



Chapter 12

Constructing Culturally– Authentic Differentiated Access Points Using the Content Imperatives

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ABSTRACT

The need to create culturally authentic and specific learning experiences is a call to action that all teachers must answer. Current definitions of differentiation either avoid or exclude topics of culture and race. These definitions are incomplete and must be expanded if the needs, interests, abilities, and cultural assets of gifted learners are to be addressed in a classroom. Under this expanded definition, differentiation strategies must be culturally authentic and purposefully integrated into the opportunities provided to gifted learners. It is incumbent upon teachers to reorient differentiation strategies they employ with gifted and advanced learners, so they become culturally authentic and contextually relevant. This chapter provides the reorientation of one differentiation strategy: the content imperatives. This chapter (1) defines the content imperatives, (2) demonstrates how they can be used as the catalyst for honoring the funds of knowledge that students bring into any learning experience, and (3) creates culturally-authentic access points into content for all learners.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-8153-7.ch012

THE NEED FOR AUTHENTICITY

“There is no such thing as a neutral education. Education either functions as an instrument to bring about conformity or freedom” (Freire, 1970).

The words spoken by Freire (1970) feel especially poignant and timely in today’s educational context. In his thesis, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire articulates that curriculum must focus on student experience, promote social action, and solve real-world problems. A curriculum that is disconnected from the learner quickly becomes ineffective, and is therefore unable to provide students with the opportunities necessary to invent and reinvent their world (Freire, 1970). The “distance” between the curriculum, both in relevancy and proximity, to the lives of the learners is not a new problem. Greene (1986) spoke about how teachers, classrooms, and students were moving farther away from participating in meaningful learning and towards “information machines” (p. 70). The shift from an assembly line curriculum designed to provide gifted and advanced learners with a static set of facts and skills, to a dynamic and culturally relevant curriculum is critical.

Curriculum for gifted and advanced learners must generate meaningful connections to the context and communities of the students who experience it. This context must include the recognition of the linguistic and cultural plurality that exists in our classrooms (Yosso, 2005). According to Yoon (2020), an authentic and meaningful curriculum must integrate students’ home pedagogies and life experiences into organizational structures that “affirm the personhood” of children of color (p. 3). Culturally relevant and authentic curriculum for the gifted should provide students with opportunities to (a) increase academic success and motivation through content that is authentic and makes personalized connections to their own lives, (b) the space for students to analyze, critique, and debate social, political, and economic constructs that produce and maintain inequities, and (c) apply what they have learned to promote social justice and action in the communities in which they live (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Furthermore, the curriculum must be culturally sustainable by valuing, maintaining, and sustaining the linguistic and cultural aspects of a community (Paris, 2012). Culturally authentic curriculum for diverse gifted learners must:

- Recognize, value, and honor the lives and lived experiences of students and their families
- Focus on preparing students for participation in a just, humane, and democratic society
- Provide students with opportunities for analysis, critique, and debate on topics that maintain inequities
- Engage students in the study of perspectives that are inherent in a topic of study, focusing specifically on those that are underrepresented
- Examine issues and topics that encourage students to be agents of social change in their communities
- Utilize practices that sustain students’ cultural wealth and promote anti-bias thinking (Yosso, 2005)
- Incorporate pedagogical practices that spill over and are inclusive to all learners in the classroom, not just those who are formally identified as gifted and talented

Culturally authentic curriculum for gifted and advanced learners must shift the balance of power from the teacher to the student (Daniel & Zybina, 2019). As learners co-construct their own experiences, they recognize that their lived experiences matter and develop the agency necessary to solve problems on their own. When modifications to curriculum are made that ignore and fail to recognize the cultural backgrounds of students, it has demoralizing effects on students’ self-efficacy and their ability to engage

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in meaningful learning (King et al., 2017). The remainder of this chapter describes how a seminal practice used to modify curriculum for gifted and advanced learners can be reorganized to better honor students' funds of knowledge and provide them with culturally authentic and specific learning experiences. The authors will demonstrate how the *Content Imperatives* (Kaplan, 2018) can be filtered through a culturally authentic lens to (a) access content through students' funds of knowledge, (b) reorient content to examine inequities and promote social justice and action, and (c) shifts the focus from the teacher as the disseminator of knowledge to the student as a creator of their own intellectual destiny (Moll et al., 1992; González et al., 2005). This chapter addresses the following driving questions regarding the creation of culturally authentic and specific curriculum experiences for gifted and advanced learners.

