

*“The Best US/British Connection  
Through One Glorious Web Site”*

This website is phenomenal! <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/> Find the age group you teach, as well as the skill area you would like to connect to.

- ❖ The box marked *Preschool* would be great for kindergarten classes. For example, you have a high ability reader who is only five years old. There are some great reading/game activities here.
- ❖ The box titled *Ages 4-11* is great for high Kindergarten – 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. For example, are you in need of something for your math class to understand fractions? Click onto *Numeracy* and then go into *Revisewise Maths*. You will not only find fractions but all other essential math skills.
- ❖ The box titled *Ages 11-16* is helpful for intermediate teachers who have the pleasure of teaching our 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders. For example, are you a PE teacher who wants to teach his/her students about “injury prevention” as well as “health and fitness?” Click onto PE and then go to *Bitesize Physical Education*. There are even ready-made tests that can be taken.
- ❖ The box titled *Ages 16+* will be helpful to high school teachers. For example, are you a Chemistry teacher? You can do some troubleshooting for your students by clicking onto *Chemistry* and then going into *SOS Teacher*.

A helpful hint: One of the best ways to present some of these web sites to your whole class is through the use of a presentation system (CTX, etc.) connected to a computer. Your Media Specialist is an invaluable resource when beginning this type of work.

## *The Contract for Permission to Read Ahead*

This strategy can be used at all grade levels K-12.

Many gifted students are also voracious readers. This can be a problem for gifted readers when teachers limit how much reading can be done. An example is when the teacher assigns only one chapter to be read, thus limiting how far students can read. Teachers do this for a variety of reasons: pacing the class, desire to preserve a surprise ending (for the rest of the class), and problems with what to do with the “read ahead” student.

For gifted readers, this “read only the assigned pages” technique is stifling and can be perceived as a punishment for being good readers. This is NOT the message we want to convey. Most teachers feel that it is important for their students to become lifelong readers, and enjoyment of reading plays a large part in this process.

The “Contract for Permission to Read Ahead” solves some of these problems. It tells students that it’s okay to read ahead, but they need to understand how important it is to honor the terms of the contract. They must not “spoil” the selection for their classmates, and they must use class time for learning.

To provide these readers with a meaningful alternative to slowing down their reading, some teachers have other books available in the same genre. These books should be at varying levels of difficulty. Another idea is to have several books by the same author available (for author study). Having some informal assessments and alternate activities or projects available for these readers will eliminate the “what to do with students who read ahead” problem.

Here is an example of the contract:

### **Contract for Permission to Read Ahead**

Check each statement to show that you agree with it. Then sign the contract.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will not tell anyone anything about the story until everyone in the group has finished reading it.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will not participate in prediction activities.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will participate in the alternate assessments/activities.

Student’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Most gifted readers are delighted to sign and honor the contract – as it gives them the green light to continue reading.

*Adapted from Susan Winebrenner’s Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom. Free Spirit Publishing, c. 2001.*

***Getting More Out of Biographies***  
***By Kirstin Cuellar, TAG – Buchanan and Jackson***

The Problem: How can I get my students to get more out of a biography other than the usual book report?

The Idea: Have a student relate personally to the obstacles, goals, and accomplishments of another person by organizing information from the biography into categories that allow the student to present an informal biographical retelling.

- Have students label index cards with the following headings, and teachers should also label these headings on large, various colored papers that are placed on the chalkboard:
  1. “Goals” (plans to accomplish something)
  2. “Obstacles” (things that stand in the way)
  3. “Challenges” (occurrences that lead to greater accomplishment)
  4. “Motivators” (people who encourage, assist, or challenge a greater accomplishment)
  - “Solutions” (answers to problems or ways in which problems were solved)
  5. “Accomplishments” (what a person has done that is noteworthy)
  6. “Lessons for Me” (what you have learned or what is worth remembering about a person for your own benefit)
- After students have read the chosen biography, have them look through the book again, choosing details that could be written on index cards. With every important detail, there should be a new index card.
- Teachers can evaluate the quality of the biography research by having students orally share their person by telling his/her story. Students should not start the biographical story with, “I was born...” Students should instead focus on elements of the biography.
- As students retell the important aspects of the biography, they place the index cards under the 7 main headings on the chalkboard. There should be item index cards under each heading, but some heading may have more cards than others. That’s okay!
- An example using renowned pediatric neurosurgeon Ben Carson is shown below.

<b>Obstacles</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Accomplishments</b>	<b>Solutions</b>	<b>Motivators</b>	<b>Lessons For Me</b>
Parents divorced	Wanted to be the best	To spell better than other kids	ROTC program	Wearing glasses	Teachers	Hard work is for my own good
Poverty	Missionary doctor	To pass chemistry	Won full scholarship	Would read 2 books per week	God	Read, read, read
Worst student in 5 <sup>th</sup> grade	Help people	To take charge of own life	3 <sup>rd</sup> highest graduating senior	Live by Proverbs	Chemistry set	Everything is worth knowing
Peer pressure			Went to Yale			
Bad temper			Graduated from Michigan Medical School			
Encountered prejudice						

### *Most Difficult First*

Here's the dilemma: Some students may know the material covered in your next practice activity/ assignment. This strategy lends itself to skill-based content rather than conceptual content.

