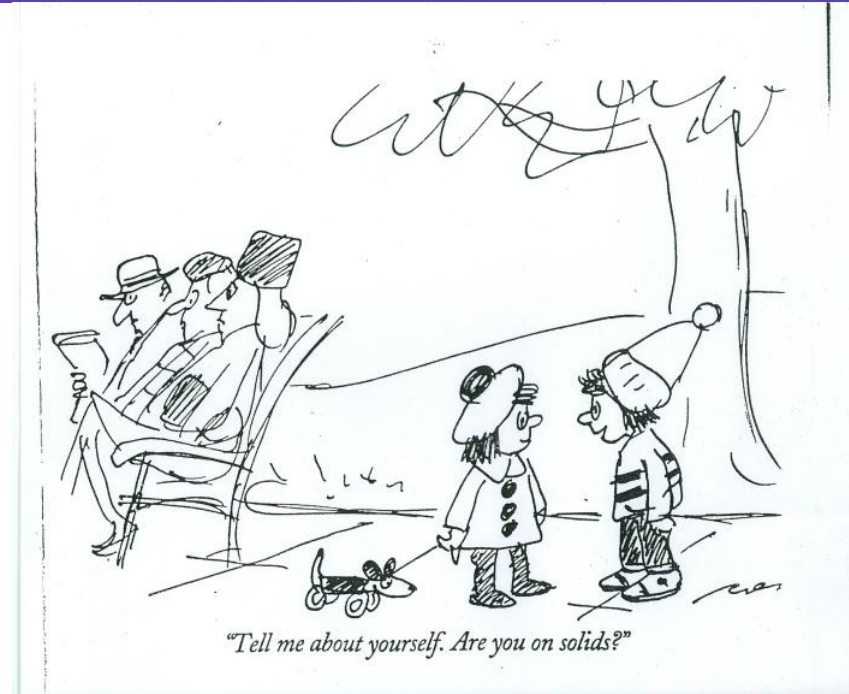
Three Components

- **Family connection** welcomes families into the Washington K-12 system as partners in their child's education.
- **Whole-child assessment** gives kindergarten teachers information about the social/emotional, physical, cognitive, language, literacy and mathematics development of the children in their classrooms, so they may tailor their instruction to the individual needs of each child.
- **Early learning collaboration** aligns practices of early learning professionals and kindergarten teachers to support smooth transitions for children.

- **Family Connection**
 - Talk about each students' strengths and needs
- **Whole Child Assessment**
 - Teachers observe and record each child's developing skills in six areas: **social-emotional, physical, cognitive, language, literacy, and mathematics**

WaKIDS Assessment

- **Occurs over a period of 2 months; completed by October 31**
- **Measures strengths in 6 areas of development and learning**
- **Observation-based**



Teaching Strategies GOLD

- ***A variety of online tools to gather and organize meaningful data quickly, including online portfolios where children's work can be stored create a developmental profile of each child to answer the questions,***
 - ***What does this child know?***
 - ***What is he or she able to do?"***
- ***understand how their observations relate to important objectives for development and learning and use that understanding to scaffold each child's learning***
- ***Brochure. ([PDF](#))***

GOLD “Levels”

- **Levels 2, 4, 6, 8—** milestones of development
- **Levels 1, 3, 5, 7** — “In-between” periods when skills are emerging, but not mastered
- **Level 9—** Beyond end-of-year kindergarten expectations



What the GOLD Assessment Can Do

- ***Determine if a child is making progress and compare the child's knowledge, skills, and behaviors to those of most children of his or her age or class/group***
- ***Recognize children who might benefit from special help, screening, or further evaluation***
- ***Generate comprehensive reports that can be customized easily and shared with family members and other stakeholders***

How do we see **these** Learning Characteristics?

