



Project PROMISE

Professional Development Components 2004-2008

1. Understanding Characteristics of Giftedness
2. Understanding the Effects of Poverty on Gifted Behaviors
3. Classroom Management for Effective Problem-based Learning
4. Science Content Knowledge and Skills
5. Questioning Strategies for Advanced Thinking Skills
6. Writing Problem-based Curriculum
7. Pulling it All Together: Improving the Identification of Students from Economically Disadvantaged Backgrounds for Gifted Education Services
8. Using Humor to De-Stress Teachers

1. Understanding Characteristics of Giftedness

Description:

At the beginning of the grant, we conducted focus groups with the teachers, asking them to describe their understanding of gifted behaviors within the context of their classrooms. Following discussions on what gifted behaviors may look like in diverse and multicultural classrooms, Harrison Observation Student Forms were used to assist the teachers in documenting evidence of gifted behaviors. Over the course of the grant, we revisited the focus group responses to ascertain how the teachers' perceptions of gifted behaviors had changed. We also encouraged the teachers to reflect on how their students' responses and behaviors had changed in response to the newly implemented inquiry science activities and open-ended questioning strategies. Towards the end of the grant, we looked at how evidence of potential giftedness is used for eligibility determination for gifted programs in the teachers' school divisions, discussing ways for the teachers to document evidence of giftedness in their students' products.

Presenters:

Dr. Beverly Shaklee, professor, George Mason University
Dr. Barbara McGonagill, Virginia Department of Education

Materials:

Harrison Observation Student Forms, developed through U-Stars Plus, a Javits grant awarded to the University of North Carolina

[Focus group questions](#)

2. Understanding the Effects of Poverty on Gifted Behaviors

Description:

Because Project PROMISE served students in economically disadvantaged communities, we wanted to expand the teachers' understanding of giftedness across socio-economic strata and in multicultural contexts. The teachers had previously received training in Ruby Payne's A Framework for Understanding Poverty, so this workshop focused on classroom applications of Slocumb and Payne's Removing the Mask: Giftedness in Poverty, providing an additional structure for teachers to interpret the academic and social behaviors of their potentially gifted students. Discussion questions and the book were provided in advance to the teachers and responses to the questions were solicited via e-mail prior to the actual meeting.

Presenter:

Kathryn Burnes, educational consultant

Materials:

Paul Slocumb and Ruby Payne's Removing the Mask: Giftedness in Poverty, published by aha! Process, Inc.

[Removing the Mask Discussion Questions](#) (PowerPoint presentation for CD-ROM), developed by Tiffany Hall for Project PROMISE

Resources:

<http://www.ahaprocess.com/>

3. Classroom Management for Effective Problem-based Learning

Description:

Initial observations of teachers' classrooms and teachers' comments indicated that the teachers could be effectively served by providing them with advanced strategies for managing the active class activities incorporated in the Project PROMISE units. Over the course of the grant, we provided a variety of technical assistance:

- a) Strategies for general classroom management were presented by master teachers from the source division, followed by Project PROMISE teacher visits to observe classrooms successfully using active learning.
- b) Strategies for successful grouping of students for teamwork were presented by Nancy Mcroft, followed by Nancy observing and providing feedback to the teachers as they polished their new skills in their own classrooms. Nancy also included strategies for effective differentiation of activities for multiple levels of learning.
- c) Information on learning styles (PETALS – People Exploring Teaching and Learning Styles) was presented in order to increase the teachers' understanding that giftedness can be expressed through a variety of modalities, and to ensure that activities supporting a variety of learning styles were incorporated into the Project PROMISE curriculum.

Presenters:

Teachers and administrators from Prince William County elementary schools

Nancy Mcroft, educational consultant with Engine-Uity, Ltd.

Kathryn Burnes, trainer for PETALS

Materials Used:

PETALS – People Exploring Teaching and Learning Styles

Resources:

<http://www.engine-uity.com/>

<http://www.petalslearning.com/>

4. Science Content Knowledge and Skills

Description:

Advanced science content knowledge and sample teaching strategies were presented to the teachers in an afternoon of science-is-magic hands-on lessons for the teachers. Groups of teachers rotated through center activities that addressed the following content areas:

Matter

Mass and Volume

Magnets
Light
Motion and Sound

This workshop also provided the teachers with an opportunity to refine their skills in using traditional and hand-held microscopes, and other scientific apparatus. A critical focus was on assisting teachers to move from teacher demonstrations to authentic student experimentation. In addition to the content knowledge centers, activities were provided that supported the teachers in developing their own content-based science games and science songs. Teachers used a Project PROMISE “passport” to document their participation at each learning center.

