

## Differentiating the Common Core Standards: A Model

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The introduction and value attributed to standards have to some degree obliterated the perceived need to differentiate curriculum for gifted students. The emphasis provided to educators regarding the importance of the standards to academic success often relegates the need for differentiation to a secondary level thus resulting in the omission of a differentiated set of learning experiences. In reality, the standards have become a substitute for differentiated curriculum rather than a common feature of a differentiated curriculum.

The discussion that the Common Core standards are sufficiently sophisticated to qualify as differentiated for gifted students is noted among educators and community members. The Common Core standards do challenge gifted students, however, they do not, as a single stand-alone learning experience, constitute all the features that have been touted as fundamental to creating the challenge that recognizes and responds to giftedness. Each of the Common Core standards require an association with other recognized features of a differentiated curriculum to become the challenge that gifted student should and need to expect.

### *The Model to Differentiate Standards*

The model is comprised of a sequence of steps that define the learning process. The integration of the standards to the GATE Standards is facilitated by their connections to the elements outlined in each of the dimensions of the GATE Standards: Acceleration, Depth, Complexity, and Novelty. The following chart synthesizes the definitions of the constructs of the GATE Standards and highlights the non-negotiable elements that are to be embedded within a differentiated learning experience for gifted learners.

GATE Constructs	Non-Negotiable Elements
<i>Acceleration</i> — Acceleration of knowing, or how to accelerate the understanding of the content and/or skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Universal Concepts</li><li>• Big Ideas</li><li>• Thinking Like a Disciplinarian</li></ul>
<i>Depth</i> — Delineation of key words or prompts that stimulate inquiry or research into an area of study at deeper and more sophisticated levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Language of the Discipline</li><li>• Details</li><li>• Patterns</li><li>• Trends</li><li>• Rules</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unanswered Questions</li> <li>• Ethics</li> <li>• Big Ideas</li> <li>• Impact</li> <li>• Process</li> <li>• Motive</li> <li>• Proof</li> </ul>
<i>Complexity</i> — Delineation of key words as prompts that encourage awareness of the intricacies of an area of study.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over time</li> <li>• Multiple Perspectives</li> <li>• Interdisciplinary Connections</li> <li>• Context</li> <li>• Translate</li> <li>• Original</li> <li>• Judgment</li> </ul>
<i>Novelty</i> — Selection of skills and learning experiences that encourage individualized thinking, investigation, and expression.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical Thinking Skills</li> <li>• Creative Thinking Skills</li> <li>• Independent Study</li> <li>• Student interest, choice, and aptitude</li> </ul>

The elements within each of the four constructs of the GATE Standards function like individual spices on a spice rack. Each spice, as with each element of the GATE Standards has its own unique “flavor profile,” or set of characteristics, attributes, and features. Elements of the GATE Standards, like spices, can be used on their own or in thoughtful combinations to create beautifully seasoned “dishes” or learning experiences. The purpose of this model to differentiate standards is to have the teacher function like a master chef; strategically engaged in the decision making process regarding which elements of the GATE Standards could be selected to best “season” the learning experience for individual and small groups of learners in a classroom. It is important to note that there is not one right way to align the GATE Standards with the core content standards. Appropriate matches are made based on an analysis of the following questions:

- What are the needs, interests, and abilities of the individual or group of gifted students in relation to the content standards?
- What are the needs, interests, and abilities of the individual or group of gifted students in relation to the elements of the GATE Standards?
- How will the selected GATE element(s) positively impact the learning experience for the individual or small group of gifted students?

- In what ways will the selected GATE element(s) provide an appropriate challenge for the individual or small group of gifted students?
- What element(s) of the GATE Standards would the individual or small group of gifted students select for and by themselves?

The following chart provides a general example of how the elements from the constructs of the GATE Standards (Acceleration, Depth, Complexity, and Novelty) can be used as the means of differentiating within each syntactical layer of an instructional model. Under this paradigm, the core content standards (CCSS, NGSS, VAPA, etc.) and the GATE Standards work in tandem to create comprehensive and responsive learning experiences. One set of standards does not dominate the other. Both sets of standards are necessary and must work as complimentary sets to articulate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that students must grapple with at each grade and readiness level.

