



Fall 2003

Update from the Director of Exceptional Student Services (formerly known as Special Education)

Welcome back to another school year. I really thought we might have a reauthorized federal law for special education by now, but my best resources inform me that we should not expect to see it before the first part of 2004 at the earliest. Meanwhile, continue to watch the development of the Senate version of the bill for proposed changes. As you know the House Bill has passed with recommended changes already. Even without a signed bill, we are fairly certain about some of the changes we will see:

- New requirements for demonstrating that we have qualified teachers and paraeducators
- Recommendation for changing how we identify students for special education especially in the area of Perceptual Communicative Disability (PC)
- Opportunities for states to waive requirements in order to reduce paperwork associated with students on IEPs
- An emphasis on the use of scientifically based researched practices

Knowing this, at CDE we have already initiated task forces to prepare for these changes. Also, I am aware of several districts that are piloting new practices in

some of these areas. So once the new law is in place, we should have some good information to assure a smooth implementation of any changes.

Relative to Gifted and Talented (GT) activities, we have some major challenges for the year as we begin to aggregate and disaggregate CSAP data on gifted students during this next testing cycle. At the same time, guidelines are being shared on best identification and programming practices. GT identification and programming has not been consistent among districts due to the flexibility for this was in the state law. However, with Accreditation now tied to the data analysis of subpopulations, including GT students, there is a need to be sure that the data is meaningful from one district to another. Our State Advisory Committee and all of the educational leaders on GT education are working hard to get some consistent practices in place. Jacquelin Medina is the State Consultant in this area and can be a wonderful resource to you.

In this edition of Inside Exceptional Student Services, we are focusing on Differentiated Curriculum Instruction & Assessment (DCIA). All students benefit from individualized learning approaches, but in the Exceptional Students Services Unit, we advocate for

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professional development in this area because of the tremendous opportunities for success of students who are gifted/talented and for those who have disabilities. This issue provides information about DI and the training that is available across every region of the state.

The Exceptional Student Services Unit of the Colorado Department of Education has just completed an initial analysis of the results of a study on student achievement. Preliminary findings show a strong correlation between teacher training/use of differentiated

instruction and higher CSAP reading scores for students with IEPs. Look for the results of the complete study by late fall.

Thanks to all of you that have assisted in moving this training forward and implemented DCIA in classrooms across our state.

Have a great new school year!

Lorrie Harkness,
State Director,
Exceptional Student Services

Call for Articles

We invite you to submit an article for a future issue of the Inside Exceptional Children. Below are listed deadlines and feature topics, although other topics are welcome as well.

The deadline for articles for the Winter 2003-2004 issue is December 1, 2003. Feature topics will be Dispute Resolution and Alternate Assessment. The deadline date for articles for the Spring 2004 issue is March 1, 2004. Feature topics will be Finding and Implementing Scientifically-based Curriculum and Assessment.

Editing assistance is available/provided as needed. To discuss submissions, or for a list of additional article ideas to consider, contact Jennifer Jackson @ Jackson_j@cde.state.co.us.

Mailing address for photographs or logos to accompany articles is:
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www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped

The *Inside CDE Special Education* newsletter staff:

Coordinators

Jennifer Jackson
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The purpose of the *Inside Special Education* newsletter is to serve as a medium for the dissemination of information pertaining to special education in the state of Colorado and the activities of the CDE Special Education Unit. This newsletter is designed to disseminate information on professional issues, procedural changes, and upcoming events to Colorado educators.

All views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Colorado Department of Education or the University of Colorado-Denver.

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How it Works in Colorado

Differentiating Instruction for ALL Learners

By Candy Myers, Senior Consultant, ESSU

Recently the CDE Exceptional Student Services Unit sponsored a dialogue session among educators and consultants from local, regional and state levels who primarily support diverse populations of unique learners. The dialogue focused on the various initiatives in differentiating instruction in the state that focus on improving teacher and classroom practice to maximize student learning. Participants in this cross-discipline effort represented English language acquisition, gifted and talented education, library services, literacy efforts, special education, and Title programs. The participants shared current professional development endeavors and discovered many commonalities. There was certainly a common focus on creating classrooms that are responsive to all learners. The group expressed that even though unique learners may require some truly distinctive instructional techniques and processes, it would be important to identify common elements of good instruction that will meet a wide range of learning needs. During discussion, the group defined its purpose and formulated a shared vision, mission, and working definition of *Differentiating Instruction*.

PURPOSES:

- Delineate the common elements of differentiating instruction initiatives
- Clarify the meaning of differentiating instruction for ALL students
- Develop a set of common concepts about differentiating instruction that may be supported in professional



development across Colorado

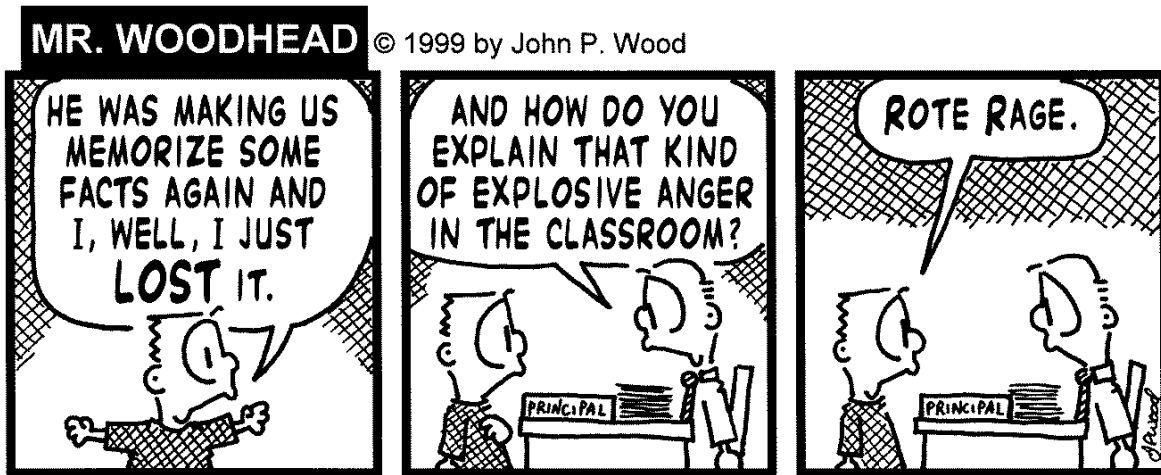
- Explore collaborative efforts in implementing differentiation and professional development

VISION: Educators in Colorado differentiate instruction and curriculum to impact student achievement and develop student potential.

MISSION: To enhance the capacity of educational systems to meet the needs of ALL learners through professional development and alignment of resources

DEFINITION: *Differentiating Instruction* is a proactive and strategic process to deliberately increase learning for all students by planning and facilitating a variety of learning opportunities matched to the learners' diverse strengths, needs, and interests.