Giving them a shortened version (most difficult problem first) allows them to demonstrate their mastery and move on to more challenging material.

1. Before you give an assignment, determine which items are examples of the most difficult work of the entire assignment/task. Sometimes these appear sequentially at the end of the assignment but not always.

2. Five examples is a reasonable number, but you may choose a few more or less, using your judgment.

Allow students designated by you to decide if they want to use this approach or if they want to do all the items.

Check students' work when they finish. If they have all problems correct or have just missed one, provide them with an alternate assignment that meets their learning needs. OR, the first one to finish (with four or five correct) becomes the "checker" for the rest of the period.

When you begin a new lesson, these students should rejoin the rest of the class for instruction.

## *The Question Spinner*

**“The important thing is not to stop questioning.” Albert Einstein**

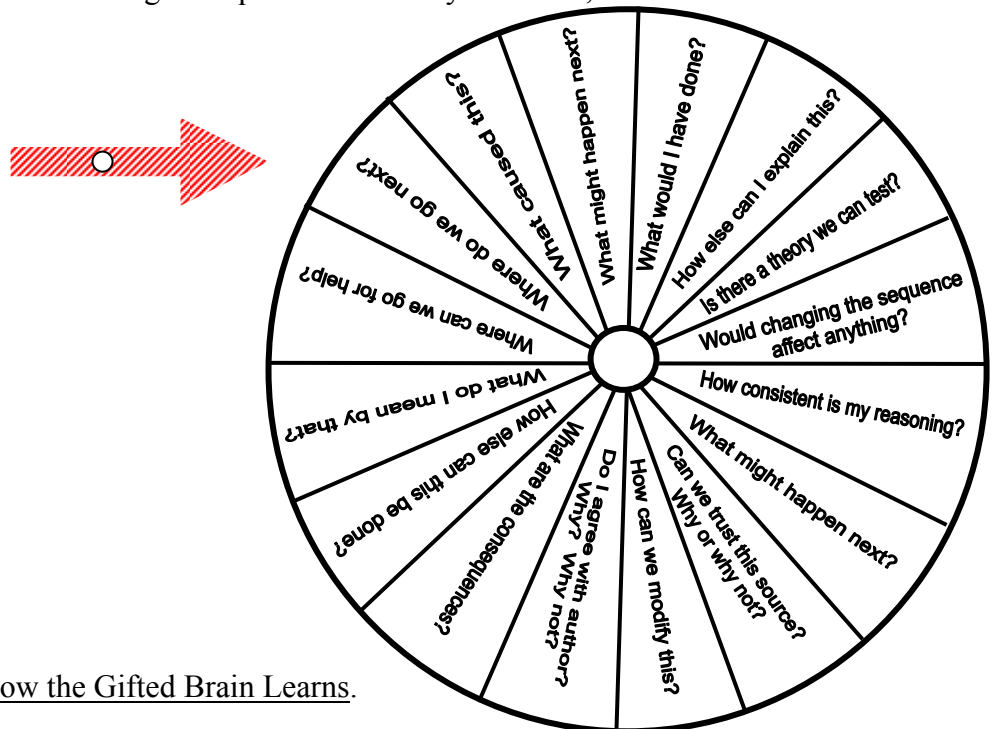
Questions are an important element in the classroom. Teachers ask questions. Students ask questions. Questions are a part of classroom communication; they can expand thinking and knowledge.

Questioning can be taught and learned. It is sometimes difficult for teachers to move away from direct knowledge questions and move on to synthesis and evaluation. However, it is worth the practice and time to develop questioning skills. It will stretch students and keep them interested. Questions such as “What if . . .?” “What do you think . . .?” “How could we change . . .?” will heighten student engagement.

Teaching students to ask these questions causes excitement and increases the level of participation. Everyone can ask a question. The more practice, the better the question – and the answer. The more students are involved, the more they feel they have some control over their learning. The feeling of ownership is powerful.

The *Question Spinner* (below) is a ready-made question strategy. Enlarge the circle, cut it out, insert a paper fastener through the center to serve as the spinner, and you’re all set.

Possible uses: Student spins AND answers the question; one student (or the teacher) spins and another student answers. You can change the questions to suit your needs, too.



Source: Sousa, David A. How the Gifted Brain Learns. Corwin Press, 2003.

### *Questions to Encourage Creativity*

Some have questioned whether creativity is inherent in one's abilities OR can it be learned/taught? Recent studies in cognitive neuroscience seem to point towards creativity as a result of a series of cognitive processes that can be developed in most individuals. This is great news to teachers!

Four behaviors often associated with creativity are fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. To incorporate this into your teaching, think about using something like this:

<b>Behavior</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Question/s</b>	<b>Students who respond to OR ask these types of questions</b>
Fluency	Describes the ability to generate new ideas. In what ways can we do this?	What ways can we do this?	
Flexibility	Requires generating a broad range of ideas.	How many different ways can we do this?	
Originality	Refers to unusual or unique responses to a situation.	What is the most unusual way to accomplish that?	
Elaboration	Other ideas and details are added to the reasoning.	What else can we do here? Can you tell me more?	

