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# **Gifted Readers: What do we know and what should we be doing**

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# NRC/GT Study: Talented Readers

- Recent research concerning how the needs of gifted and talented readers are being met in elementary and middle schools
- Findings suggest that only minor modification are being made for this special group
- Study results
- Suggestions for enhancing instruction for gifted and talented reader



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# Coding Areas for Individual Case Studies

- Reading strategies for all readers in the regular classroom
- Differentiated reading strategies for talented readers in the regular classroom
- Support for the use of differentiated reading experiences for talented readers



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# Reading Strategies Used for All Students in the Regular Classroom

- A. Use flexible groups for instruction based on reading levels
- B. Assess reading levels (frustration, instructional, and independent levels).
- C. Use direct instruction
- D. Promote independent writing: journals, prompts, written response to use of skill
- E. Access classroom library leveled books or wide range of books without levels indicated
- F. Access school library
- G. Support school library a number of volumes; some guidance on selections or specific connection to current curricular emphases
- H. Access school librarian trained/not trained
- I. Use silent and oral reading
- J. Emphasize oral reading by teachers and students
- K. Share reading/writing with partner or peers
- L. Use focused questions; promote big idea, theme, main idea



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# Reading Strategies Used for All Students in the Regular Classroom

- M. Promote opportunities to discuss underlying themes, concepts
- N. Schedule reading/language arts (with emphasis on writing and spelling) extended class (90-100 minutes)
- O. Integrate with other content areas (e.g., theme, use of spelling words from science)
- P. Use basal readers, phonics, and trade books (modified whole language approach)
- Q. Practice goal setting or purpose for reading (students and teachers)
- R. Encourage reading at home
- S. Promote reading during school vacations and summer
- T. Schedule remedial or skill-based classes to increase or improve students performance
- U. Recognize emphasis on state and school tests
- V. Press for achievement, high expectations, clear expectations (students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community)
- W. Promote well-managed classrooms



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# Reading Strategies Used for All Students in the Regular Classroom

- X. Promote student self-regulation
- Y. Focus on student engagement
- Z. Employ options to solve reading, writing, or spelling barriers
- AA. Promote summarizing, clarifying, predicting
- BB. Set stage for reading background knowledge, schema
- CC. Understand, promote, and implement scope and sequence of skills
- DD. Use test results to guide instruction and to inform students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community



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# Differentiated Reading Strategies Used with Talented Readers in the Regular Classroom

- A. Use pre-assessment of reading skills/abilities
- B. Use flexible grouping
- C. Maintain homogeneous reading groups
- D. Promote multiage groups for reading based on reading abilities and skills
- E. Access books/novels by choice, theme, or assignment
- F. Test out of skills
- G. Use focused questions; promote big idea, theme, main idea
- H. Promote opportunities to discuss underlying themes, concepts
- I. Use replacement strategies *Note: not always with reading; one case used course involvement in algebra; level of challenge of replacement strategies is not always known or is questionable*



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# Support for the Use of Differentiated Reading Experiences for Talented Readers

- A. Access an array of classroom and library books: topics, challenge level
- B. Promote challenge level of reading selections
- C. Recommend specific titles to individuals
- D. Use theme-based approach (multiple titles)
- E. Recognize the need to challenge talented readers
- F. Use multiage groups across grades
- G. Support for ability groups (administrators and teachers)
- H. Assess continuous progress
- I. Serve as role models in approach to assigned and pleasure reading (teachers, students, administrators, and parents)
- J. Understand and use different reading strategies and instructional approaches
- K. Promote value of reading



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# An Advanced Reader...

- Understands the nuances of language
- Uses multiple strategies to create meaning
- May focus on a single strategy
- Reads beyond their chronological age
- Enjoys reading a wide variety of material
- Is voracious
- Looks at books to solve problems
- Wants to choose books
- Has a wonderful vocabulary
- Reads quickly
- Relates literature to their own lives
- May be an insightful reader



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# Characteristics of Gifted Learners

Teachers of the gifted notice that gifted learners tend to complete their assignments quickly wanting to know what to do next; ask probing questions and require information in greater depth; and their interests tend to be more like older students rather than their age peers (Maker, 1982). Van Tassel-Baska (1998) summarized the work of Keating (1976), Sternberg (1985), and Gallagher (1985) on the differences of gifted learners from typical learners. (p. 54-55).

1. They have the capacity to learn at faster rates.
2. They have the capacity to find, solve and act on problems more readily.
3. They have the capacity to manipulate abstract ideas and make connections more readily.



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# Rationale

Brown and Rogan (1983) suggest that gifted readers may be in jeopardy of losing sight of schools as places to find wonderful books because they are held back from finding and interacting with materials that are appropriate for them.



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# Who Are Advanced Readers?

Mason and Au (1990) defined gifted readers as children who have exceptional reading ability and the capacity to understand text information well above what would be expected of a person for a that age.



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# Characteristics of Advanced Readers

Advanced readers have been described as avid, voracious readers who apply read differently for different reading purposes (Kaplan, 1999). Specifically, precocious reading is a complex skill made up of many sub skills that may vary greatly within the advanced reader population (Jackson, 1988). Advanced readers are generally described as students with extensive vocabularies who read two or more years above grade level (Bonds & Bonds, 1983; Levande, 1999; Vacca, Vacca, & Grove, 1991).