As a result of the initial collaboration, the group is committed to further cross-categorical dialogue and will publish a document that elaborates on the meaning and implementation of differentiating instruction.

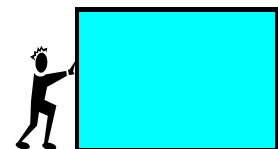


Differentiation is a way of life! Teachers combine what they learn about differentiation from a range of sources with their own professional instincts/knowledge and continually discover ways to make the classroom a match for its learners.

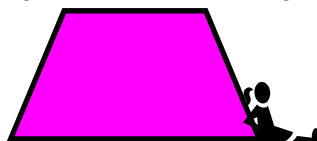
"Reprinted with permission from www.learninglaffs.com."

Differentiating Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment:
Regional Professional Development Providers

The Exceptional Student Services Unit is beginning the third year of a trainer-of-trainer initiative: *Differentiating Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment*. Educators/consultants from across the state who have been trained through this initiative have formed regional teams and provide professional development opportunities through a variety of formats: study groups, school and district-level workshops, coaching, courses for university credit, etc. CDE continues to support these teams of trainers to increase their expertise, effectiveness and access to resources. Anyone interested in finding out what local or regional professional development activities are being offered or in setting up some type of training with these teams/individuals may contact them through the appropriate Regional Professional Development Coordinator (see listing on 6).



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Exceptional Student Services Unit Regional Professional Development

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Differentiation: What's it all about?

Although the Differentiated Curriculum Instruction & Assessment (DCIA) initiative has drawn from a variety of experts who address the differentiation of instruction, Carol Ann Tomlinson's body of work is probably the most widely recognized and referenced. She is well known for her work throughout the U.S. and abroad with teachers whose goal is to develop more responsive heterogeneous classrooms. Her basic tenets of differentiated instruction will be summarized here for the purpose of introducing the concept to those not familiar with the fundamentals of this educational approach.

Essential Elements of Differentiation

- The teacher's instruction is primarily **PROACTIVE** rather than reactive. The teacher does not design one instructional plan for all students, hoping to "adjust on the spot," but purposefully plans with student differences in mind.
- Effective and **ONGOING ASSESSMENT** of learner needs and characteristics informs instructional decisions.
- **LEARNING GOALS** are clearly specified by the teacher. This clarity is important in order for the teacher to then vary the complexity, support systems, instructional activities, etc., while still focusing on what is essential learning for all students. Teaching and learning are focused on **KEY CONCEPTS, UNDERSTANDINGS AND SKILLS**.
- **FLEXIBLE USE OF TIME, SPACE, and MATERIALS** promotes individual and whole-class achievement.
- **VARIED INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPINGS** that include individual, small group and whole group configurations are purposefully selected according to desired learning outcomes. At times students may work in a group based on similar academic needs or readiness. At other

times, students may choose a group with like interests or learning style. Teacher may form heterogeneous groups based on varied strengths of the students.

- All students have "**RESPECTFUL WORK**". Each student is given work that is appropriately challenging and inviting.
- The teacher differentiates **CONTENT, PROCESS AND PRODUCT** according to **READINESS, INTERESTS AND LEARNING PROFILE**. (See Figure 1).

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Differentiation of Instruction

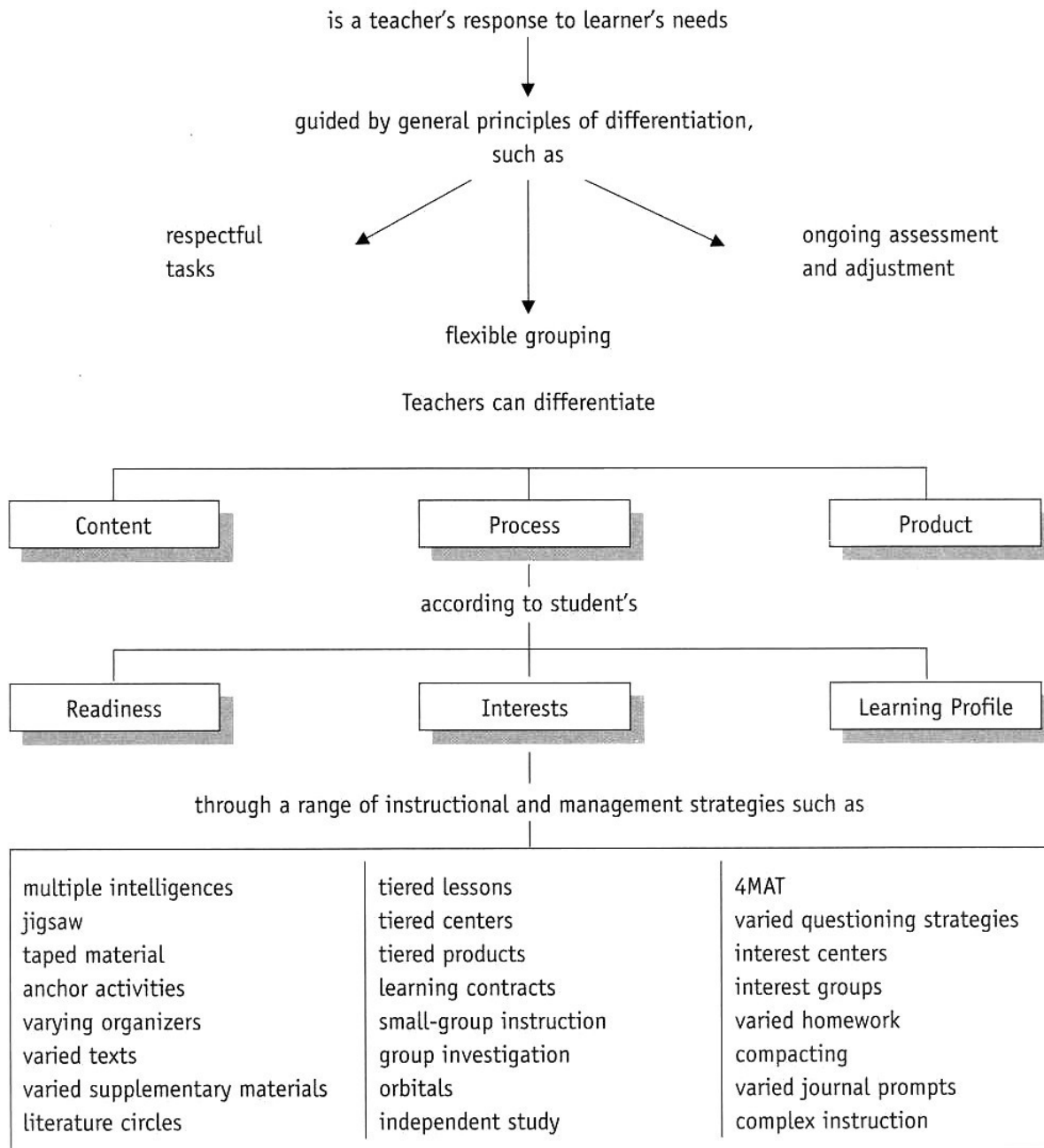


FIGURE 1



- From The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners by Carol Ann Tomlinson. Alexandria, VA.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Copyright 1999, ASCD. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved

Figure 2
Comparing Classroom

<u>Traditional Classroom</u>	<u>Differentiated Classroom</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student differences are masked or acted upon when problematic • Assessment is most common at the end of Learning to see "who got it" • A relatively narrow sense of intelligence prevails • A single definition of excellence exists • Student interest is infrequently tapped • Relatively few learning profile options are taken into account • Whole-class instruction dominates • Coverage of texts and curriculum guides drives instruction • Mastery of facts and skills out-of-context are the focus of learning • Single option assignments are the norm • Time is relatively inflexible • A single text prevails • Single interpretations of ideas and events may be sought • The teacher directs student behavior The teacher solves problems The teacher provides whole-class standards for grading • A single form of assessment is often used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student differences are studied as a basis for planning • Assessment is ongoing and diagnostic to understand how to make instruction more responsive to learner need • Focus on multiple forms of intelligences is evident • Excellence is defined in large measure by individual growth from a starting point • Students are frequently guided in making interest-based learning choices • Many learning profile options are provided for • Many instructional arrangements are used • Student readiness, interest, and learning profile shape instruction • Use of essential skills to make sense of and understand key concepts and principles is the focus of learning • Multi-option assignments are frequently used • Time is used flexibly in accordance with student need • Multiple materials are provided • Multiple perspectives on ideas and events are routinely sought • The teacher facilitates students' skills at becoming more self-reliant learners • Students help other students and the teacher solve problems • Students work with the teacher to establish both whole-class and individual learning goals • Students are assessed in multiple ways



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SUPPORT FOR PRINCIPLES OF DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

by Terri Howard, Centennial BOCES

Principal #1:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Teaching and learning are focused on key concepts, understandings and skills. ◆ Clearly established criteria are used to help support student success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The teacher is primarily a coordinator of time, space and activities, rather than primarily a provider of information. ◆ Instruction is differentiated by content, process, and/or product,
Brain-Based Teaching – Supports the rationale	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrichment – the brain can grow new connections at any age. Complex. Challenging experiences with feedback are best. Cognitive skills develop better with music and motor skills. • The Brain understands and remembers best when facts and skills are embedded in natural spatial memory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning is enhanced by challenge and inhibited by threat. The impact of threat of stress can alter and even kill brain cells. • The search for meaning is innate. The brain is meaning-driven – meaning is more important to the brain than information. • Learning involves both focused attention and peripheral perception.
Multiple Intelligences– Supports the use of a variety of strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher is a partner in the learning process, • Basic skills are treated seriously and are taught in the context of appropriate applications. 	
Research-Based Strategies and Information	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting objectives and providing feedback • Instruction must promote higher-order thinking. • Promote achievement of academic standards by all students. • Focus instruction to develop 	

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*(Continued from page 10)***Principal #2:**

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The teacher uses a variety of strategies to help target instruction to student needs. ◆ Student strengths are emphasized. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Assessment of student needs is ongoing and tasks are adjusted based on assessment data. ◆ Learning experiences are based on student readiness, interest or learning profile. |
|--|---|

Brain-Based Teaching – Supports the rationale

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniqueness – every single brain is totally unique. • The brain develops with various stages of readiness. • The brain is a parallel processor in which thoughts, experiences and emotions operate simultaneously. It can perform several activities at once. • The brain is a complex, adaptive system – effective change involves the entire system. • Learning always involves conscious and unconscious processes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning engages mind and body physiology. Movement, foods, attention cycles, drugs and chemicals have powerful effects on learning. • Meaning occurs through understanding and connections. Intelligence involves the ability to elicit and to construct useful patterns. • Every brain simultaneously perceives and creates wholes and parts. • Information is stored and retrieved through multiple memory and neural pathways. |
|---|---|

Multiple Intelligences– Supports the use of a variety of strategies

- Teachers pay attention to the cultural, emotional, physical, social and academic aspects of the learner.
- Accommodating students' learning strengths and differences results in more effective learning.
- Each student is unique; uniqueness has an effect on learning. Teachers must celebrate/foster diversity.
- Products and performance stem from the learners' needs, interests, and problem solving skills

Research-Based Strategies and Information

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying similarities and differences • Summarizing and note taking • Homework and practice • Nonlinguistic representations • Cues Questions and graphic organizers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must be appropriately challenged. • Instruction must be comprehensible to all learners, • Connect to school students' lives • Promote cross-cultural understanding. • Generating and testing hypothesis |
|--|--|

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Principal #3:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students work in a variety of group configurations. Flexible grouping is evident. ◆ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ All students participate in respectful work. ◆ Time is flexible in response to student needs.
Brain-Based Teaching – Supports the rationale	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The brain develops better in concert with other brains. • Emotions are critical to patterning. Emotions drive attention, health, learning, meaning and memory. 	
Multiple Intelligences– Supports the use of a variety of strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for the individual is paramount. 	
Research-Based Strategies and Information	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative learning • Reinforcing effort and providing recognition 	

What Students Say About DCIA

"I like teachers who know how to make a lesson interesting and have different ideas rather than read and answer questions out of the book ... or show movies. I like teachers who get involved in the class."

Learning is more meaningful when...

- ◆ I can relate to the lesson.
- ◆ Different options for my learning are allowed, even encouraged.
- ◆ I can apply the subject to whatever I am doing, like learning math by doing experiments.
- ◆ I can do hands-on projects and labs.
- ◆ I do assessments that are meaningful to my real life.

(Anonymous student responses obtained through focus group sessions)



A Tale of True Training: Doing the Right Stuff ~ the Right Way

By Sandra Berman-LaFrance,
SW RPDC Coordinator

The results are in and the evidence proves overwhelmingly that teacher quality is the key to increased student performance. We know without a doubt that quality teaching requires a high degree of skill and knowledge in both content and pedagogy. It's an exciting time to be involved in professional development for educators. Even though the time is rife with opportunity, educator sentiment and morale runs the gamut and can be largely dependent on where one's school or district falls on the state's grading continuum. As educators we are amidst, as Charles Dickens stated in *A Tale of Two Cities*, "...the best of times, ...the worst of times."

Just as quality teaching requires expertise in content and pedagogy, quality teacher training requires a combination of research-proven content and research-proven professional development design. This essential balance will serve to promote and support the sustainability of research into practice in our schools and classrooms. Providing quality professional development is like assembling a complex structure. If the structure is built without a sound foundation or is not completed, it will be fundamentally weak and unable to support its contents.