Such questions as these will open up the creativity in you and your students. Give them a try!

## *Think-Tac-Toe*

Adapted from Fulfilling the Promise of the Differentiated Classroom, Carol Ann Tomlinson, ASCD 2003

Think-Tac-Toe plays off the familiar childhood game. It is a simple way to give students alternative ways of exploring and expressing key ideas and using key skills. Typically, the Think-Tac-Toe grid has nine cells in it like a Ti-Tac-Toe game. The number of rows and cells can, of course, be adjusted. As with related strategies, it is important that no matter which choices students make, they must grapple with the key ideas and use the keys skills central to the topic or area of study. A well-designed Think-Tac-Toe allows for differentiation by readiness, interest, and learning styles. Choices must reflect the upper levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy, as well as Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences. Below are current Think-Tac-Toe examples used by some teachers our district. Students must complete at least 3 squares; horizontal, vertical, or diagonal.

<b>5<sup>th</sup> Grade Language Arts Unit based on “Peanuts” Comic Strip</b>		
Compare/Contrast someone you know (change names, please) with a “Peanuts” character. Write a paragraph to compare the fictional character and real person.	Write an autobiography of one character from the strip.	Imagine Charlie Brown as a senior in high school. What courses has he taken? What extracurricular activities has he been in? Has he won any awards? What will he do next fall?
Your character is the most interesting one in the strip. Persuade everyone to believe this. Give or tape a persuasive speech.	Write a one-page paper responding to the question: Why do so many children and adults relate to Charlie Brown?	Is Charlie Brown a good baseball manager? Defend your position.
Write a biography of Charles Schulz.	Write an essay that expresses your opinion of why Lucy is drawn to Schroeder.	Create a new character for the strip. How is the character introduced? Include an illustration.
<b>6<sup>th</sup> Grade Science</b>		
Label 5-7 physical traits the killer whale, narwhal, walrus, and the Greenland shark have in order to adapt to the cold Arctic weather.	Read and find the coldest average temperature and the warmest average temperature of the Arctic and color these in on the provided thermometer. Use a blue color pencil for the coldest average and a red color pencil for the warmest average.	Use this website to identify and compare tracks, as well as bird beaks and bird feet. Record your scores on the paper provided.  <a href="http://www.gp.com/educationalinnature/topics/index.html">http://www.gp.com/educationalinnature/topics/index.html</a>
Answer questions about reindeer using the provided worksheet. You will need to research reindeer before you answer the questions!	Using the list of Arctic animals at the bottom of this page, complete the “Arctic Animals Quiz” worksheet.	Choose 4 Arctic land animals from the provided pictures, and label 5-7 physical traits they each have in order to adapt to the cold Arctic weather.
Complete the provided chart called “Hot Places/Cold Places,” after reading the paragraph of surviving in difficult places.	Choose 4 Arctic birds from the provided pictures, and label 5-7 physical traits they each have in order to adapt to the Arctic environment.	Complete the provided worksheet that discusses Arctic plants, such as lichens, moss and Arctic/dwarf willows.

## *Tiered Activities*

Tiered activities are great for providing challenging opportunities for all students. Using this strategy, the teacher develops varied levels of activities, each meeting the objective of the lesson/assignment. This approach challenges each student to learn where he/she is cognitively – not a one-size-fits-all assignment. Assignments can be tiered in content, process, and/or product according to readiness, interest, and/or learning style. As students will be completing different assignments yet each meeting the same objective, the teacher find variety in their evaluation as well.

Steps to develop a tiered activity:

Identify the curriculum benchmark and select the activity organizer

Think about your students (use assessments to determine needs)

Create one activity that is interesting, high level, causes students to use key skill(s) to understand the key idea

Chart the complexity of the activity

Clone the activity along the ladder as needed to ensure challenge and success for your students

Match the task to student based on student profile and task requirements

Example: Students are studying ozone (what it is and why it is important to the atmosphere).

Easiest: Write a public service announcement for citizens of New Zealand

More Skill: Conduct a peer survey of awareness and understanding about the ozone problem.

Slightly above grade level: Write a position paper for a newsletter or news magazine with an audience of \_\_\_\_\_ (grade level) students.

Most challenging: Debate the issue of whether there is an ozone problem to which humans contribute.

## *Vocabulary Web*

This Vocabulary Web Model is great for helping gifted students study words in depth. This strategy goes beyond having students simply learn the meaning of a word. Students can work alone or in pairs. Words can be assigned, or students can choose their own words to explore. In order to web, students write the word to be explored in the center. Then they research the word to find the following information to place on the web:

- Definition
- Synonyms and antonyms
- Writing a sentence using the word
- Analysis: part of speech, language of origin, word families, stems
- Examples (which may include analogies or examples from literature, TV, movies, etc.)

After students complete the web, they have an in-depth understanding of the word. In addition, students can be given the option of sharing their work with the whole class or with a group of students.

Source: Winebrenner, Susan. Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom. Free Spirit Publishing, Inc., 2001.

