
Preface

When I was approached to write this book, the focus was to be on gifted students and how to *make smart kids smarter*. As the book evolved, however, it became clear to me and to my editor at Corwin that there was a definite need for a book about making ALL kids smarter. While the focus still is on gifted and high-ability students, this book is about activities and instructional strategies designed to be compatible with how the brain processes information. Therefore, the content is about more than just making our bright kids brighter; it's about making more and more kids smarter.

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the mandate for schools has been to increase the performance of the lowest achieving students so that all children reach a minimal proficiency level. More than a decade later, NCLB continues to influence educational practices as standardized assessments are used to determine proficiency levels. However, in my current work with teachers, students, administrators, and parents, it appears that test scores have become the goal of teaching rather than an indicator of performance. This isn't a book about raising test scores. Rather, it is a guide with strategies and activities for *teaching kids to be thinkers*, helping them become smarter in a variety of ways. Happily, a positive consequence of utilizing these strategies is that test scores do improve. That has been the experience at my school and at other schools where these strategies have been implemented.

Much of the terminology in this book is from the world of gifted and talented education. This is because the philosophy of working with our brightest students has always been to challenge them in meaningful ways. Applying these terms to a broader group can only increase the opportunities students will have to think more deeply and meaningfully about content. After 40 years as an educator, I have come to believe that we don't expect nearly as much from some students as we do others. I'm

convinced that holding such diminished expectations for some students is a form of discrimination that we should examine carefully.

This book is about taking the strategies previously reserved for our gifted and brightest children and presenting them to all of our students, regardless of ability levels. This philosophy guided me as a teacher, principal, administrator, and university instructor and it continues to do so now in my role as a consultant working with educators in districts across the country.

I hope you will find this book both informative and liberating. I trust it will bring back the enthusiasm and joy that you experienced when you entered this profession and that, consequently, your job will become more interesting, meaningful and, dare I say, FUN!

Enjoy!!!