Other articles in this issue provide detailed information on the theory and implementation of differentiating curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This article will focus on a training project in the Southwest region that combines the content of differentiation with a high-quality professional development design. The project reinforces current state training efforts in the area of differentiating and builds sustainability for these practices through the institutionalization of site-based professional learning communities.



The overarching goal is school improvement through teacher development and the integration of collaboration, coaching, and mentoring into the systemic structure of the school. The model is based on training and supporting teams of educators rather than individuals. Participants in the project thus far have learned to integrate research proven differentiation strategies within their classrooms and to work

as a professional learning community within their school. Each team has become central to the continued development of teachers within their schools, both in differentiating and collaborative support practices.

Southwest Project Year One

Twenty-five teams of educators from schools throughout the region participated in the first year of this project. Participating teams were comprised of general, special, and gifted educators, school administrators, and staff from institutes of higher education. Participation was voluntary and interested teams completed an application process. Teams had an average of six members.

The project began by providing the site-based teams two days of expert training. The training covered the content of differentiating curriculum, instruction, and assessment as well as the process of collaboration in professional learning communities. Trainers incorporated a balance of theory, strategy, constructivist learning, interaction, and technology. Teams were provided with books, training packets, and additional resources for implementation.

Over the four to six months following the initial training the teams met collaboratively for six to eight hours per month. As the teams worked in these professional learning

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communities they used protocols to examine student work, study relevant information and texts, create lesson plans, and resolve problems and issues that impact their practice. A team leader was identified by each team and at their first collaborative session teams developed a set of norms to guide and structure their time together. Records were kept of each collaborative session and included team goals, meeting outcomes, questions or concerns, and next steps. These feedback sheets were submitted to the project coordinator who monitored and supported the teams throughout the year. The project included two days of expert follow-up training. On-line mentoring and technology support were available throughout the year.

In addition to the trainings and collaborative work, teams and individuals completed three other tasks. At each project site participating teams developed and presented an information session on differentiating and professional learning communities to their full staff and parent representatives. Teams were also required to develop and present plans for how collaborative time could be embedded into the routine practices of their school, thus promoting sustainability and systemic change. Lastly, each individual participant was required to turn in two lesson plans demonstrating their use of differentiating

strategies that had been learned and implemented during the project.

Southwest Project Year Two

A second cohort of educators will be trained this coming year. The program design will remain the same as in year one. In addition, the teams trained in the first year will have an opportunity to receive advanced training. Content experts will provide training in assessments and management for the differentiated classroom. The teams will then be expected to implement the plans for collaborative meeting time that they developed in year one of the project. This will allow teams to continue their work in professional learning communities and further develop their ability to effectively differentiate for all students.

Year two of the project also includes training opportunities for selected participants to learn the skills necessary for coaching and mentoring. These individuals will be supported to use these skills with peers throughout the region.

The Best of Times

Educators continuously endeavor to better meet the needs of all their students. To assure a quality teacher for every student, every day, we must have personnel development systems in place that are proven and comprehensive. Effective training initiatives are designed to provide research-

based information, resources for implementation, time to practice, and a supportive venue for evaluation and reflection. These components help to ensure that teachers efficaciously enter a process of growth and change. A common response from teachers involved in the Southwest project was that although differentiating could be challenging, they felt excited and renewed participating in this project. Having specific time set aside to share successes, work through problems, and receive feedback from peers kept the momentum going. The following is an excerpt from a letter submitted by a participating team:

“Thanks so much for the opportunity to serve on our school’s differentiation team. The experience has really been both enjoyable and educational. It was especially valuable to be able to work with other staff members. We so often get caught up in our own classrooms and duties that we don’t always seek enough help and input from others. All the collaborative time we spent on this project was so beneficial. There really is something to the old adage, ‘two heads (or in our case 8 heads) are better than one.’ We look forward to maintaining this collaborative atmosphere next year. Thank you for taking on this project. We, and the kids, appreciate all your efforts in providing this opportunity for us.”

RESOURCES*



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DEFINITION – Gifted children mean...

persons between the ages of five and twenty-one whose abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment are so outstanding that they require special provisions to meet their educational needs. Children under five who qualify may also be served. Gifted learners are capable of high performance in any or a combination of these areas:

- General intellectual ability
- Specific academic aptitude
- Creative, productive thinking.
- Leadership and human relations skills.
- Visual, spatial, and performing arts

- ◆ When identifying gifted students the intent is to create a body of evidence that demonstrates exceptional strengths, interests, and needs of the student. The body of evidence must attempt to discover strengths and potential in the areas of giftedness using multiple data sources appropriate to grade, culture, and language needs.
- ◆ Schools address exceptional talents through the instructional, counseling, enrichment, and post-secondary option programs. Shared responsibility and planning among educators, parents and community are invaluable in meeting the needs of gifted students, especially when resources of the public system are limited in addressing the development of exceptional talent.
- ◆ Develop a rubric for gifted programming
- ◆ Review quality administrative unit plans
- ◆ Create Colorado guidelines for consistent identification practices
- ◆ Over time provide guidelines for each programming element in the rubric

- ◆ Conduct regional meetings for dissemination of guidelines
- ◆ Develop membership for the State Advisory Committee for Gifted and Talented Student Education
- ◆ Support regional needs through a limited regional consultation system
- ◆ Create and meet on a regular basis with a Gifted-Education Forum representative of each educational region in Colorado
- ◆ Coordinate professional development activities with the Regional Professional Development Councils and provide gifted-education representation through coordinators and Forum members
- ◆ Network with CDE departments and other agencies that provide support, services or funds for gifted-education – quality and appropriate instruction

Accreditation requires the disaggregation of gifted student achievement data. Individual districts, currently, maintain gifted student CSAP information. Districts may also set incremental targets to improve the number of gifted students at the proficient and advanced level of CSAP performance. Beginning in 2004, the state will request that gifted students be marked on the CSAP data sheets. Through this manner, CDE will be able to report CSAP data for academically and/or talented gifted students.



Under the Exceptional Children’s Education Act (ECEA) administrative units carry the responsibility to develop gifted-education plans for application of state gifted and talented education funds.

Gifted-education services and achievement of exceptional-ability learners are based in Colorado's accreditation law and Exceptional Children's Act. These laws require administrative unit plans in gifted-education to receive gifted state funds and disaggregation of gifted student CSAP data. Administrative plans address the elements of: definition, identification, programming, budget, accountability, and reporting.

To support the efforts of gifted-education, the State Advisory Committee for Gifted and Talented Student Education (SAC), Gifted-Education Coordinators and CDE agreed that statewide consistency and communication would be necessary to build common understanding and data-based systems. The following dynamic vision, adopted by SAC and coordinators, guides the current work.

