

Differentiation: Meeting the Needs of High-Ability Students in a Way that Makes Sense

with Lisa Van Gemert, M.Ed.T. | [GiftedGuru.com](https://www.GiftedGuru.com)



Welcome to Differentiation!

This is a jam-packed training, so I've set up the handout like a short e-book. I hope you'll refer to it again and again and that it will be of true benefit to you and your students.

It's divided into sections that align with the sections you'll see in the training itself. The titles are linked, so you can jump right to that section.

1

[Section 1: The Buy In](#)

In this section, we'll explore why we differentiate, and why it's worth it even though it's not always the easiest method of instruction.

2

[Section 2: The Environment](#)

We'll dive into practical differentiation techniques here. We'll look at the classroom itself, as well as the materials in it.

3

[Section 3: Content](#)

Now you'll dig into the most challenging part of the course. We'll look at the most important methods teachers need to be differentiation ninjas: tiering and compacting. You'll see real examples from real teachers (including me!).

4

[Section 4: Process](#)

This section looks at the way we invite students to process the content we're learning.

5

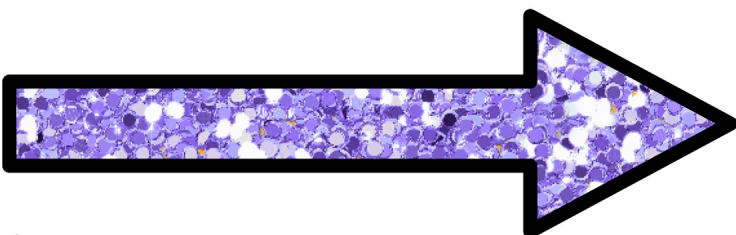
[Section 5: Product](#)

Here's where it gets really fun! We'll explore loads of ideas for student-created products you can use to differentiate.

6

[Section 6: The Extensions](#)

Get the info you need on the course extensions to make the course the full six hours!



Thanks to Glitter Meets Glue for the cool glitter arrows you see throughout!



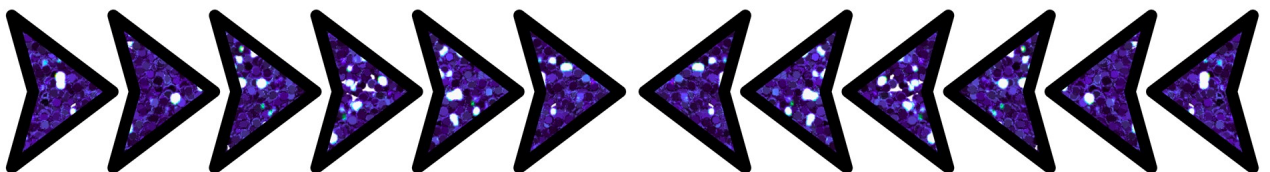


Meta Ideas:

- ✦ They are already differentiated.
- ✦ No response is a response.
- ✦ Differentiation is the norm, not the exception, of human experience.
- ✦ It's differentiation, not more differentiation.
- ✦ It's not about what they're doing; it's about what they're thinking.
- ✦ Start with your most-able learners in mind.
- ✦ Start where you are. You're already doing it. Really!

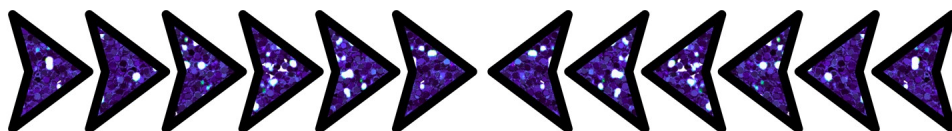
You can differentiate these things:

- ✦ Environment
- ✦ Content
- ✦ Process
- ✦ Product





- ✦ Want some ideas to consider? bit.ly/wow-classrooms
- ✦ Want classroom eye candy? cultofpedagogy.com/classroom-lounge/
- ✦ Want to read the entire article about how the setup of the classroom impacts students? It's here: bit.ly/setup-article
- ✦ Consider if materials are windows or mirrors. diversebooks.org/
- ✦ 20/20/20 rule
- ✦ Centers/stations
- ✦ Article on digital learning station options: bit.ly/digital-stations
- ✦ Differentiation poster download: bit.ly/diffposter
- ✦ Magazines (check Amazon!)
- ✦ Motivational posters: bighugelabs.com/motivator.php
- ✦ Remember the Staples engineering prints option





Zone of Proximal Development - embrace appropriate challenge

Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience by Mihaly Csikszentmihaly.