- How can curriculum modifications for gifted learners reorient seminal practices so that they value and honor the funds of knowledge gifted and advanced learners bring to the classroom?
- How can curriculum modifications for gifted and advanced learners specifically promote analysis and critique of inequity to prompt action-oriented problem-solving that results in social justice?

CULTURALLY AUTHENTIC AND SPECIFIC PEDAGOGY

The construction of a culturally authentic curricular experience is not a packaged program or structured series of steps. It is a philosophical belief that can be exemplified in the classroom through a myriad of activities and learning experiences. When intentional focus within a learning experience is placed on a student's culture, community, and interests, it increases the equity and access for historically underserved and marginalized populations in classroom settings (Paris, 2012). Culturally authentic experiences are anchored by three goals and learning objectives: developing students' positive racial identity, increasing students' comfort and knowledge about racial diversity, and encouraging students' to recognize and take action against racial unfairness in the world (Beneke et al., 2019). The development of culturally authentic curricular experiences does not happen overnight or in one lesson. It is an iterative process that requires teacher observation, critical reflection of practice, the intentional integration of students and their families, and the promotion of social action in the community (Spitzman & Balconi, 2019).

Muhammad and Hollie (2012) suggested that education must transition from tokenized representations of diverse individuals, groups, and communities to representations that place value on culture to foster cultural sustainability through instructional practice. Muhammad and Hollie (2012) described three levels of curriculum development that occur:

- *Culturally Neutral*: Curriculum features individuals who are from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, but has nothing to do with the culture or identity they represent.
- *Culturally Generic*: Curriculum features individuals who are from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, but contains few specific details to define them as individuals or aspects that describe their culture authentically.
- *Culturally Authentic or Specific*: Curriculum that illuminates and values authentic cultural experiences of an underrepresented racial or ethnic group and includes various multi-faceted aspects that describe identity, including socioeconomic status, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or immigration.

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Table 1. Culturally Authentic and Anti-bias Domains and Teacher Reflective Questions

Anti-Bias Domains	Description	Questions
Identity	Identity is related to who someone is and the qualities that define them. Integrating identity into differentiation for gifted and advanced learners could include recognizing students' multiple identities and how they work together to create unique individuals.	How can teachers use differentiated instruction to guide students in examining the contributing factors that have impacted of their personal identity? How can differentiated instruction create opportunities for learners to learn about the life experiences of others?
Diversity	Diversity is the practice of valuing and including people from a range of backgrounds and groups. Integrating diversity into differentiated learning experiences could include learning about the experiences of others and how they are similar and different.	How can differentiation strategies help gifted and advanced learners develop empathy and respect for each other? How can educators of gifted learners reinforce open-mindedness in formal and informal ways?
Justice	Justice is a recognition that power and privilege influence how people are treated and what they have access to. Incorporating justice into differentiated patterns of instruction could include topics such as: stereotypes, individual injustices (bullying), and the harmful impact of injustice on groups of people.	How can educators of the gifted guide learners in making connections between the content and patterns of stereotypes, prejudice, and bias over time? How can teachers use differentiated patterns of instruction to help students analyze and critique the impact of cultural stereotypes and implicit bias?
Action	Action involves planning and carrying out initiatives that combat bias and injustices at any level: local, state, national, and global. Integrating action into differentiated learning experiences could include examining the many and varied ways that students can speak out when someone is being treated unfairly.	How can differentiation strategies address the emotional trauma of racism in gifted and advanced learners? How can differentiated instruction be used to create social action with gifted students in situations where racism is overt or covert with individuals, groups, or institutions?