All gifted Colorado youth, including those living in urban areas, small towns, suburban neighborhoods, rural plains, and remote mountain communities, are identified by their strength areas and needs. Educational programming is designed and implemented to match their identified needs. Student progress and achievement is monitored through on-going dynamic assessment. Teachers of gifted students participate in professional development to increase knowledge, skills and understanding of gifted students and required instruction.

The first half of 2003 established:

- A network of gifted-education coordinators
- A rubric for gifted programming elements in the administrative unit plans
- A statewide standard of collaboration in developing administrative unit plans

- Peer review of administrative unit plans
- Initiation of statewide guidelines for identification of gifted students

The 2003-2004 school year is filled with promise for making the vision a reality in Colorado.

The next steps include:

- Disseminate identification guidelines through the coordinators and other regional meetings as the first part of a statewide resource notebook.
- Establish a Gifted Forum with representation from each of the 8 regions for the purpose of planning and input on issues of procedures, budget, professional development, technical assistance, and monitoring.
- Facilitate gifted-education coordinators' meetings twice a year
- Increase professional development including the blending of the Colorado Association for Gifted Children Conference for coordinators' participation
- Clarify meaning of gifted students for the October enrollment count
- Communicate procedures for the bubbling of gifted students on CSAP tests
- Advocate for advanced placement and pre-AP opportunities for students and AP training for teachers
- Facilitate conversation about the proposed Gifted-Education Specialist endorsement
- Continue the development of the resource notebook: programming and accountability.
- Provide technical assistance through regional meetings and part-time regional consultants on a high-needs basis.

Accreditation Embeds Gifted Education

The Colorado accreditation law aims to encourage excellence by assessing students in relation to state standards; and promotes high standards, equal access, and educational opportunities for all students' academic growth. "All students" means every student regardless of gender; socio-economic level; at risk status; racial, ethnic, or cultural background; *exceptional ability*, disability, or limited English proficiency.

Two requirements in the law are specific to exceptional ability students: Section: 2.101 (4) (f)

To identify and reduce consistent patterns of low academic achievement and discrepancies in academic achievement related to gender, socio-economic level, at-risk status, ethnic, or cultural background, exceptional ability, disability or limited English proficiency.

Section 3.01 (1) (c)

CSAP scores disaggregated by all student groups (including exceptional ability learners) are included in the summary report.

Many districts have begun to disaggregate gifted-student data so that they may better determine growth of exceptional ability learners. The state will also support the reporting efforts by providing a CSAP code for gifted and talented students beginning with the 2004 CSAP tests.

Administrative Unit Plans like Sand Castles...

The mortar of carefully structured water and sand create an incredible labyrinth of strength and presence –reforming as the builders fine-tune or change the design.

At the last meeting of gifted-education coordinators and directors an analogy to museum quality sand castles was used to demonstrate the development and requirements of the gifted-education administrative unit plans. Each coordinator presented their plan to colleagues exemplifying the following traits:

A rubric for quality gifted programming guides the plan

- ◆ Collaboration and cooperation among the stakeholders exemplify the process for developing the plan in the admin-unit
- ◆ Intention to develop all programming elements over time – beginning with the most urgent needs of the district/s in the admin-unit.
- ◆ Implementation activities to reform the structure or quality of gifted programming
- ◆ Yearly Goals that may adjust each year as targets for improvement or redesign are realized by the builders of the plan
- ◆ Insight that new laws and regulations may require periodic rebuilding of the plan

The programming strategies most beneficial to advanced learners are:

- ◆ Acceleration
- ◆ Enrichment
- ◆ Career awareness
- ◆ Specific and appropriate instruction in the area/s of strength
- ◆ Peer interaction, study, project and/or support groups
(Rogers, 2001; Shores, Cornell, Robinson & Ward, 1999)

SPECIAL ATTENTION: IS IT REALLY NEEDED? DIFFERENTIATING FOR THE GIFTED STUDENT

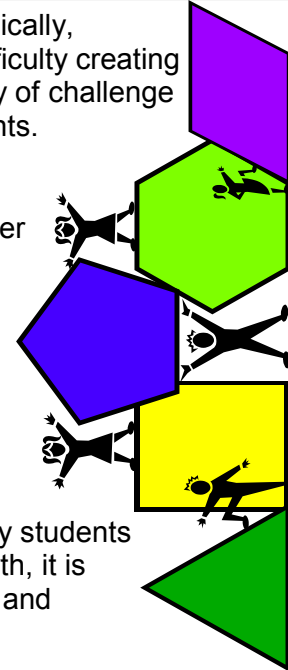
by Melanie Isenhour & Diana Weeks, NC Region

Why is it important to pay special attention to gifted, talented, and high-ability students? These students comprise a population of learners who are capable of understanding new concepts with little repetition, who need access to more challenging, in-depth, complex material, and who require a faster learning pace. According to psychologists Webb, Meckstroth, and Tolan, authors of *Guiding the Gifted Child*, underachievement in school is the major motivational problem faced by families of gifted, talented, and high-ability children. It is very difficult for these students to stay motivated in an "educational system that is oriented primarily toward" struggling or average students. Typically, these students spend their days in classrooms with little or no modification to meet their needs. This can result in long-term effects.

According to Dr. Sanders, the "one factor most significant in predicting student academic growth was the effectiveness of the teacher." Many of the brightest students fail to achieve their potential every year.

The most effective teachers are those who differentiate instruction, essentially offering meaningful instruction delivered around challenging content areas designed to meet the needs of students at their appropriate levels and to help them to achieve maximum academic growth. Differentiation should be designed for high-ability students and then adjusted to meet average and struggling student needs, rather than designing differentiation for the average learner and attempting to increase the challenge for

advanced learners. Typically, teachers have great difficulty creating the appropriate intensity of challenge needed by these students. Methods that are highly effective in teaching advanced learners center on differentiated curriculum and instruction, teaching to the next advanced level, and using appropriately challenging content in classrooms. For gifted, talented, and high-ability students to show academic growth, it is necessary to anticipate and design for it.



STRENGTHENING TEACHER SKILLS AND EFFECTIVENESS

This type of training for both the regular classroom teacher and the g/t specialist is occurring in our state through a program of professional development delivered through The Center For Advanced Student Learning (CASL). CASL is currently working with their second cadre of 85 teachers to strengthen their planning and delivery skills to better differentiate instruction. This two-year commitment includes multiple seminars throughout the school year where experts in the field share their information and participants have a chance to interact and ask questions pertinent to their own situations. Sessions cover a myriad of topics including planning by design, the use of concepts, differentiation strategies, the use of assessment and pre-assessment, how to be an advocate and consultant....and the list goes on.