Sequence of the Model	Integration of GATE Standards
<p><i>Motivation /Introduction</i></p> <p>The selected standard needs to be introduced in relationship to a real world purpose for the understanding and use of the standard.</p>	<p><i>Acceleration</i></p> <p>Conduct a discussion regarding the standards relationship to big ideas: “Change can have negative and/or positive outcomes.” OR “Power can be seen or unseen.”</p>
<p><i>Application</i></p> <p>The selected standard needs to be demonstrated with respect to its relevant and purposeful relationship to the appropriate facet of a discipline or disciplines.</p>	<p><i>Acceleration</i></p> <p>Respond to the question: How does this standard relate to Thinking Like A Disciplinarian in the subject area?</p>

<p><i>Practice</i></p> <p>The selected standard needs to be demonstrated and practiced as it relates to other skills/knowledge that gifted students have learned previously.</p> <p>The selected standard needs to be practiced in context of the discipline in which it was introduced and practiced so it is understood as a fundamental feature of the discipline.</p>	<p><i>Depth and Complexity</i></p> <p>Instruct students to apply the standard to different <b>contexts</b> and <b>processes</b>.</p> <p>Facilitate students' abilities to discuss and exemplify the <b>rules</b> for the use of the standard.</p>
<p><i>Transfer</i></p> <p>The selected standard needs to be applied across various intra and interdisciplinary learning experiences.</p>	<p><i>Novelty</i></p> <p>Allow students to apply the standard for new academic purpose.</p>
<p><i>Individualization</i></p> <p>The selected standard needs to be integrated into the gifted student's repertoire so that the student can become self-directed in its application.</p>	<p><i>Complexity</i></p> <p>Provide students with the opportunities to <b>translate</b> the standard into their own words and for their own purposes.</p>
<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <p>The selected standard needs to have related criteria to be applied by educators and students to determine the appropriateness and sophistication of its utilization.</p>	<p><i>Novelty</i></p> <p>Apply critical thinking skills to determine the appropriateness and quality of the application of the standard.</p>

The lesson plan below provides a more specific example of how the elements from the GATE Standards can be embedded within each step of the model to differentiated learning experience for a CCSS Anchor Standard. Please note that this lesson example is not grade level specific and can be adapted to meet the age and developmental levels of any student.

Standard: [“CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.8](#)

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.”

Sequence of the Model	Integration of GATE Standards
Motivation	<p>Discuss with students how argumentation facilitates or inhibits the concept of <b>change</b>.</p> <p>As a class, generate a definition for the meaning of <b>change</b> and construct a set of variables that could <b>change</b> as a result of argumentation.</p> <p>GATE Element – Universal Concept GATE Construct – Acceleration</p>
Application	<p>Provide a set of examples of how argumentation facilitates understanding of scientific phenomena.</p> <p>Use current events such as global warming, the California drought, and deep space exploration as discussion points to examine the various sides of the argument that exist within these scientific phenomena.</p> <p>Provide an opportunity for students to <b>Think Like a Disciplinarian</b> and examine the same argument from different disciplinary perspectives. Discuss how the facts of the argument <b>change</b> or remain the same based on the <b>point of view</b>.</p> <p>GATE Elements – Thinking Like A Disciplinarian, Universal Concepts, and Complexity GATE Constructs – Acceleration, Complexity</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Practice</p>	<p>Provide students with an opportunity to prepare and defend an argument for two subjects (topics) within a discipline. For example, prepare and defend an argument for a treaty and political event in our country within the past ten years.</p> <p>Engage students in a discussion to analyze their argument in relation to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who does the argument <b>impact</b>?</li> <li>• What were the <b>motives</b> of the author of the argument and what are the <b>motives</b> of the recipients of the argument in either accepting or negating the argument?</li> <li>• How does the argument address the <b>ethical</b> issues inherent in the issue?</li> </ul> <p>GATE Elements – Depth prompts and Complexity prompts GATE Constructs – Depth and Complexity</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Transfer</p>	<p>Provide students with an opportunity to create and defend an argument concerning the efficacy of an answer or the solution to a math, literary, or social studies problem.</p> <p>Provide students with samples of previously constructed arguments. Students can work independently or in small groups to examine the constructed arguments using the skills of <b>critical</b> and <b>creative</b> thinking:</p>

	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Critical Thinking</th> <th>Creative Thinking</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Prove with evidence</td> <td>Substitute</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Determine the relevance</td> <td>Add-to</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Modify</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>GATE Elements – Critical and Creative Thinking GATE Constructs -- Novelty</p>	Critical Thinking	Creative Thinking	Prove with evidence	Substitute	Determine the relevance	Add-to		Modify
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Prove with evidence	Substitute								
Determine the relevance	Add-to								
	Modify								
<p>Individualization</p>	<p>Provide students with an opportunity to prepare and defend an argument for a situation or issue that is important to them.</p> <p>Provide an opportunity for students to reflect on the construction of their argument.</p> <p>GATE Element – Learning-to-learn GATE Constructs -- Novelty</p>								

NOTE: The content provided in this article is based from work currently being conducted under the U.S. Department of Education Grant, Project CHANGE.