Intentional focus on the part of the teacher is needed in order to create access points within the learning experiences that are culturally authentic and sustaining. Teachers can begin this process by orienting access points in their curriculum around the themes of identity, diversity, justice, and action (Learning for Social Justice, 2016). Each of these levels or access points provides students with a nuanced orientation to the relationship that exists between their lives, and the larger factors that influence their communities (Schrank, 2020). Teachers must conduct an analysis of who their learners are in relation to their funds of knowledge; their linguistic contributions, their cultural identities, their talent areas, and the value their home and community bring to the development and advancement of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Delgado Bernal, 2001; 2002). This knowledge is used to construct differentiated learning experiences that both reinforce the standards through an asset lens, and extend the standards via community-based interests and cultural connections. Understanding who students are as people, helps teachers begin to craft inclusive experiences that directly target their academic strengths and cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). Table 1 defines the domains, and provides a series of reflective questions for teachers to begin to examine their differentiation practices for gifted and advanced learners through a culturally authentic lens.

Paris and Alim (2014) contend that reorienting teacher pedagogies to value the home knowledge and language of communities of color is an “educational imperative” (p. 95). The first step in creating a culturally authentic, differentiated curriculum for gifted learners requires that teachers philosophically believe that context and community are important. They must get to know the community, the people, the beliefs, and the culture of the learners in their classroom. Knowledge of who students are,

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as learners and as people, can then be purposefully used to differentiate access content in varied ways. Culturally authentic differentiation directly challenges deficit thinking and access for gifted learners by starting the construction of any learning experience with the home and community rather than a curriculum that pre-determines what knowledge should be valued and how knowledge should be constructed (Freire, 1972; Giroux, 1983; Delgado Bernal, 2001; 2002). This moves the concept of differentiation from a content-focused, teacher-created approach, to something that is much individualized. Culturally authentic differentiation demands personalization. It requires that students are provided with many and varied opportunities to show what they know and can do in ways that reflect their culture and family dynamics (Blumen, 2021).

Culturally authentic curriculum advances equity, however, it does not address racism. Ladson-Billings (2006; 2017) and Gorski (2019) address the problematic practice of increasing cultural content in instruction but still maintaining a “poverty of culture” mindset. Maintaining a deficit ideology associated with student’s cultures or making racially infused misinterpretations reinforce the systemic and structural racism that has occurred in the school setting. Educators need to directly address their implicit and explicit biases, racial presumptions, and the school system’s inequitable practices to develop a culturally authentic and specific pedagogy that addresses racial inequity (Gorski, 2019). The remainder of this chapter provides a framework for reorienting a general differentiation strategy for gifted and advanced learners to directly address racism and social justice through the construction of culturally authentic experiences.

FROM GENERAL DIFFERENTIATION TO CULTURALLY AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

Differentiated curriculum is a general term used by educators across the spectrum to address the varying needs of learners in a classroom and promote equity and access to content. Philosophically, a differentiated curriculum is based on the recognition and response to learners’ needs, interests, and readiness levels. Tomlinson and Jarvis (2009), argue that there are a myriad of practices that can be used to modify curriculum or adapt a learning experience. Differentiated curriculum, therefore refers to a “framework of key principles” rather than a static set of activities, procedures, or steps (Tomlinson and Jarvis, 2009, p. 600). Kaplan (2009) reiterates the assertion that there is not one single or specific method to differentiate for gifted and advanced learners. Passow (1982), articulates a set of nonnegotiable tenets of a differentiated curriculum that serve as guiding principles for modification. A differentiated experience for gifted and advanced learners should: (a) organize content around the in-depth study of major areas (b) promote the development and application of higher order thinking skills that help students utilize existing knowledge in new situations, (c) utilize inquiry-based, real-world approaches to knowledge acquisition, (d) integrate many and varied resources, and (e) provide opportunities for self-directed learning.