Watch this TED talk on it, if you're interested in the idea bit.ly/flowted.

TIERING:

1. Select the activity (concept, skill).
2. Decide what you will differentiate for (readiness, interest).
3. Create activity that is high level.
4. Clone the activity along the ladder (see possibilities chart below).
5. Match the version to the students (Which students will do which tier?).

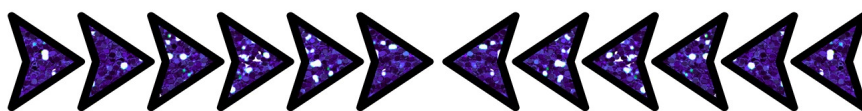


Grab the tiered lesson plan template here:

giftedguru.com/tiered-lesson-plan-template/

COMPACTING

1. Identify your objectives
2. Decide how to pretest
3. Decide who to pretest
4. Pretest
5. Eliminate practice, drill, or seat time for students who already know it.
6. Streamline instruction for students who can learn it more rapidly (optional - this is next level!)
7. Enrich or accelerate students in steps 5 & 6
8. Keep solid records



TIERED INSTRUCTION POSSIBILITIES CHART

Differentiate:	Possibilities (in top to bottom order of most-to-least complex)
Size of group	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Independent work (note: for GT students, work in pairs or groups may actually increase rigor, complexity, and/or challenge) 2. Pairs or triads 3. Small groups (view the <i>Grouping without Fear</i> slidedeck and get the handout at http://bit.ly/LVG-grouping for more info) 4. Teacher directed
Resources (quantity)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Multiple, self-discovered 2. Multiple, teacher-supplied 3. Limited or single, self-discovered 4. Limited or single, teacher-supplied
Resources (complexity)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Multi-media or requiring citation, self-discovered 2. Multi-media or requiring citation, teacher-supplied 3. Text only, above grade level 4. Text only, at grade level
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assignment takes place over an extended period of time AND has many steps AND has rapid pace 2. Assignment takes place over an extended period of time AND/OR has many steps AND/OR has rapid pace 3. Assignment takes place over a typical period of time, does not have many steps, and is completed at a typical pace
Teacher Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No questions after initial introduction 2. Restricted number of questions 3. Unlimited questions
Complexity of Thinking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of Psychomotor or Affective sections of Bloom's in addition to: 2. Creation, Evaluation or Analysis levels of Bloom's (new) 3. Application, Comprehension or Knowledge levels of Bloom's (new) (Print revised Bloom's diagram at bit.ly/rev-bloom . Find resources for other domains at bit.ly/bloom-psychomotor & bit.ly/bloom-affective)
Choice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Menu of differentiated opportunity is given (<i>see books by Laurie Westphal for menu ideas</i>) *choice menus do not guarantee differentiation 2. Teacher directs
Product	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advanced skills needed 2. Real world application (including web-based publication) (these two may overlap)
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Standard, on-level

Remember: Just a few will do! You don't need to adjust every component. Even one is often enough!

Ideas for what to do with students who are good candidates for compacted instruction.

Offer more challenging content. Consider:

- A different book
- A higher-level text of the same content (like a college textbook for high school, a secondary textbook for an elementary student, or even the next grade level). You're looking to raise the complexity. You may find online articles about the content easier to use than the textbook.

Make the product piece spectacular and juicy. This may mean that the product requires acquiring a new skill or is much more involved.

Use contracts to let a small group create or complete a project.

Use centers and learning stations. This is such a great use of your favorite things to teach that aren't in the curriculum anymore.