WAC 392-170-036

- 1 Capacity to learn with unusual depth of understanding, to retain what has been learned, and to transfer learning to new situations;**
- 2 Capacity and willingness to deal with increasing levels of abstraction and complexity earlier than their chronological peers;**
- 3 Creative ability to make unusual connections among ideas and concepts;**
- 4 Ability to learn quickly in their area(s) of intellectual strength; and**
- 5 Capacity for intense concentration and/or focus.**

Early Childhood Program Model

- **Collaborative Resource Teacher**
 - Flexible grouping: reading, math, integrated projects, interests
- **Professional Development for Classroom Teachers**
- **Multiple Services and Programs**
 - Acceleration in specific subject areas
 - Opportunities to explore interests
 - Programs for Parents

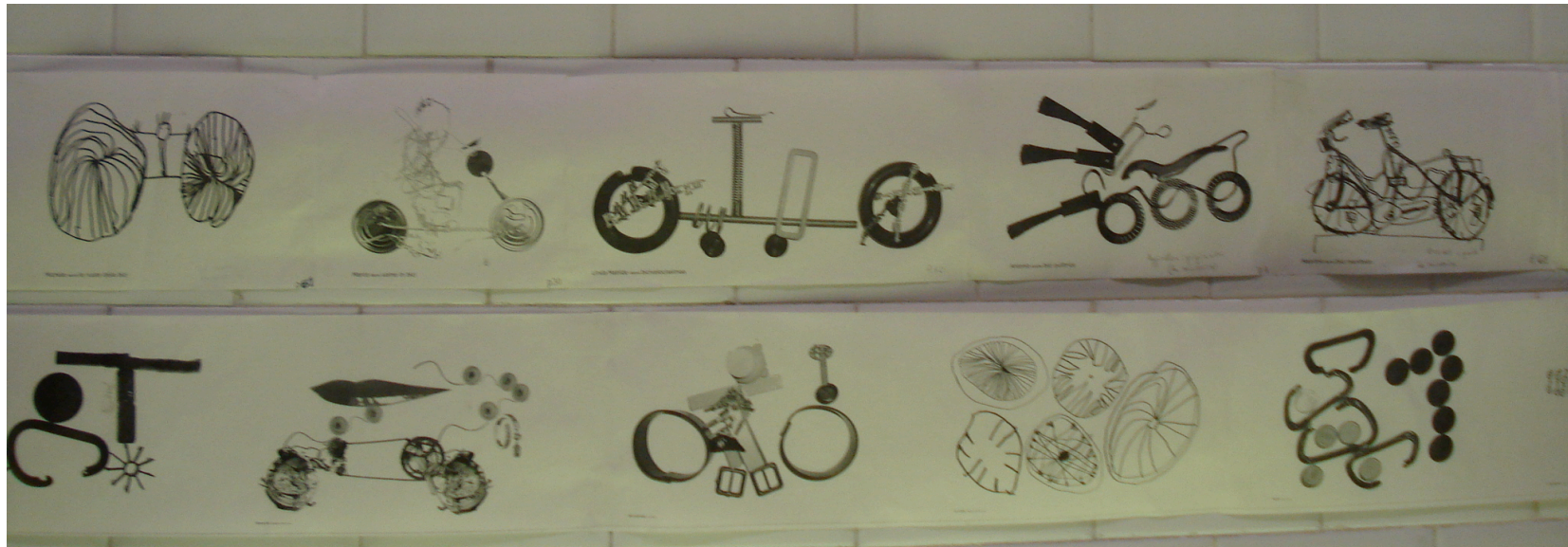
What is an early childhood gifted program?

- **Defined by curriculum and instruction – not only good for “gifted” children, **but must be there** to challenge gifted children**
- **Focus on **creative, critical** and **evaluative thinking****
- **Role of teacher** – facilitator of learning; empower the student; teach students, not prescribed curriculum
- **Role of student** – agency and ownership in learning

- **Beyond grade level expectations**
- **Emergent Curriculum**
 - Pursuing Inquiry
 - Project Approach
 - <http://education.illinois.edu/ups/projects/>
- **Connected to children's interests**
 - **Collaborative relationships with parents** to share curricular projects, elicit suggestions

The Environment

- **Inspired by Reggio Emilia**
 - **Philosophy of Competent Child**
 - **100 Languages of Children**



Providing an Environment that Nurtures Talent

- **Physical**
 - Inviting
 - Stimulate Curiosity
- **Emotional**
 - Safe to take risks
 - Not right or wrong, encouraging and valuing children's ideas and expression
- **Social**
 - Learn from others
 - Provide opportunities to develop pro-social behaviors



What does it look like?