Differentiating curriculum for the gifted should be accomplished using practices that provide the “optimal match” between students’ interests and aptitudes (VanTassel-Baska, 2017, p. 63). The instructional pedagogies used to enact a differentiated curriculum are referred to as a spill over practice (Kaplan, 1985; 2004). Spill over practices are targeted means of differentiating instruction based on how students learn, and how they transfer information between and across contexts. Spill over practices focus on the internalization and transfer of knowledge rather than on the replication of processes (McLeskey et al., 2018). Spill over practices help teachers construct the instructional conditions that promote more personalized student outcomes, and therefore, generate transfer from student to student. Spill over prac-

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Table 2. Spill Over Practices for Differentiating Curriculum for Gifted and Advanced Learners

Practices for Differentiating Curriculum			
Acceleration	Depth	Complexity	Novelty
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Concept Building and Bridging ● Universal Concepts ● Introduction to the Disciplines ● Thinking Like a Disciplinarian ● Art of Appreciation ● Art of Argumentation ● Questioning ● The Content Imperatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Language of the Discipline ● Details ● Patterns ● Trends ● Unanswered Questions ● Rules ● Ethics ● Big Ideas ● Impact ● Process ● Motive ● Proof 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Over time ● Points of View ● Interdisciplinary Connections ● Context ● Translate ● Original ● Judgement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creative thinking ● Critical thinking ● Problem Solving ● Logic ● Development of self-Accountability ● Task Commitment ● Task Development

tices form a bridge between what is taught, how it is taught, and respond to the needs of the learner in a genuine way that promotes transfer from individuals to the larger group (Billingsley, et al., 2019). They provide both teachers and students with the license to become flexible thinkers and decision-makers in the classroom. Spill over practices can become the vehicle for recognizing all learners in ways that sustain their cultural wealth, honor their funds of knowledge, expand their abilities to problem-solve in different contexts, reflect on various perspectives, and directly address racism in the classroom (Moll et al., 1992; González et al., 2005; Yosso, 2005). Table 2 outlines a series of spill over practices that form the foundation for differentiating curriculum and instruction for gifted and advanced learners.

Effective differentiation should be done using strategies that capitalize on the needs, interests, readiness levels, *and* cultural context of the learners (Ladson-Billings, 2016).

Most differentiation for gifted learners emphasizes a modification to either the lessons’ content, process, or product. It fails to extend the use of that strategy to the creation of culturally authentic learning experiences that directly address issues of racism and inequity. In order for differentiation to be truly tailored and authentic, it must address the cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity that exists among gifted students (Ford, et al., 2021). Educators of the gifted cannot be silent in employing differentiation practices that value students’ funds of knowledge, or neutral in the creation of learning experiences that promote fairness, equity, and action. How educators of the gifted engage learners by differentiating experiences through a culturally authentic lens of social justice and action *matters*. According to Beneke et. al., (2019), students will not develop or sustain “practices for interpreting racism if we do not teach them how to recognize it” (p. 75). Teachers must reorient general differentiation practices (see Figure 1) so that they provide gifted and advanced learners with many and varied opportunities to integrate their funds of knowledge to respond to social justice issues, with any content or subject matter.

Creating culturally authentic differentiated learning experiences that address issues of racism for gifted learners requires socially conscious teaching. Social conscious teaching is a philosophical orientation to instruction that “redistributes the pedagogy” from the teacher to the student (Daniel, 2018, p. 363). A socially conscious teacher employs differentiation practices that are culturally authentic and promote social justice and action. *Social justice* is defined as the actions taken to treat all people with respect and dignity while affirming and honoring the culture and groups with which people identify (Nieto & Bode, 2018). Under this definition, culturally authentic differentiation practices serve as a

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catalyst to critically examine issues of identity, diversity, inequity, and power inherent in any content or context. *Social action* in the classroom examines how the curriculum promotes cultural competence and “sociopolitical consciousness” in all learners (Howell et al., 2019, p. 186). Learning experiences that are social action-oriented raise awareness about local, national, and global issues, and encourage students to take action to address and solve them. In order for differentiation to truly meet the needs of diverse gifted and advanced learners, it must actively promote social action and cultural authenticity.