An additional component of the CASL program is a "coaching" piece. While Cadre participants begin to apply the information gleaned from the seminars in their

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classrooms, they receive a personal visit by a coach to support their efforts. During the "coaching" time, teachers can reflect on their teaching....an essential aspect for professional growth and development. This is not an evaluation...it is provided solely for support. Professional growth is then fostered as each member takes an active role in the conversations and reflection time exploring how to best increase the opportunities for every student to achieve maximum growth. It is an exciting element to the program.

Because of the intense interest in this area of professional development, CASL is opening up a few slots for their remaining sessions for the 2003-2004 school year. Anyone interested in attending one (or more) seminars needs to contact Julie Campbell at 303-772-4420 Ext. 213. Please leave your name, phone number and email address.

References:

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Experts speak on G/T. (2001, February). LIGHTS. (Available from Larimer Initiative for Gifted, High-Ability, and Talented Students, 3107 Hiawatha Drive, Loveland, CO 80538)

Greer, D. (2000, April). Data drives approach. LIGHTS. (Available from Larimer Initiative for Gifted, High-Ability, and Talented Students, 3107 Hiawatha Drive, Loveland, CO 80538)

Rainey F. (2001, January). Getting to advanced by design: Using CSAP to benefit high-ability students. Presented to administrators of the Center for Advanced Student Learning (CASL) trainers on January 30, 2001, Milliken, CO.

Webb, J., Meckstroth, E., & Tolan, S. (1982). Guiding the gifted child: A practical source for parents and teachers. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio Psychology Publishing Company.

DIFFERENTIATION IS CRUCIAL NOW FOR GIFTED LEARNERS

by Becky Haffke, West Middle Level SAIL program, Colorado Springs District 11

Pondering the virtues of differentiated instruction for gifted students, I am struck that there has never been a better time for discussion. As state governments face budget shortfalls and local school districts cut services for students, the need for quality differentiation is at its greatest. In the best of economic times, gifted students are overlooked due to pervasive beliefs that they will "make it" on their own and their intrinsic

curiosity and precocity will see them through. Nobody better describes the dangers of this type of thinking than Dr. Sylvia Rimm who states, "If gifted children are not challenged by curriculum early in their school lives, they equate smart with easy, and challenge and hard work with threats to their self-esteem. They will become perfectionists and avoid challenge or search for easy-way-out solutions like not handing in assignments, procrastination, and disorganization for fear that conscientious work may reveal they are not as smart as they are assumed to be." What greater reasons than these motivate us

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to pursue academic rigor? If children are not taught that being smart is wonderful, difficult, challenging, frustrating, and exciting; then they may not learn how to reach their potential for fear of failure due to the false assumption that for smart people, everything should come easily.

Further justification for differentiating work for gifted students can be gained by viewing giftedness from a perspective similar to special education. Special education students are identified for services in a regular classroom when achievement scores on standardized measurements fall two grade levels below age mates. This same standard applied to giftedness means that differentiation is needed for students whose abilities are two grade levels above age peers. Regular classroom activities cannot bring their achievement scores to the level of their measured abilities. Concern about achievement and ability discrepancy includes the fact that the difficulty level of textbooks has declined over the last thirty years while information therein has become repetitious—a huge problem for gifted students who require fewer exposures to new material before they reach mastery

(Plucker & McIntire, 1996). The repetitious and understimulating nature of an undifferentiated classroom may leave gifted students showing signs of boredom, frustration, disruptive behavior, and withdrawal from classroom activities (Purcell, 1993). In 1993, Archambault et al. discovered classroom teachers differentiated the curriculum for high achieving students only 12% of the time (Plucker & McIntire, 1996). This is a problem for gifted students since the vast majority of them are mainstreamed for the majority of their time at school (Shore, 2001)—a trend likely to increase with budget cuts. A 6th grade student scoring at the 9th grade level in math will not function at his/her true ability level in his/her grade level math class without differentiation.



What constitutes quality differentiation for gifted

students? Options range from full-time magnet programs to enrichments seminars. Research shows each programming option can be effective (Callard-Szulgit, 1998). In her book, *Teaching Models in Education of the Gifted*, C. June Maker cites J.J. Gallagher and J. Renzulli that regular curriculum (i.e. the Colorado State Standards) can be modified in CONTENT (what is learned), PROCESS (methods students apply), and PRODUCT (the final piece created by students for evaluation). We can also modify ENVIRONMENT through mentorships, pull-out programs, magnet programs, and alternatives that change physical and psychological surroundings. Effective programming ensures that gifted students work with subject matter at a greater depth and complexity than their age-level peers (Maker, 1982). Classroom teachers who are adept at differentiating the regular curriculum will protect students from further economic drain on local schools.

References:

Callard-Szulgit, R. (1998). *Let's put the fighting behind us and serve our gifted children. Gifted Child Today, 21, 4, 46-48.*

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Maker, C. J. (1982). *Teaching Models in Education of the Gifted*. Rockville, MD: Aspen, 3-16.

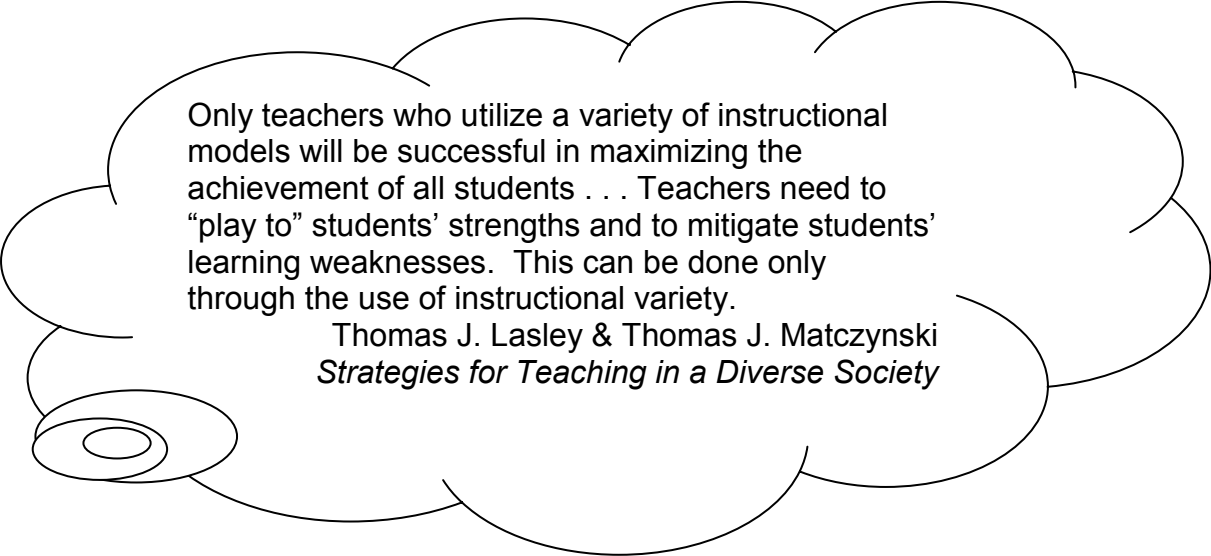
Plucker, J.A. & McIntire, J. (1996). *Academic survivability in high-potential, middle school students*. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 40, 7-13.

