

# Preparing Preservice Teacher for ALL Learners: A Book Critique on Gifted Education and Gifted Students

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## Introduction

A goal of an undergraduate teacher preparation program is to prepare future teachers to work with all learners regardless of gender, ethnicity, economic status, home language, and ability. Children arrive in our classrooms with a range of developmental, physical, cognitive, and intellectual abilities that impact educational performance (Simpson et al., 2013), and educators have the responsibility to ensure all students have access to fair and equitable learning experiences (Kansas State Department of Education [KSDE], 2022). This can be achieved by creating inclusive learning environments where all students can have their learning needs met. Inclusion was described by Simpson et al. (2013) as a philosophy, a belief, of including all students in a classroom setting so that all students have a sense of belonging and viewed as valued members of the classroom community. A community of learners include students with advanced abilities who deserve the same levels of differentiation and scaffolding as students needing remediation by the teacher to facilitate critical thinking (Miller & Lubkert, 2012). Advanced learners are in most classrooms and will likely benefit from differentiated instruction when teachers are trained on the unique needs of gifted and talented students. Kansas and bordering states (i.e., Colorado, Nebraska, Missouri, and Oklahoma) do not require undergraduate preservice teacher candidates to take university coursework in gifted education (Rinn et al., 2022). Without specific coursework on gifted learners, Kansas preservice teachers are entering classrooms partially equipped to meet the array of learning needs represented in classrooms.

## Summary of Argument

*Gifted Education and Gifted Students: A Guide for Inservice and Preservice Teachers* aimed to address the lack of coursework about gifted and talented learners in teacher education programs. Margot and Melin (2020) believed that “they [gifted students] all deserve to learn every day in their classrooms.” Acting on their belief, Margot and Melin (2020) wrote this book to equip preservice teachers with the background knowledge of the theories and models of gifted education, the characteristics of gifted learners, and instructional practices for gifted learners.

## Summary of Content

*Gifted Education and Gifted Students: A Guide for Inservice and Preservice Teachers* is a primer text of gifted education with the intended audience of preservice teachers and practicing teachers who are seeking professional development on the basics of gifted education. The book’s chapters summarize three main topics: research, characteristics, and service models. Chapter One provided a recap of the research describing what giftedness is and how to identify giftedness in children. Chapters Two and Four describe the unique characteristics of diverse gifted learners including underrepresented populations and twice-exceptional children. These chapters gave insight on how these populations are identified as well as best practices of instruction for these

students. Finally, Chapters Three, Five, and Six provided examples of service models to meet the cognitive and social-emotional needs of gifted students. Accompanying each chapter are a set of objectives, reflection questions, and prompts to practice what you learned.

## **Relevance**

### ***Strengths***

In Kansas, the term *gifted* is defined as “performing or demonstrating the potential for performing at significantly higher levels of accomplishment in one or more academic fields due to intellectual ability, when compared to others of similar age, experience, and environment” (KSDE, 2021). Based on this definition, the content of this book aligns with the how school districts in Kansas identify and serve gifted students. One of the greatest strengths of the text was the inclusion of underrepresented populations in gifted education. Margot and Melin (2020) stated the need for more equitable methods of identification of students that are economically, ethnically, and ability (twice-exceptional) diverse. With the changing demographics of students in public education, it was significant to include these topics to ensure teachers are knowledgeable of the under-identification, misidentification, and under-service of diverse, gifted learners.

From a licensure perspective, the text aligns with four of the five categories outlined on the Praxis Exam for Gifted Education:

- Development and Characteristics of Gifted Learners (Chapters One through Four)
- Learning Environments for Gifted Learners (Chapters Five and Six)
- Instruction for Gifted Learners (Chapters Five and Six)
- Identification and Assessment for Gifted Learners (Chapters One and Two)

While the text will not be sufficient to prepare preservice teachers to pass the Praxis Exam for Gifted Education, it will provide an overview of the main themes that will allow preservice teachers to build future knowledge upon with time, experiences, and studying.

### ***Opportunities for Improvement***

The terms *gifted* and *talented* are used together and often used interchangeably since paired together in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (2002). However, according to Dai and Chen (2013), there are three distinct paradigms in gifted education: gifted child, talent development, and differentiation. The terms *gifted* and *talented* are distinctly different when describing advanced learning service models and identification processes. *Gifted Education and Gifted Students: A Guide for Inservice and Preservice Teachers* focuses heavily on the programming aspects of the gifted child paradigm. An opportunity to enhance this text would be to include additional research on the talent development and differentiation paradigms to better articulate and distinguish between the three paradigms. To accomplish this, the authors would need to include descriptions about the facets of the talent development and differentiation paradigms, including the purpose of each paradigm, how each paradigm serves advanced students, the varying targeted populations, and the service models that align with paradigms.

## **Critique and Recommendation**

*Gifted Education and Gifted Students: A Guide for Inservice and Preservice Teachers* addresses the gap in available literature regarding educating preservice teachers about the gifted education research, models, theory, and learning needs of gifted students. The text is concise, comprehensible, and has the potential for high utility by preservice teachers who are balancing multiple courses about who, what, and how to teach. Yet, the book provides a sufficient overview for preservice teachers that they would have some understanding and knowledge of who gifted learners are and how to provide differentiated learning experiences to challenge them daily.

After searching for similar text to use with preservice teachers, *Gifted Education and Gifted Students: A Guide for Inservice and Preservice Teachers* is my recommended text. This text is a 'right fit, right now' for preservice teachers as they learn a little bit about everything in education before entering the profession.

### **Specifications**

Title: *Gifted Education and Gifted Students: A Guide for Inservice and Preservice Teachers*

Authors: Kelly C. Margot, Ph.D. and Jacque Melin

Publisher: Prufrock Press Inc.

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Pages: 71

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