This chapter attempts to answer the call to action in creating culturally authentic differentiation for gifted and advanced learners by reorienting a seminal differentiation practice. The remainder of this chapter defines the *Content Imperatives* and reorients them so that they align with the domains of identity, diversity, justice, and action (Learning for Social Justice, 2016). The authors contend this intersection creates a culturally authentic approach to differentiation that honors the funds of knowledge and cultural wealth of gifted and advanced learners (Moll et al., 1992; González et al., 2005; Yosso, 2005).

THE CONTENT IMPERATIVES

The *Content Imperatives* are a differentiation practice created by the California Department of Education with funding provided by the U.S. Department of Education (Kaplan, 2018). The *Content Imperatives* align the aptitudes and talents of gifted and advanced learners with sophisticated analysis of content. The *Content Imperatives* consist of a set of keywords that provide gifted and advanced learners with prompts to access content, organize information, and formulate conclusions in sophisticated ways. These keywords unlock the many and varied nuances inherent within a discipline, and serve as the basis for making connections between and across topics and themes. The *Content Imperatives* provide teachers with an equitable way to make the content accessible to all learners, and students with opportunities to connect their interests and talents to the core content. The seminal set of *Content Imperatives* are defined below:

- **Origin:** *Origin* defines the beginning, root, or source of an idea or event. The major focus of this prompt is to examine how something got started. For example, psychologists examine the *origin* of dreams and virologists study the starting point for a plague or an infectious disease. Points of analysis for the keyword *origin* can include (a) the details that describe the beginning of an event or idea, (b) the motives, rationale, or reason why the event or idea *originated*, (c) the impact of the original event or idea of other things, and (d) the relationship of the *origin* of this event or idea on other variables such as people, places, beliefs, or environment.
- **Contribution:** *Contribution* represents the significance of an idea or event. This prompt focuses on the impacts, ramifications, consequences, and results of an event or idea. A major focus of this keyword is perspective. Groups of people can view the *contributions* of the same event or idea through very different lenses. For example, some might see the *contribution* of the smart phone as a piece of technology that has positively revolutionized the world, while others view it as the demise of human communication. Applications for this *Content Imperative* could consist of an analysis of (a) the impacts of a *contribution* from various perspectives, (b) the relevance of a *contribution* over time, (c) the ethical issues that arise from the *contribution* of an event or idea, and (d) the potential future events or ideas that might result from a *contribution*.
- **Parallel:** *Parallels* represent the comparaisons that exist between ideas or events. Variables such as location, purpose, function, time, mores, beliefs, or context can be used to highlight the simi-

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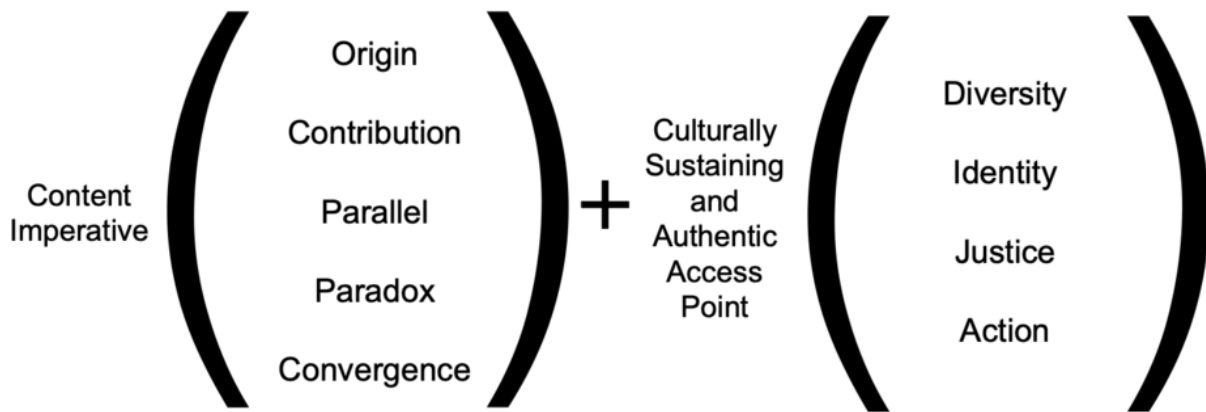
larities or differences that exist between one or more events and ideas. This prompt requires the examination of details that describe events or ideas, and the juxtaposition of those details to uncover larger patterns. For example, an examination of the invention of the printing press and current social media outlets would highlight *parallels* in communication over time. Applications of *parallels* can include an analysis of (a) the relationship between various events and ideas, and (b) the recognition of the predictive quality of *parallels* in hypothesising the results of future events or ideas.