If possible, primary source document research is a wonderful use of the time. I cannot think of a content area that doesn't have an opportunity for this. For example, in math, a student could research the origins of the concept being studied. Who was first credited with it? Is it still used/thought of the same as it was? Was it at all controversial? Can you find the first book that had it and compare it to how it's explained now?

Independent study is my go-to. I use this work ahead contract to keep it from going out of control: bit.ly/work-ahead.

Here's the contract for reading ahead for elementary:

bit.ly/readahead-el

Here's the contract for reading ahead for secondary:

bit.ly/readahead-sec

Don't forget your school's librarian! They have great resources & sometimes are a wealth of ideas for implementing these ideas.

Compacting: Ideas for student interest

Use or adapt the interest-a-lyzers.

- Elementary – bit.ly/elem-interest
- Secondary – bit.ly/secondary-interest or bit.ly/interestalyzer

TED

- ted.com
- TED Connections – mensaforkids.org/teach/ted-connections

Gapminder: gapminder.org

Be guided by the students themselves. You are not required to teach already-mastered material, so if you're confident they've mastered the standards, feel free to be very broad in what they do instead.

Compacting: Documentation

Document the objective/content/assignment.

Document how you pre-tested.

Document what you did instead.

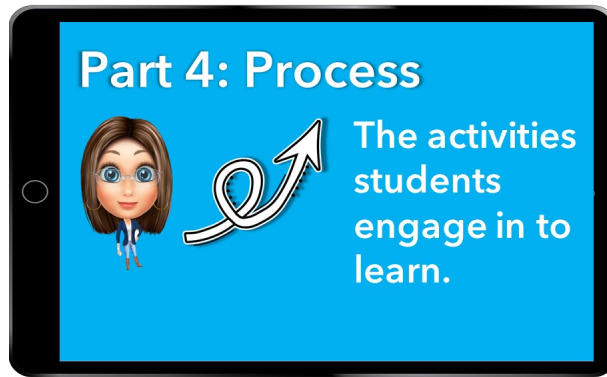
Ian Byrd's Differentiator: byrdseed.com/differentiator

Compacting: Pre-assessment

Remember: It's a change agent. Only do it if you're going to change something.

Don't overthink it. Keep it simple. It can be a unit test or quiz or a chart or graphic organizer they fill in.

Differentiation: Process



Process differentiation almost always involves one of these three things:

- 1) Adding greater complexity or abstractness to the tasks
- 2) Engaging students in critical and creative thinking
- 3) Increasing the variety of ways in which you ask them to learn

READINESS: entry point for a particular content or skill

1. Make task directions more detailed and specific for some learners and more open or “fuzzy” for others.
2. Tiered instruction (remember, this may be Content or Process differentiation)
3. Different levels of reading material
4. Teacher-led mini workshops
5. Use a variety of criteria for success (what counts as mastery)
6. Labs & manipulatives

INTEREST: affinity or curiosity

1. Interest-based work or discussion groups
2. Jigsaw/jigsaw with an expert
3. Design tasks that require multiple interests to complete

LEARNING PROFILE: ability to learn (gender, culture, preference - not “learning style”)

1. Allow choice in working independently or collaboratively.
2. Balance collaborative and collegial learning opportunities.
3. Develop activities that seek multiple perspectives.

Differentiation: Choice Menus

Remember that menus alone are not sufficient. It's about what they're thinking, not what they're doing.

Be sure to read the article at giftedguru.com/menus. Really, it's worth it.