Presenter:
Ruth Grillo, Virginia Department of Education

Materials:
[Science Centers Sheets](#)

Resources:
Science SOL’s http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/science/index.shtml

5. Questioning Strategies for Advanced Thinking Skills

Description:

In order to ensure that the Project PROMISE teachers were both comfortable and proficient in using questioning techniques that elicit advanced thinking skills, we provided multiple workshop sessions that included *Bloom’s Taxonomy* for advanced thinking, Dr. de Bono’s *Thinking Hats*, and *Thinking Maps*©. These complementary strategies assist teachers in moving from fact and recall types of questions to open-ended, evaluative, and analytical (“why”) types of questions, geared for students’ conceptual understanding. In addition, the *Thinking Maps*© provide visual cues to increase student facility with causal relationships, classifications, comparisons, and analogies.

Presenters:
Project PROMISE Executive Team
Melissa Edmonds, *Thinking Maps*© trainer

Materials Used:
[Questioning Strategies](#) using Bloom’s Taxonomy
Thinking Maps© training materials

Resources:
<http://www.thinkingmaps.com/>



6. Writing Problem-based Curriculum

Description:

The first life science units for Project PROMISE were adapted by the source division writing team from Dust Bowl, A Problem-based Unit developed by the Center for Gifted Education at The College of William and Mary. The second set of units, for earth science, was written by the source division team with substantial input, suggestions, and critiques from the Project PROMISE demonstration division teachers. Through continual encouragement and a humorous-but-persuasive skit, the initially-reluctant teachers were persuaded that they could indeed write a curriculum unit; thus the final physical science units were written by the demonstration division teachers, with support from the source division writing team. As the units were implemented each year, they were repeatedly revised and refined. Ideas and materials from the questioning strategies workshops, learning styles workshop, differentiation workshop, and the science content session were incorporated into the units as they were developed. Curriculum implementation logs and curriculum debriefing sessions provided structure to the revision process. The final versions of each of the units were field tested by the Project PROMISE teachers and an additional cohort in Prince William County.

Presenters:

The Project PROMISE curriculum writing team:

Joan Brownlee
Nita Faught
Tiffany Hall
Gail Hubbard
Betsy Wilco

Materials Used:

Dust Bowl, A Problem-based Unit developed by the Center for Gifted Education at The College of William and Mary; published by Kendall/Hunt Publishing
Curriculum template developed for Project PROMISE
Curriculum implementation logs
Curriculum debriefing logs

Resources:

<http://www.cfge.wm.edu/>
<http://www.kendallhunt.com/>

7. Pulling it All Together: Improving the Identification of Students from Economically Disadvantaged Backgrounds for Gifted Education Services

Description:

Throughout the course of the grant, we had on-going discussions about how evidence of giftedness could be elicited through the effective use of the strategies presented in the

workshops, particularly through the use of analytical and open-ended questions, problem-solving projects, student-directed experiments, creative responses in journals, differentiated activities, and attention to learning styles and diverse behaviors.

Towards the end of the grant, we looked at how evidence of giftedness is used for eligibility determination for gifted programs in the teachers' school divisions and how teachers can contribute effectively to that process. We discussed ways for the teachers to accurately document evidence of giftedness using student products and portfolios, comparing effective and non-effective referral narratives. A group of teachers from each of the demonstration school divisions was trained on the use of student product rubrics for documenting evidence of gifted behaviors over time. In addition, the Otis Lennon School Ability Test was administered to the teachers to give them a greater understanding of some of the elements often used in identification for gifted programs.

Presenters:

Linda Rae, Director of Gifted Education, Greenville County Public Schools
Brenda Matthews, Resource Teacher, Greenville County Public Schools
Project PROMISE Executive Team

Materials:

[Focus group questions](#)

[Student product evaluation rubric](#)



8. Using Humor to De-Stress Teachers

Description:

Throughout the course of the grant, humorous skits were used to introduce and reinforce concepts and to provide levity to the very intense sessions. “Dr. Phil” could always be counted on to provide insight and hilarity.

Presenters:

The Inimitable Prince William County Gifted Resource Actors:

Joan Brownlee
Nita Faught, aka “Dr. Phil”
Betsy Wilco

And the Intrepid Acting Associates:

Tiffany Hall
Gail Hubbard
Ruth Grillo
Barbara McGonagill