- **Paradox:** A *paradox* defines the contradictory elements that are inherent in any event or idea. A *paradox* examines events or ideas that appear self-contradictory and require further investigation. The major purpose of this *Content Imperative* is the exploration into logical thinking. *Paradoxes* exist in all things; from stories, to character traits, to historical events. When a topic or event is examined through the lens of a *paradox*, the inconsistencies inherent in that topic or event become clear. The analysis of these dilemmas provide the fodder for critical thinking and debate. For example, superheroes have both extraordinary traits as well as the same facilities inherent in all people. Applications for the keyword *paradox* can induce (a) how perspective influences the interpretation of an event or topic, and (b) the intersecting variables that help individuals and/or groups form judgments and conclusions.
- **Convergence:** A *convergence* represents where elements that describe an event or idea come together. The examination of *convergence* focuses on both the how and the why things intersect. When separate facts, thoughts, or ideas converge, they take on a new identity and adopt a singular focus or pathway. For example, when three rivers *converge*, they abandon their own course and work together to move water and debris towards the ocean. Applications for *convergence* can include (a) the reasons disparate items, facts, or ideas merge, (b) the results or consequences of that intersection, and (c) the details that describe the newly formed idea or object.

The use of the *Content Imperatives* as a spill over practice cannot be implemented sporadically (Kaplan, 2018). They must be purposefully integrated into learning experiences on a regular basis to achieve their self-regulated use by students. Therefore, application of the *Content Imperative* prompts must be driven by the teacher and student. A teacher may apply the *Content Imperatives* to content or ask students to select a *Content Imperative* they feel best fits with the content based on their interest or readiness level. The development of self and self-efficacy as a scholar is a major objective of the integration of the *Content Imperatives*. The degree to which a learner has knowledge of self and is able to communicate their self-awareness significantly influences their course of learning (Flavell, 1979; Pintrich, 2010). Nogara (2008) contends that students' perceptions of self as a learner are critical in creating culturally sustaining classrooms. The "centrality of student voice" and culture in a learning experience helps illuminate their funds of knowledge and future applications (Liou & Rotheran-Fuller, 2019, p. 401). The *Content Imperatives* provide learners with many and varied opportunities to tailor the nature of the task to their own learning styles, talents, and strengths. Students must be provided with the agency and opportunity to apply their home pedagogies and life experiences in ways that are meaningful, authentic, and connected to their cultures and backgrounds. This is why the creation of culturally authentic, differentiated learning environments is critical. Cultural authenticity provides gifted learners with a change to be "seen" within the curriculum.

The remainder of this chapter provides a framework for reorienting the original *Content Imperatives* through the culturally authentic lenses of identity, diversity, justice, and action.

