

Educating the More Able Student: What works and why

By Martin Stephen, Ian Warwick



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An unprecedented collaboration between leading names from the independent and state sectors, this thought-provoking book addresses the current crisis in education for the most able.

Grounded in the classroom, the authors draw on their own first-hand experiences and international research to scrutinise techniques and practices from leading countries, exploring the more divisive issues that have damaged teaching worldwide.

Demonstrating what works well in teaching the most able, and also what does not work, the book offers a radical solution, a stimulus to thought and a way forward for teachers, academics and all those with responsibility for ensuring high standards in education, including governments and members of regulatory authorities.

Considering it for your course reading list? Lecturers can order their e-inspection copy!



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• Published on: 2015-04-13 • Original language: English

• Number of items: 1

• Dimensions: 9.60" h x .80" w x 6.70" l, .0 pounds

• Binding: Hardcover

• 240 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

Well-travelled, and often polemical, the authors have achieved a triumph of collaboration. The strength of the book is in their shared and uncompromising view that the most able are being ignored in the UK. They are right and they must be heard.

The well read, left-wing reformer and the free-thinking establishment heavyweight have done their homework. Instead of getting lost in the debate about identifying the most able, they have pursued a practical path and toured the world to find out what more can, and should, be done. Instead of concluding that the solutions are complex, they have concluded that the solutions are many.

This results in a refreshing perspective and it might just be enough to stir all of us in schools to wake up, get up off our seats and do something for a change. (Professor Ralph Tabberer CB)

Policy makers and education leaders from around the world are beginning to realize the economic and cultural value of intellectual and creative human capital. Ian Warwick and Martin Stephen have provided a highly informative macro-view of many countries' approaches to developing giftedness and talents in young people. This book provides a superbly-organized and resourceful assessment of gifted program practices and services that will save interested persons the ten thousand hours necessary to gain this kind of global perspective.

(Joseph S. Renzulli)

A once in a generation nugget of truth that we can and must do so much more for our most able, superbly written by two contrasting writers both with unchallengeable credibility in the world of education. This skilfully crafted book forces us to look beyond our shores only to find ourselves lacking when it comes to schooling our best and brightest. It is a provocative challenge for all educators to raise the bar. A rare blend of much needed intelligent debate with a completely practical approach for teachers to use in class. Quite simply a must read; by teachers and for teachers; a winning formula. (Graham Watts)

Martin Stephen and Ian Warwick have produced a timely reminder of the importance of programmes that enable highly able students to achieve their full potential. By collecting a wealth of global case studies, they deliver a wake-up call to British politicians to ensure that effective provision for the highly able is seen as an issue of equity rather than elitism.

(Sir Peter Lampl)

This is a well-organised, well-researched book that is also very well-written – the reader is immediately drawn into the text because, from page one, it is exciting to read! This is a refreshing change from many 'academic' texts that drone on in a style that is supposedly in the traditional (and often dull!) style of academic writing.

The writers have critically explored a vast array of issues with regard to the education of the more able. They convey their passion and concern for the needs of learners who need and deserve appropriate educational

opportunities which challenge and stimulate their thinking. And we all know that both motivation and the drive to learn are maintained through appropriate challenge for *all* learners across the full range of abilities.

The term 'more able' is defined within the concept of academic ability; but importantly, this conception derives from the belief that *all* learners need equal opportunities to discover their strengths. In particular, the issues with regard to socio-economic disadvantage and racial/gender bias are confronted.

The book is a practical text fulfilling its subtitle of 'what works and why'. The writers argue that too much (often sterile) debate has taken place about definition, identification, and genetics versus environment; whereas, studies of good school/classroom practice have not been given enough attention.

The writers analyse the perennial debates around issues such as acceleration, curriculum compacting, enrichment, summer schools, teacher training, etc. but they ground their analysis in successful schools and programmes that actually have made a real difference to the development of more able learners.

Various countries' programmes are evaluated, for example, in Australia, Europe, the Far East, UK, and USA. The critical factors that emerge are the importance of the insightful, supportive mentoring relationship between teacher and learner, and the respect for learners' voices with regard to what constitutes appropriate depth and breadth for their learning assignments.

The exciting message that comes though the text is the scattered but collective power of the often small but significant educational 'bonfires' that light up best practice worldwide. And the writers have portrayed these 'bonfires' in ways that will inspire other teachers to take some calculated, informed risks with a rigid 'stand and deliver' pedagogy that seeks to instruct learners within often outdated and irrelevant content.

I commend this text to all parents, teachers, advisers and administrators, and I challenge them to audit their values and practice with regard to education. I would also add that able learners at upper primary through secondary phases would understand selections from the text and be inspired to debate what they understand as 'best' practice with regard to their social, emotional and cognitive needs.

(Belle Wallace)

In this thoughtful exploration of a wide range of programming options and techniques for teaching the most able students around the world, Warwick and Stephen raise tough questions that are critically important for all educators and parents. Are we getting the balance right between spoon feeding and challenge? In our concern for ensuring that all students achieve basic academic standards, are we ignoring the needs of the most able learners? Are we providing the opportunities for engagement in real learning required for creativity and innovation? Are we fostering the work habits and enquiry skills needed for meaningful achievement across the life span? Are teachers being given the training, resources, and support they need to work most effectively with the wide range of abilities found in every classroom? And are we providing learning incentives that will result in students' taking responsibility for their own learning, or are we implicitly fostering dependency and entitlement?

In today's rapidly changing world, it is becoming increasingly urgent that we get the answers right, that we give students the supports and challenges they need to be the innovators and leaders of tomorrow. In Educating the More Able Student: What works and why, Warwick and Stephen provide a catalyst for considering the questions deeply, and for moving forward toward creating the best possible learning environments. We'll all benefit if we get it right.

(Dona Matthews, PhD)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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Carole Houston:

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