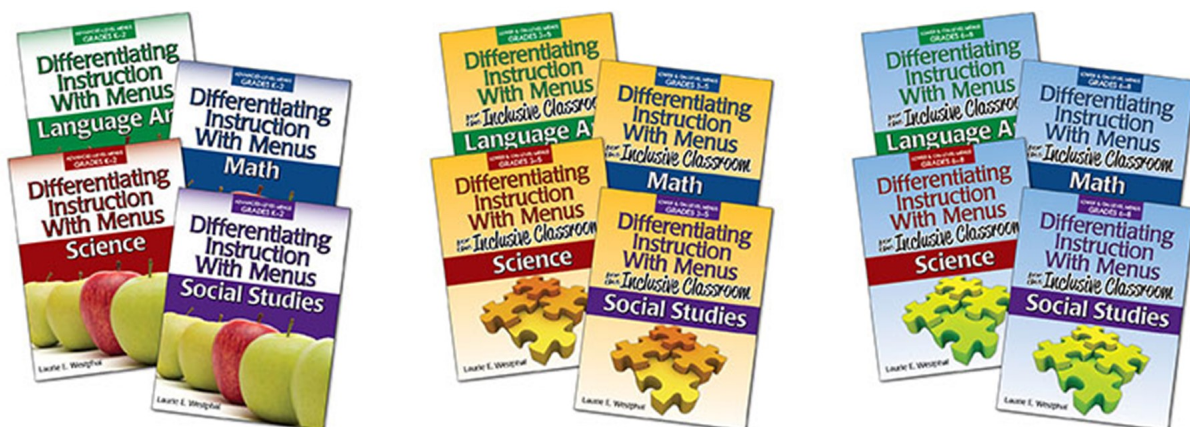
To set up a menu that you feel has a variety of thinking, consider using Bloom's to structure it.

Knowledge	Comprehension	Evaluation
Application	Product	Knowledge
Analysis	Application	Extension

Best practices (discussed in the article linked above):

1. Make the purpose clear.
2. Focus on the thinking required, rather than on the product.
3. There is no need to have nine choices.
4. Be sure to offer a rubric for each choice (if they're a product).
5. Remember that just offering menus is not enough alone.

WANT LOADS OF IDEAS? Laurie Westphal's written loads of books on differentiating with menus. She's a pal of mine, but even if she weren't I'd recommend her books.

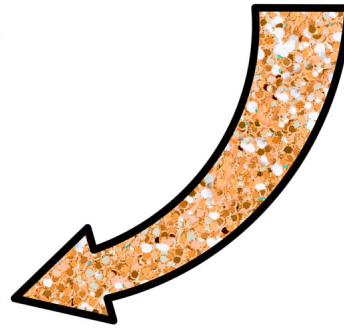


Differentiation: Process

SEO's: Read the article and find out all of the details at bit.ly/diff-seos.

Looking for a quick differentiation technique any teacher can use?

