



Nebraska Department of Education

300 Centennial Mall South ♦ Lincoln, Nebraska ♦ 68508

High Ability Learning

December 2020

A Year's End: Call for Celebration and New Beginnings



If one year ago you would have asked me what the world would look like right now, I definitely would not have said this! This has been one of the most challenging years for educators—both in and out of school. Distance-learning, staggered schedules, masks, and health concerns have been just a few of the challenges faced...not to mention elections, civil unrest, wildfires, and murder hornets!

I cannot adequately express how impressed I am with your tenacity and commitment, my gratitude for all that you do, and pride to be in such a wonderful state. Through being pulled to teach other classes, budget cuts, and hectic scheduling, you have continued to serve our High Ability Learners and for that I am grateful.

Fear of the unknown can be scary. While we may not know what 2021 holds, I am excited for all of the new possibilities and to hear all of the great things going on for HALs in Nebraska. I look forward to engaging with all of you and (hopefully) getting to meet in-person! I have high expectations and lofty goals for myself and the HAL program as a whole for the upcoming year. For example, Rule 3 is in the process of revision. This legislation surrounding HAL has not been updated since 1998, so I am looking forward to taking this on! I am also crafting a new mission and vision for HAL as a state-wide concept. Creating a concrete goal and touchstone for us to refer back to in order to center our work is important. I will be reaching out for feedback throughout both of these processes. I will continue to partner with NeMTSS, university systems, and other departments within NDE to provide the most services to the most students. I cannot wait to see all of the wonderful things you all will do for our students!



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The purpose of this newsletter is unlike the others—it is not full of research and information, but a chance to reflect upon your year, as well as some other fun things. I hope you have a wonderful break. Sleep in. Eat too many cookies. Read a book that is NOT for school. Spend time with your families. And, most importantly, do what make you HAPPY! I look forward to being fully recharged and ready to take on the New Year ☺

Happy Holidays!

Dear Curriculum Clause...: HAL-Related Books to For Your Favorite HAL Teachers (Or Yourself) for Christmas!

It's the magical time of year that good ol' Curriculum Clause uses his universal ID badge to come into your classrooms and leave gifts of best-practice and ready-to-go lessons! Make sure to leave cheesy bread sticks and a carton of chocolate milk on your desk. ☺

This is my list to Mr. Clause. If you are still looking for a gift for your teachers, staff, PLC, or yourself, look no further!



Unlocking Potential: Identifying and Serving Gifted Students from Low-Income Households – Stambaugh & Olszewski-Kubilius

Drs. Stambaugh and Olszewski-Kubilius recently published an edited book, with research from experts in the field, that presents the latest research on gifted student from low-income households and how to translate the research into practice. They discuss identification, curriculum resources and instructional strategies, consider perceptions and roles of race, family, school system, etc., and how to use experiences to enhance systems and services. *Unlocking Potential* is the go-to resource for an up-to-date overview of best practices in identification, curriculum, instruction, community support, and program design for gifted learners from low-income households.

[Available on Amazon](#)

Advanced Curriculum from Vanderbilt University's Programs for Talented Youth

Vanderbilt PTY has published evidence-based units that are engaging, center around advanced content and thinking like an expert, and are written with research based in gifted pedagogy AND an expert in the subject area. These units are completely ready-to-use, including pre-and post-assessments, differentiated activities, and all required texts and worksheets. Each unit has a theme or over-arching concept that connects all lessons to a central set of ideas. Units are available from



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elementary to middle school levels, and span subject areas and support cross-subject connections. Some examples include *Space, Structure, and Story: Integrated Science and ELA Lessons in Grades 4-6*, *Finding Freedom: ELA Lessons for Gifted and Advanced Learners Grades 6-8*, and *Interactions in Ecology and Literature: Integrated Science and ELA Lessons for Gifted and Advanced Learners Grades 2-3*. Other options are listed on the website linked below. I highly recommend these curriculae.