Purcell, J.H. (1993). *The effects of the elimination of gifted and talented programs on participating students and their parents*. *Gifted Child Quarterly*. 37, 177-187.

Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom by Susan Winebrenner. (2001). Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit, xi.

Shore, K. (2001). *Teaching the gifted student*, *Principal*, 79, 37-42.

Rimm, Sylvia. *excerpt taken from forward of*



Only teachers who utilize a variety of instructional models will be successful in maximizing the achievement of all students . . . Teachers need to “play to” students’ strengths and to mitigate students’ learning weaknesses. This can be done only through the use of instructional variety.

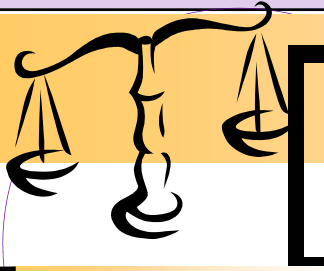
Thomas J. Lasley & Thomas J. Matczynski
Strategies for Teaching in a Diverse Society

Differentiated Instruction for Diverse Learners

The Colorado Odyssey Project is a joint outreach effort of the Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado Council for Learning Disabilities. Odyssey is organized and ready to provide an exciting learning experience for teachers across the state. Three regional meetings and a summary conference in the spring will deliver our theme for this year, Differentiated Instruction

for Diverse Learners. One credit hour is available from Adams State for \$35. The \$38 fee for the summary conference includes all handouts, a reception, breakfast and lunch!

Odyssey study group facilitators will provide information about the principals of Differentiated Instruction with opportunities for participants to engage in activities that are differentiated according to their readiness level. See Calendar of Events for dates.



SPECIAL REVIEW

A NEWSLETTER ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION LAW ISSUES

Exceptional Student Services Unit
Colorado Department of Education

Looking ahead

Did You know?

Did you know that one of the proposed changes to the IDEA is a provision for voluntary binding arbitration? It would be a required part of the notice and description of procedural safeguards. This would have to be provided as an option when a due process hearing is requested. It would be in lieu of a hearing and the decision of the arbitrator would be final with no appeal process.



Another proposed change is the right to be represented at a hearing by a non-attorney advocate.

Looking Back at dispute resolution

Last year, in 2002, there were 30 Federal Complaints filed—down by one from 31 in 2001.

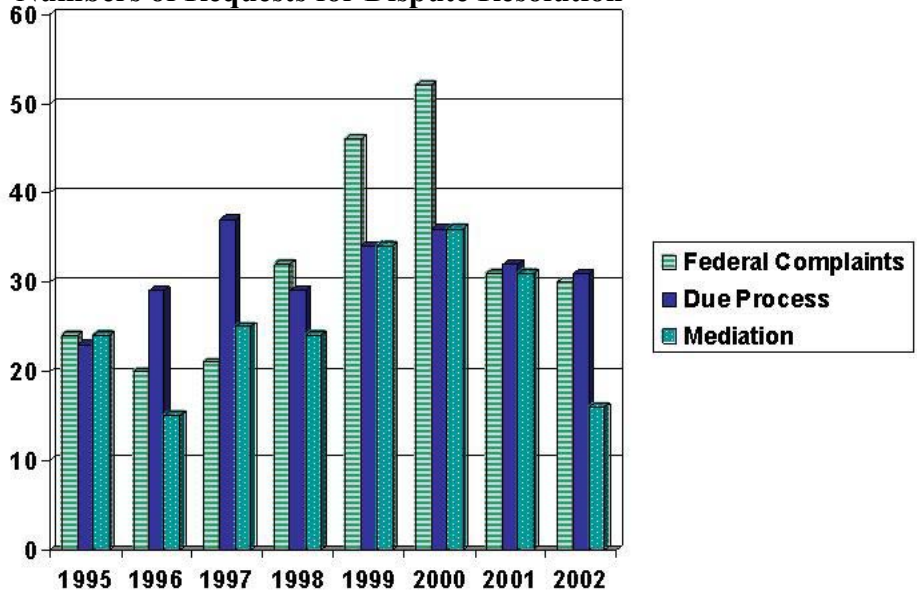
There were 31 Due Process requests in 2002. This has remained consistently in the 30s for the past 4 years. The highest number of requests was 37 in 1997.

There were 16 requests for Mediation in 2002. This is a

48% decrease from the 31 requests in 2001. The lowest was 15 in 1996.

Below is a graph showing the range of requests for each dispute resolution process for the past eight years for Special Education in Colorado.

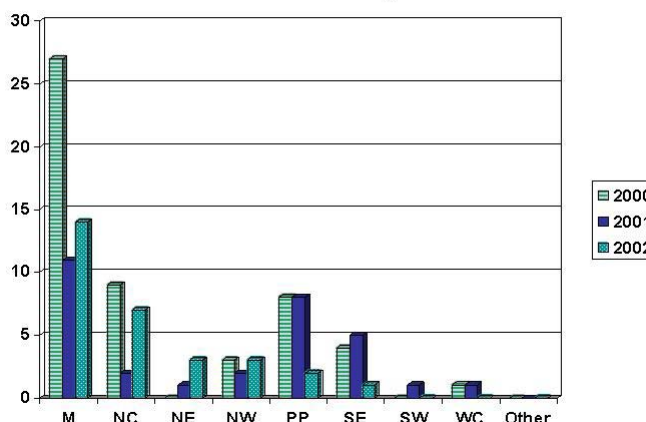
Numbers of Requests for Dispute Resolution



Breakdown by Region

The graphs on this page show the number of Federal Complaints filed, the number of Due Process requests, and number of requests for Mediation by educational region for the years 2000, 2001, and 2002. (Metro, North Central, Northwest, Pikes Peak, Southeast, West Central, and Other (ie., DYC)) The results on this page do not mean that each case resulted in a decision. These numbers are only the number of requests received. For more information on issues and decisions please visit our website at: www.cde.state.co.us/spedlaw/