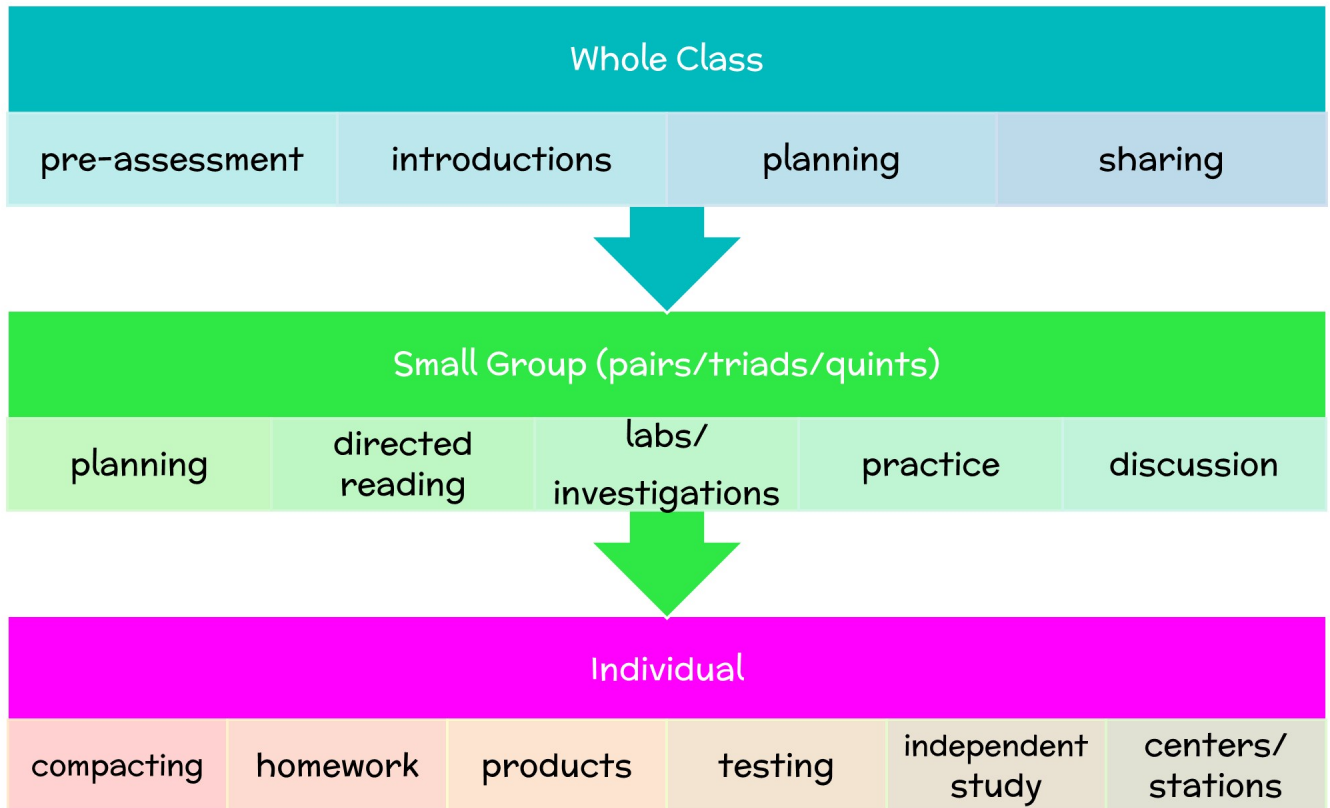
I made this one up, and it's worked really well for me for years. I call it "Scholar Extension Opportunity."



Grouping

I've got two must-read article for you about grouping:

- ✓ How to Get Gifted Kids to Work in Groups: giftedguru.com/gifted-groups
- ✓ Most Teachers Do Group Work All Wrong: giftedguru.com/group-work-all-wrong





Key: Keep it real.

Audience: More than just you!

Ideas for sharing student work:

Interwebs:

- Google Sites: sites.google.com
- YouTube: youtube.com
- Flipgrid: info.flipgrid.com

Blogs:

- Blogger: blogger.com
- Edublogs: edublogs.org
- SeeSaw: seesaw.me/blogs

Podcasts:

- Anchor (record, edit, publish): anchor.fm
- Podbean (record, publish): podbean.com
- Soundtrap (cool & good, but does cost \$): soundtrap.com

The Socials:

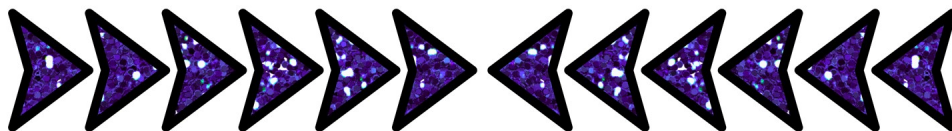
- Facebook: facebook.com
- Instagram: instagram.com
- Twitter: twitter.com
 - #comments4kids
 - Kidstweets
 - Use the subject/grade level chat hashtags (#mathchat, etc.)