- **Inclusive classroom** – where talents are developed and nurtured
- Children working on many different things at the same time – **Choice Time**
- Resource teacher helping classroom teacher – **Higher teacher/student ratio**
- Students integrating project investigations and applying their skills in **authentic learning experiences** – Very little rote and drill!

Elements of Environment

- **Aesthetics**
- **Critical Thinking**
- **Inquiry**
- **Representation**
- **Student Choice**



Reggio-Inspired - Aesthetics



A Kindergarten Classroom



Themes from Reggio Emilia

- **Environment as the “Third Teacher”**
- **100 Languages of Children**
- **Pedagogy of Listening**

100 Languages of Children

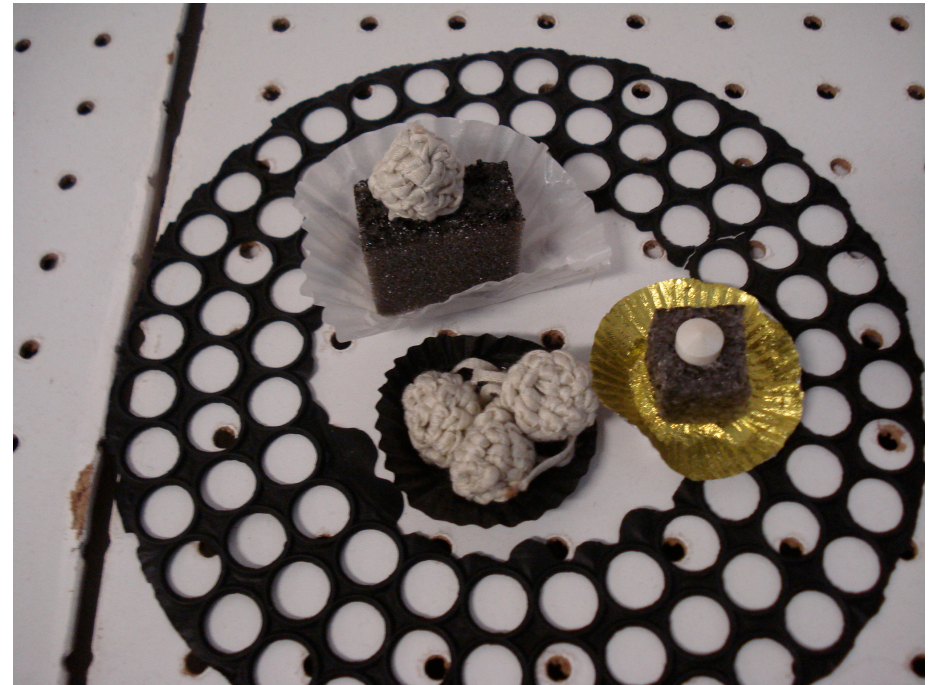


Image of the Child: Competent



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- Rich in **vocabulary and literacy** opportunities
- Rich in **choices** where teachers can observe and develop scaffolding learning experiences based on students' interests
- Rich in opportunities to engage children in **“intellectually meaningful”** experiences

Literacy

- **Reading**
- **Writing**
- **Listening**
- **Speaking**



Rationale for Choices

Child Initiation - **Agency**

- **Increases motivation**
- **Provides opportunities to work in preferred learning styles**
- **Students perform better**
- **Strengthens interest**
- **Strengthens disposition to love to learn**
- **Research has shown students in early child-initiated programs fare better in later years**

Making Choices



Choice Time



Students make all kinds of things during their choice time.

Ongoing Choices

- **Reading**
- **Writing**
- **Computers**
- **Pattern Blocks**
- **Blocks**
- **Puzzles**
- **Math Manipulatives**
- **Making Games**
- **Boxes and Junk**
- **Easel Painting**
- **Observational Drawing**
- **Experiments, Science Investigations**



Literacy Choices

- **Book making**
- **Poetry writing**
- **Journal writing**
- **Plays**
- **Thank you letters**
- **Riddle books**
- **Reading**
- **Writing interview questions**
- **Interviewing**



Math Choices

- **Math Challenge**
- **Collecting Data**
 - **Counting**
 - **Graphing**
 - **Surveying**
- **Geo-boards**
- **Measuring**
- **Parquetry blocks**
- **Pattern blocks**
- **“Zome”**
- **Cuisenaire Rods**