Figure 1. Content Imperatives and Culturally Sustaining and Authentic Access Points



REORGANIZING THE CONTENT IMPERATIVES TO PROMOTE CULTURALLY AUTHENTIC AND SPECIFIC PEDAGOGY

In order to be truly culturally sustaining, a differentiation practice for modifying curriculum for the gifted must honor the funds of knowledge and the cultural wealth that learners bring to the classroom (Moll et al., 1992; González et al., 2005; Novak et al., 2020). It is incumbent upon teachers to recognize the relevancy, or lack thereof, between the curriculum and the gifted and advanced learners that they teach. A disconnect between the culture of the students and the differentiation practice used creates a relevancy gap; a split between what the curriculum provides and what the learners actually need in connection to the community that surrounds them. Decisions regarding curriculum modification must juxtapose the needs of gifted and advanced learners with research-based indicators of effective curriculum (Purcell, et al., 2002). Gaps in one or more of these areas provide educators with specific and targeted areas to embed the *Content Imperatives* to promote the examination of the intersection between the content in relation to identity, diversity, justice, and action.

The *Content Imperatives* can be intersected with the access points of identity, diversity, justice, and action to move from general differentiation to culturally authentic curricular experiences. This combination enables the teacher and learner to overlap the advanced nuances inherent within a discipline through the *Content Imperatives* with the integration of cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity in the student population. This intersection creates a personalized and culturally authentic access point for each student in the learning experience. Figure 1 illustrates this integration.

The spill over elements of this intersection are twofold; it has the potential to spill over to other learners in terms of content acquisition and synthesis, and it has the potential to spill over to impact cultural sustainability through instruction. Table 3 demonstrates how prompts from the *Content Imperatives* have been combined with identity, diversity, justice, and action to develop culturally authentic access points into a learning experience that promote analysis and critique of inequities, and encourage social action in any discipline.

How the *Content Imperatives* are applied is personal and dependent on prior knowledge, philosophical beliefs, and individual interests. Therefore, the *Content Imperatives* can be applied to subject matter by the teacher, student, or a combination of both. Figure 2 visually represents how the *Content Imperatives*

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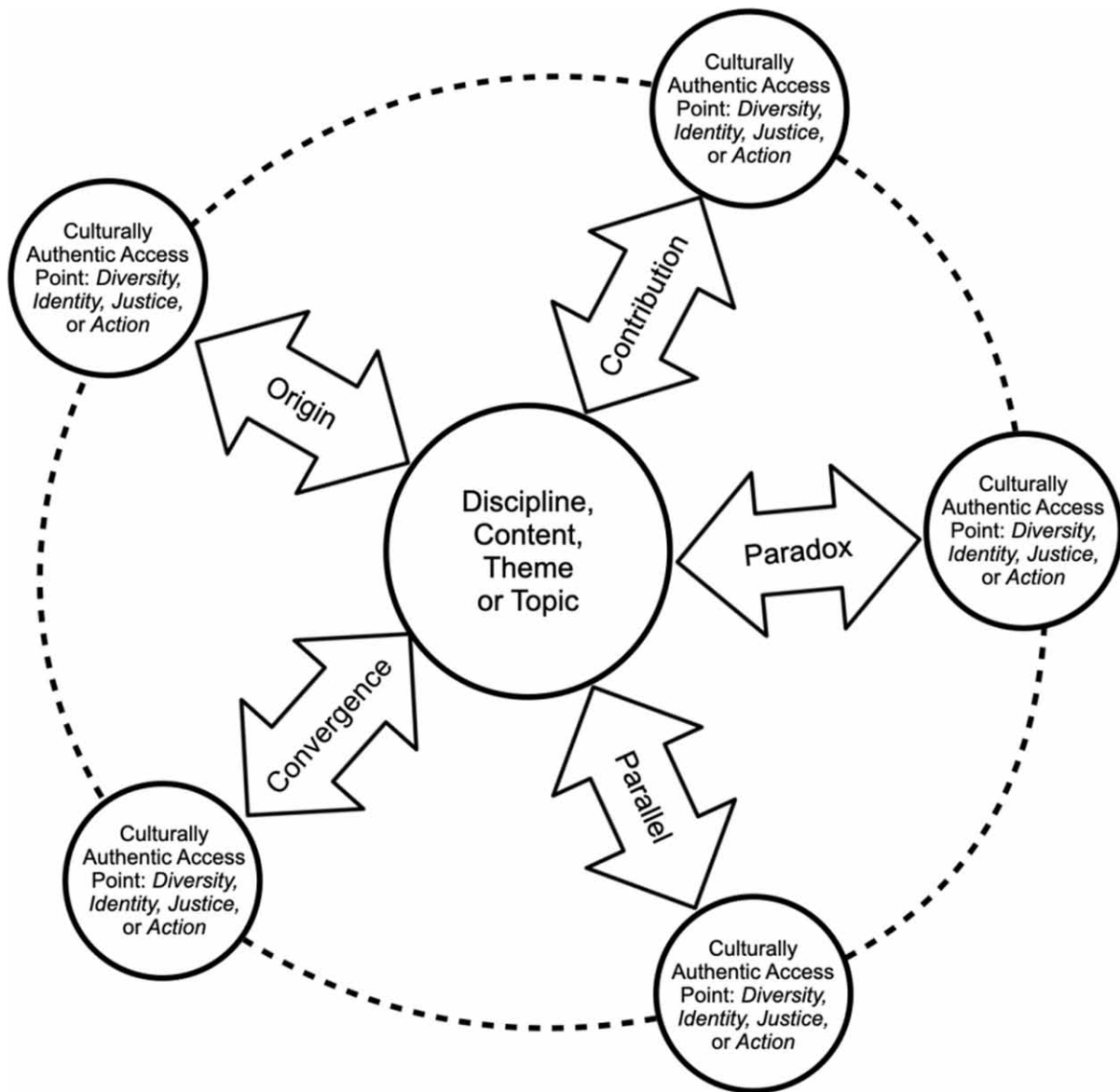
Table 3. The Intersection of the Content Imperatives and the Anti-Bias Framework