Idea-o-Rama

- Share student work on Slideshare (PPTs or even PDFs) (It's switching to Scribd soon, but for now it's at [slideshare.net](https://www.slideshare.net))
- Make a movie. PowerPoint is all you need!
- Make online digital magazines out of PDFs at Issuu or Flipsnack. Issuu: [issuu.com](https://www.issuu.com) Flipsnack: [flipsnack.com](https://www.flipsnack.com)
- For research, I recommend the IIM method. You'll get everything you need in this book. I'd ask your principal to order it for the school: bit.ly/iim-research
- Library of Congress research projects: [loc.gov/preservation/scientists/projects](https://www.loc.gov/preservation/scientists/projects)
- Library of Congress using primary source documents: [loc.gov/teachers/tps](https://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps)
- Library of Congress general teacher site: [loc.gov/teachers](https://www.loc.gov/teachers)
- Envision (long-term projects): [mindvinepress.com](https://www.mindvinepress.com)
- Mensa for Kids Lesson Plans: [mensaforkids.org/teach/lesson-plans](https://www.mensaforkids.org/teach/lesson-plans)
- National Student Research Center - [nscresearchcenter.org](https://www.nscresearchcenter.org)
NSRC serves as an outlet for student investigations. This site is on-line to assist teachers and their students on how to conduct scientific research. Students can submit their research findings to this site for publication.
- The Exploratorium's website, in four languages, is as interactive and hands-on as the museum in San Francisco! Thus, it's not surprising that the website has earned a variety of awards. Monthly, the staff presents "10 Cool Science, Art, and Education Sites." [exploratorium.edu](https://www.exploratorium.edu)
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) maintains an award-winning website that houses a special link to Cool Web Sites for Kids. Students can access a variety of interactive, hands-on activities and resources about: airplanes, the Earth, planets, space travel, stars, and galaxies. All links are chock-full! Once into the planet site, for example, students have a wide variety of options such as, Make Your Own Scale Model of Galileo, Build Your Own Martian Spacecraft, and Gravity Box, in which students compare Earth's gravity to gravity on the Moon and Mars. [nasa.gov/kidsclub/index.html](https://www.nasa.gov/kidsclub/index.html)

Differentiation: Product

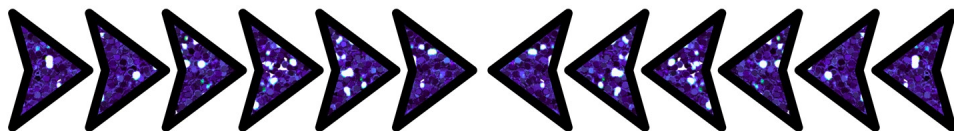
- The American Memory Historical Collection, a major component of the National Digital Library Program, is composed of multimedia collections of digitized documents, photographs, recorded sounds, moving pictures, and text. There are over 70 collections and some investigate themes such as elections, immigration, inaugurations, presidents, and women pioneers loc.gov/collections
- National History Day: nhd.org
- National Gallery of Art kids' section (super neat!)
nga.gov/education/kids.html
- Learn how everything works! howstuffworks.com and one of my fave podcasts stuffyoushouldknow.com/podcasts
- I've got loads of ideas on my site, but a great article to start with is this one: giftedguru.com/learning-at-home
- Problem-based Learning:
 - Major PBL resource pblworks.org/
 - Seven Essentials for PBL (from ASCD): bit.ly/ascd-pbl



Differentiation: Product

Product ideas:

ABC book	diary	mock Facebook page	puzzle
ad campaign	display	mock trial	sculpture
blog	graph	mural	storyboard
blueprint	graphic novel	newscast script	survey
board game	greeting card	newspaper	timeline
book cover	guidebook	obituary	Twitter post/profile
book review	interview	organize event	video
bumper sticker	journal	pamphlet/ brochure	virtual fieldtrip
cartoon	letter to the editor	philosophical chairs	walking tour
chart	logo design	photo essay	webquest
collage	magazine	plan for lottery winnings	website
dance	map	poem	will & testament
debate	mask	postcard	word collage
diagram	mobile	puppet show	write a song





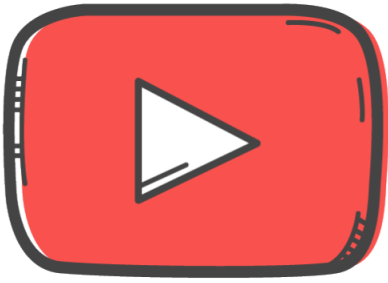
Extension #1: Starting with the most able learner in mind.
In this extension, you'll practice planning by starting with the most-able learners in mind. The extensions are designed to be two hours in total. This isn't evenly balanced. This one takes longer!