[Found here.](#)



When Gifted Kids Don't Have All the Answers: How to Meet Their Social and Emotional Needs – Galbraith & Delisle

In this engaging book about how to best understand and support the social and emotional needs of gifted students, the author's mix in worksheets, strategies, and activities linked to the research they are presenting. The authors present ways to advocate for gifted education; help gifted underachievers, perfectionists, and twice-exceptional students; and provide all gifted kids with a safe, supportive learning environment. Complete with engaging stories, strategies, activities, and

resources, this book is for anyone committed to helping gifted students thrive. Includes online digital content.

[Available on Amazon](#)

Teaching Gifted Students in Today's Classroom: Strategies and Techniques Every Teacher Can Use – Winebrenner

This book, sometimes referred to the "orange bible", is on its 4th edition as it adapts with the changing times of the classroom. This book is not only geared toward HAL teachers, it is a great tool for general classroom teachers as well. It covers compacting and differentiating skill work and new content, extending reading and writing instruction, planning curriculum for all students at the same time, supporting self-directed independent study, using assessments to help students demonstrate what they already know, using technology for accelerated learning and to benefit twice-exceptional (2e) students, and managing cluster grouping. This book does it all!

[Available on Amazon](#)

Jacob's Ladder: Reading Comprehension Program – VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh

The Jacob's Ladder Reading Comprehension Program targets reading comprehension skills in high ability learners by moving students through an inquiry process from basic understanding to critical analyses of texts, using a field-tested method developed by the Center for Gifted Education at William & Mary. Jacob's Ladder creates scaffolds to help teachers move students up the "ladder"



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of thinking. Every unit has lessons, complete with texts and questions, ready for the teacher to use. Another benefit to Jacob's Ladder is that it gives educators the framework to use their own texts and develop their own scaffolded questions. They are labeled by grade level and range from Kindergarten to 8th grade.

Jacob's Ladder Affective is a similar concept, but with social and emotional competencies on the ladders instead of critical-thinking skills. They use texts to lead the students through analyzing things such as risk-taking, talent development, and recognizing emotions, to name a few.

Jacob's Ladders are available [here](#).

Affective Ladders available on [Amazon](#).

Advancing Differentiation: Thinking and Learning for the 21st Century – Richard Cash

Advancing Differentiation will lead you through the process of creating a thriving, student-centered, 21st-century classroom. Since its initial publication, the book's materials have undergone rigorous testing and refinement in classrooms all over the world to deliver the best and most effective differentiation strategies. The strategies in this book will help you deeply engage every learner while challenging students to think critically, self-regulate, and direct their own learning, encourage learner autonomy, and employ cutting-edge techniques for designing rigorous E4 curriculum (effective, engaging, enriching, and exciting), designed by Cash.

[Available on Amazon](#)

HAL Highlight: *The HAL and SEL Webinar Series*



On behalf of myself and my colleagues, Jude Matyo-Cepero and Emma Sinnett, we extend our greatest thanks for making the HAL and SEL Webinar Series a success! We were blown away by all of the support and kind words we received from you. Not only did we have excellent participation in the live sessions, but the recordings have reached more people than we could have imagined.

Our priority was deliver high-quality professional development opportunities on the social and emotional needs and strategies for high ability learners. We could not have done this without all of you! The recordings of all of the sessions are on the High Ability Learning website, so please continue to share. We had sessions regarding how to use MTSS to support the SEBL needs of HALs, research-based conclusions from Dr. Susannah Wood, data on the impact of school-based interventions and the mental health of HAL students, practical strategie sessions, and a powerful



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student panel of HAL students ranging from 5th to 12th grade. To see session descriptions and recordings, visit <https://www.education.ne.gov/hal/hal-sel-webinar-series/>

I would like to extend a special thank you to Jude Matyo-Cepero and the University of Nebraska Kearney Gifted Education Program for helping make this series possible, as well as the continuing support of the Nebraska Department of Education in all professional development endeavors. Again, thank you for your support and continue to spread the word!



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