Specific to Investigation

- **Developing a survey**
- **Doing an experiment**
- **Creating representations**
- **Writing**
 - **interview questions**
 - **results or reports**
 - **letters**
- **Internet Search**
- **Analyzing survey results**
- **Reading nonfiction**
- **Observational Drawing**
- **Collecting Data**



Tapping into Individual Interests Child-Initiated Research

- **Search Internet with adult supervision and guidance**
- **Follow printed instructions**
- **Experiment by varying the ingredients**
- **Engage other students in investigation**
- **Share results with peers**



Strengthen Disposition to Inquire



Engage in Inquiry



Collecting Data

How Young Children Collect Data

- **Observe**
 - Draw what they see
 - Describe what they see
- **Tally, Count**
- **Ask, interview**
- **Survey**
- **Experiment**
- **Compare**
- **Chart, graph**

Steps for Inquiry

- **1. Predict**
- **2. Gather Data**
- **3. Analyze Data**
- **4. Draw Conclusions**

Thinking Skills

- **Developing theories**
- **Expression of ideas and knowledge through the arts**
- **Problem-solving**
- **Social skills**
 - (working cooperatively and collaboratively)

Positive Social and Emotional Skills

- **Sense of community, belonging to the group**
- **Feelings of competence**, that their ideas, suggestions and products will be valued
- **Feelings of comfort with self**
- **Sense of accomplishment**



Dispositions

- To become **“absorbed”** in work, work over a period of time and return to work over a period of time
- To be rewarded with satisfaction in work rather than extrinsic rewards
- **To take risks and try new things**, seeking challenge
- Toward **effort**
- Toward **helping others** rather than judging others
- To **problem-solve**

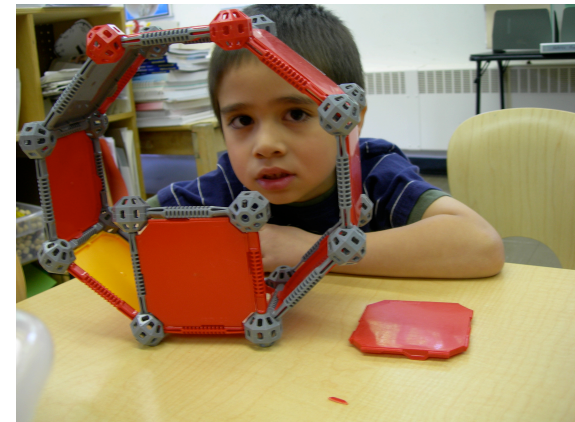
Opportunities for Thinking

- **Analyze**
- **Classify**
- **Edit**
- **Observe**
- **Predict**
- **Reflect**
- **Represent**



What is the take-away message?

- **Identify needs, strengths, and interests.**
- **Potential cannot be predetermined.**
- **Early childhood environments and instructional experiences matter.**



From a **Traditional** Classroom to a **Differentiated** Classroom

Traditional	Differentiated
Student differences masked	Student differences studied for planning
Assessment common at end	Ongoing assessment to be responsive
Student interest is infrequently tapped	Students are frequently guided in making interest-based learning choices
Whole class instruction dominates	Many instructional arrangements are used
Single option assignments are the norm	Multi-option assignments are frequently used
A single text prevails	Multiple materials are provided
The teacher directs student behavior	Teacher facilitates students' skills at becoming more self-reliant learners
Teacher solves problems	Students help other students and the teacher solve problems

Write your school plan!

- | | |
|--|--|
| | |
| (1) A report of the number of K-12 students who are highly capable that the district expects to serve by grade level | |
| (2) A description of the district's plan to identify students | |
| (3) A description of the highly capable program goals | |
| (4) A description of the services the highly capable program will offer | |
| (5) A description of the instructional program the highly capable program will provide | |
| (6) A description of ongoing professional development for educators of students who are highly capable and general education staff | |
| (7) A description of how the highly capable program will be evaluated that includes information on how the district's highly capable program goals and student achievement outcomes will be measured | |
| | |

Exploration – but with **Guidance** and **Skill**