[Click here to view the instructions for Extension #1](#)

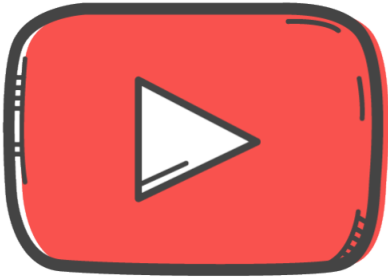
Extension #2
You'll get to explore products in this extension! Take some time to familiarize yourself with resources shared and brainstorm what you'

[Click here to view the instructions for Extension #2](#)

If you'd like to see me teach real kids, you can see it. They're all there on the YouTubes! If you teach ELA, the classes would be a great compacting option. (4th - 12th)



The Short Story Class



My Side of the Mountain



His Majesty's Dragon



In what ways is this lottery unfair, even though it seems fair because everyone has the same chance?



The Lottery by Shirley Jackson Short Story Class

896 views • Streamed live on Mar 25, 2020

48

1



SHARE



SAVE



Top chat replay ▾

- Soren Cowell-Shah It's not fair because none of those people deserve to be killed like that
- Tod Levi bigger families have a statistical advantage!!!!
- Eric Houghton They don't have the same chance. Better odds if you're in a large family
- Sophie Huang it is unfair because some people have no family
- Soniya W the whole concept is unfair
- J Sand @Plankster ok im good
- Nerdy Fangirl They don't do everyone draws, they do the head of the household draws.
- kheron1234 because the winner hasnt done anything wrong
- Honeydoy T It's fair in a lottery sense, but it is unfair that someone is dying over such a small thing
- Jane Packer ITS UNFAIR BECAUSE LITTLE DAVY CAN DIE

Thank you for signing up for this training! Your time is so valuable, and I very much appreciate your trusting me with it. Please allow me to introduce myself!

I'd love to connect on the socials!



I've got an email list to stay in the know!



I'm Lisa Van Gemert, and I love sharing ideas and strategies with fellow teachers.



Besides my own teaching, I'm best known for my work with teachers all over the world. Here, I'm facilitating training with graduate students at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia (my father-in-law's alma mater!). He came that day, and if you peer closely, you can see his sweet, bald head on the middle right.

I lead student workshops for kids from Kindergarten through 12th grade all over the country.



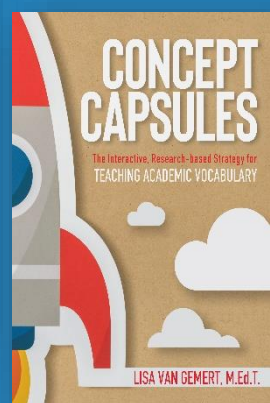
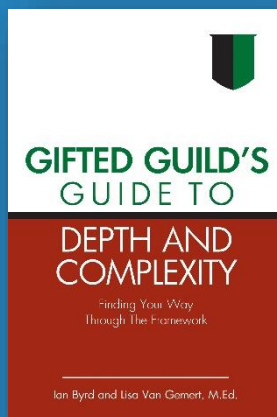
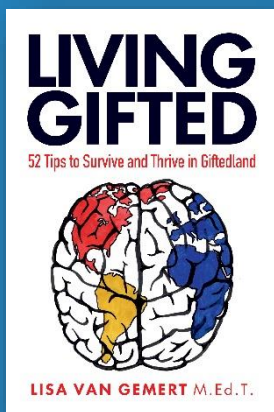
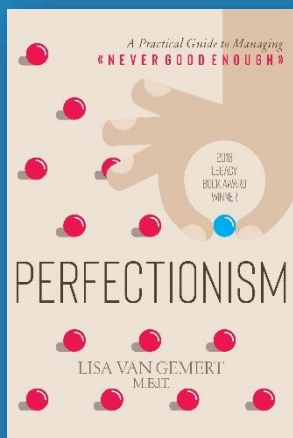
I also speak to parent groups, in person and virtually. You can probably guess they're not as fun as the kids!

Through the wonder of the internet, I also teach students from all over the world virtually from my home in Arlington, Texas.