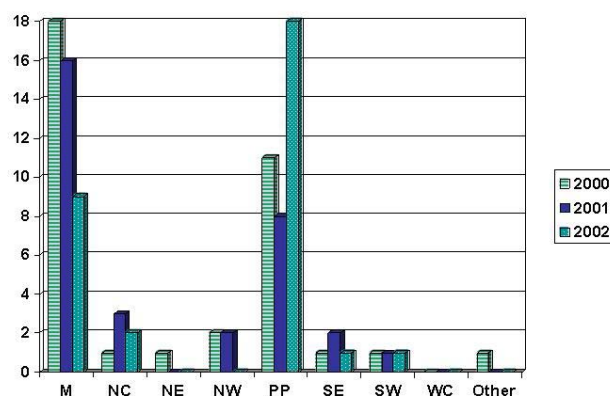
Federal Complaints



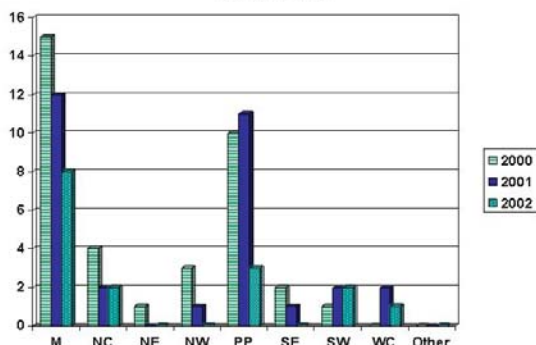
We have revised our website!

Just in case you haven't visited our website lately—it's been revised. It's much more user friendly now and check out the new search page! This new feature allows you to search only the special education law website for specific information. For instance, you may be looking for decisions that have been issued in a particular district or school, or maybe for a specific disability, this will give you those cases. Take a look! See what you think.....

Due Process



Mediation



Decisions Published in IDELR

Federal Complaint and Due Process Decisions are now being published in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Law Report (IDELR). This is a national reporter for special education cases. Some of these cases are being summarized in the IDELR Highlights (if the editors at IDELR think they are appropriate) that are included in the updates for the reporter. All decisions issued by the Federal Complaints Officer and the Impartial Hearing Officers can be found on our website at:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/spedlaw/dec.htm>

CALENDAR 2003-2004*

**This information is provided as a service. We believe it to be accurate, but it is important to confirm with the contact listed. To obtain additional information and to supply important upcoming dates, please contact us at the number below.*

September 2003

- 12 **Symposium on identification and intervention for stuttering.** The Colorado Speech-Language-Hearing Association will offer this symposium in Denver with Dr. Nina Reardon. For registration information, go to www.cshassoc.org
- 17 **Building Early Literacy & Language Skills.** A full day conference with Lucy Hart Paulson. Gateway to the Rockies Conference Center, Aurora, CO. For registration information, go to www.TheChildrensHospital.org or contact Karen Kelly at (303) 866-6741 or kelly_k@cde.state.co.us

October 2003

- 1 **CSAP-A Awareness Training.** This will be held at the Holiday Inn Summit County, Frisco, CO. For more information contact Gina Quintana at quintana_g@cde.state.co.us
- State Advisory Committee for Gifted and Talented Student Education,** Denver, CO. For more information contact Kathy Lenz, Chairperson at tklenz@lamar.colostate.edu
- 8 **Gifted Education Coordinators Meeting.** This will be held at the Radisson Hotel (I-225 & Parker Road), Denver, CO. Parent Day will be October 11th. For more information, contact Jacquelin Medina at medina_j@cde.state.co.us
- 9-11 **Colorado Association for Gifted & Talented Children Conference.** This will be held at the Radisson Hotel (I-225 & Parker Road), Denver, CO. For more information contact cagt@aol.com
- 17-18 **School Social Work Conference - Celebrating Strengths in Systems, Students and Selves.** It will be held at the Beaver Run Resort and Conference Center in Breckenridge, Colorado. For more information, please go to: www.cde.state.co.us/ssw/
- 23 **Statewide Child Find Meeting:** Vail, CO. For more information contact Nan Vendegna at (303) 866-6602
- 23-24 **Early Childhood Institute,** Vail, CO. For more information, contact Sharlene Chiapettei at (303) 837-8466

November 2003

- 6-8 **State Conference on Visual Impairment,** Aurora, CO. For more information, contact Tanni Anthony at (303) 866-6681.

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13-15 **Parents Encouraging Parents Conference.** This will be held in Grand Junction, CO. For more information, contact Katherine Keck at (303) 866-6846 or keck_k@cde.state.co.us

13-15 **American Speech-Language and Hearing Association National Convention.** This will be held in Chicago, Illinois. For more information, go to www.professional.asha.org for convention details

13-16 **National Association for Gifted Children Conference,** Indianapolis, Indiana. For more information, go to www.nagc.org

Nov 18 **CSAP-A Math/Science Pilot Administration Training.** This will be held at the Adams 12 Training Center, 1500 East 128th Avenue, Thornton, CO. For more information, please contact Janet Filbin at filbin_j@cde.state.co.us

January 2004

Jan 16 **Affective Needs Conference.** This year's conference will be held at the Holiday Inn DIA, I-70 & Chambers. For more information, contact Lisa Thoennes at LKThoennes@aol.com

April 2004

April 1-3 **Parents Encouraging Parents Conference.** This conference will be held in Estes Park. For more information, contact Katherine Keck at (303) 866-6846 or keck_k@cde.state.co.us

Multiple Months

2003-2004

Training for Transition (T4T) Two day workshop for parents, educators and students. October 24-26, 2003, January 9-11, 2004, & February 20-22, 2004 at the Rocky Mountain Village; March 5-7, 2004 at the Lakewood Holiday Inn and April 16-18, 2004 at the Rocky Mountain Village. For more information, please contact Romie Tobin at (303) 866-6720 or tobin_r@cde.state.co.us

2003-2004

Odyssey XVII. October 27 (Intro to Differentiating Instruction in mixed ability classrooms); January 26 (Principals of Differentiated Instruction); March 1 (Getting Started with Differentiated Instruction); April 30 (evening) - May 1 (Summary Conference). For more information contact Liz Peyton at jaypeyton@msn.com

Sep 10, Oct 9 & Jan 7

Gifted Forum. This will be held in Denver, CO. For more information, contact Jacqueline Medina at medina_j@cde.state.co.us

Regional Child Find Meetings:

Region/Location	Date
NW/West Central (Rifle)	Oct 10, 2003
Metro (Denver)	Nov 21, 2003
NE/North Central (Greeley)	Jan 16, 2004
SE/Pikes Peak (Co Sprgs)	Feb 20, 2004
SW (Pagosa Springs)	April 16, 2004
Northwest (Silverthorne)	April 30, 2004

Request for Information or Mailing Changes

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

HOME PHONE: _____ WORK PHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

THE MAILING LIST:

ADD NAME REMOVE NAME MAKE INDICATED CHANGES

SEND THIS INFORMATION TO:

Kelli Roark, Inside Special Education Coordinator
Colorado Department of Education, SESU
201 East Colfax, Room 300
Denver, CO 80203



Inside Exceptional Student Services
Colorado Dept. of Education
201 East Colfax, Room 300
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