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# The Potential of the Advanced Reader

Dole and Adams (1983) went one step further describing gifted readers as

"children who may not achieve two or more years on a standardized reading test, but who have been identified as intellectually gifted with potential for high reading performance." (p. 66).



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For example, advanced readers would include a second grader who has read all of the Tales of Narnia by C. S. Lewis or a sixth grader whose appetite for mystery leads them to devour Agatha Christie



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# Halsted (1994) Described the Language Abilities of Gifted Children

- They have a large vocabulary and are able to use advanced terminology correctly.
- They read early and may be self-taught; they read enthusiastically and widely, often above grade level; they select reading material purposefully and enjoy challenging material.
- They understand language subtleties and use language for humor.
- They write words and sentences early, and they produce superior creative writing (poetry, stories, plays).
- They display verbal ability in self-expression, choice of colorful and descriptive phrasing, and ease in learning a second language. (p. 38)



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# Clark (1997) Noted That Gifted Children Have These Language Related Abilities

- The ability to retain a large quantity of information.
- Advanced comprehension.
- Varied interest and curiosity.
- High levels of language development.
- High levels of verbal ability.
- Unusual capacity to process information.
- Process thoughts at an accelerated pace.
- The ability to synthesize ideas in a comprehensive way.
- Ability to see unusual relationships and integrate ideas (p. 55-56)



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# **Basal Texts May Not Be Good Matches for Advanced Readers**

The traditional use of a basal reading series typically focuses too much time and attention on mastering the reading process, particularly phonics, rather than encouraging advanced students to interact with good literature (Van Tassel-Baska, 1998).



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# What Do Advanced Readers Receive?

In a survey of reading instruction for the gifted, Mangieri and Madigan (1984) described the status of services for advanced readers.

1. Enrichment was a key component of reading instruction for gifted students.
2. The same basal was used for all readers.
3. Classroom teachers were responsible for the majority of instruction and many of these teachers had little training on how to accommodate the needs of gifted students.



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# Advanced Readers Are ...

Proficient readers who are able to understand the complexities of language. They automatically integrate prior knowledge and experience into their reading, utilize higher order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation, and communicate these ideas (Catron & Wingenbach, 1986). In fact, many advanced readers have developed a large repertoire of skills that they automatically employ in order to create meaning.



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# **Advanced Readers Often Find Themselves Out of Place With Regard to Classroom Reading Instruction**

In many instances, they may have already read the material being presented, bring a greater understanding to it, find the Readability level of to be well below their current reading ability, or are capable of reading the material at a faster pace than their classmates (Clark, 1997).



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# And Today?

Little has changed since Witty (1985) noted that advanced readers often have little to gain from the reading materials and reading related activities that are normally given to their school-age peers. Many advanced readers develop their reading skills outside the formal school setting and come to school being able to read (Jackson, 1993). Yet, these advanced readers are still expected to participate in the regularly offered reading curriculum that focuses on making readers rather than helping these readers to further develop their reading abilities.



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# Advanced Readers Needs

Van Tassel-Baska and Brown (2001) determined that current curriculum materials directed towards gifted learners should emphasize process skills such as critical thinking and problem solving. In terms of reading, that means that advanced readers are entitled to develop their reading abilities by exploring a wide variety of genres and writing styles. For advanced readers to continue to develop their reading and thinking abilities, they need to be exposed to books with rich characters, dynamic plots and extensive vocabulary. Howell (1987) suggested that one way to provide advanced readers with challenge is to encourage them to read good literature that features an extensive range of vocabulary in context.



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# Advanced Readers May Benefit From Instruction

Advanced readers may not need extensive training in the reading process and instead may benefit from opportunities to synthesize their reading experiences.



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# The Reading Interests of the Gifted Reader Often Extend Beyond the Fictional World into Non-fiction

McIntosh (1982) reported that highly able readers often have preferences for science, history, biography, travel, poetry and informational texts such as atlases and encyclopedias and *how-to* books. Advanced readers may be drawn to reference material in their quest for knowledge or need to understand or solve a problem. Interacting with informational books may also provide an opportunity for advanced readers to develop a deep understanding of a particular topic.



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# Selecting Books for Advanced Readers

Even though the advanced readers have the mental acuity to read books well beyond their age range, they still need guidance in the selection of their reading materials. Considerations for age-appropriateness must be made.



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I knew of a kindergarten teacher who invited a behavior modification team into the classroom to help with a boy who asked too many questions, and they were proud when he had learned to ask just one question every hour. Any person who is in a minority group is particularly likely to feel outside of the mainstream and, as a result, is apt to struggle with issues of feeling different, left out, or ostracized—all of which can result in disillusionment. You should just enjoy your life right now or “Of course you are doing important things to help the world; you have a good job and a good family.” Some of my best friends are books: *Guiding gifted readers from preschool through high school*, 3rd ed. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press. Webb, J.T. (2014). Sometimes we do not know yet what our child's special gift is, so we try to expose our children to many things as possible, so that we can see what they like or excel in. My oldest son, being only 5, for example, does not have a sporty bone in his body, but he has great math skills and vocabulary as well as logic reasoning for his age. Would a gifted school be an unfair advantage to him? No. That may seem to be an unfair advantage to one. But we are all growing up in different circumstances, in different countries and schools, different friends and surroundings. While one kid may have the unfair advantage of going to a gifted school in an example such as the above, he may lack support and love if his parents, or whatever other disadvantages the perceived advantaged child may have.