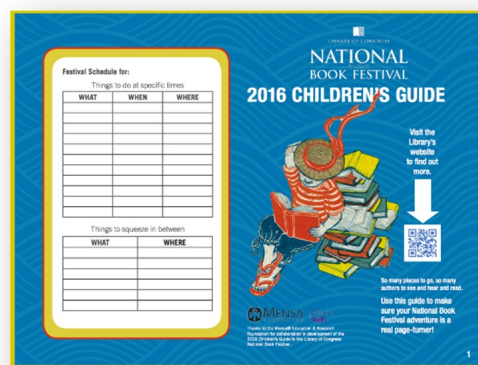
I've written four books, one with Ian Byrd. If you have ever considered writing a book, go for it!



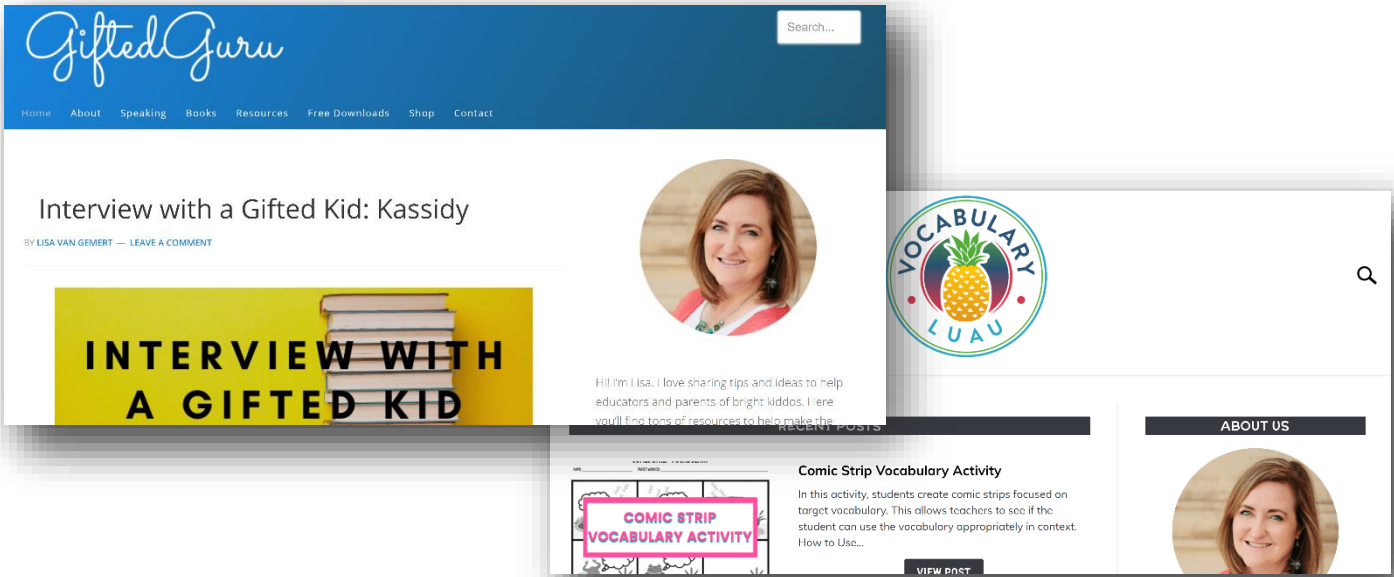
Image courtesy Dallas Morning News



I show up on TV and radio sometimes (that's my real, live son in the middle there), and I love the work I do for the Library of Congress, including these children's guides to the National Book Festival.



I write about Gifted Ed at my website GiftedGuru.com, and I share strategies and ideas for vocabulary instruction at [Vocabulary Luuu.com](http://VocabularyLuuu.com).



Because I love to share stuff I make, I also create resources for teachers that I share on [Teachers Pay Teachers](http://TeachersPayTeachers) (there's even some PD there!).



It's been so nice to meet you! I hope we can connect!

If you have any questions, feel free to email me at lisa@giftedguru.com.