	Identity	Diversity	Justice	Action
Origin	The <i>origin</i> of one's identity and the impact of one's identity in multiple contexts. The <i>origin</i> of culture and the development of cultural traits over time. The <i>origin</i> of group membership and the many and varied factors that influence how people navigate different groups.	The <i>origin</i> of beliefs and the examination of one's personal and philosophical motives. The <i>origin</i> of compassion and the development of empathy and respect for others. The <i>origin</i> of ethical issues and how they impact diversity in various contexts.	The <i>origin</i> of bias and stereotypes and their impact on self and others. The <i>origin</i> of privilege and patterns of systemic privilege and oppression over time. The <i>origin</i> of institutionalized racism historically and contemporary trends and solutions.	The <i>origin</i> of psychological trauma stemming from long-term prejudice and racism. The <i>origin</i> of personal judgment and accountability to stand up to injustices in the world. The <i>origin</i> of action research questions that promote local change.
Contribution	The <i>contribution</i> of culture and family on the development of personal identity. The <i>contribution</i> of self-esteem on the ability to empathize with others. The <i>contribution</i> of personal identity on the interactions we have with others in different contexts.	The <i>contribution</i> of lived experiences on personal beliefs and ideas. The <i>contribution</i> of context (time, place, environment) on social injustice and racism. The <i>contribution</i> of language on the promotion of empathy and respect between groups of people.	The <i>contributions</i> (consequences) of stereotypes on people and groups over time. The <i>contributions</i> of individuals and groups working towards social justice around the world. The <i>contributions</i> (value) of fighting injustice at the systemic and individual level.	The <i>contributions</i> of individual and group community action. The <i>contributions</i> (value) of speaking out against systemic racism and oppression. The <i>contribution</i> (consequences) of the continued mistreatment of individuals and groups over time.
Parallel	The <i>parallel</i> life experiences of historically marginalized groups. The <i>parallel</i> identities that exist in each person. The <i>parallel</i> characteristics that define all cultures.	The <i>parallel</i> languages used to stereotype groups of people. The <i>parallels</i> throughout history in how various groups are treated. The <i>parallels</i> between the lived experiences of others and oneself.	The <i>parallel</i> between racism and systems of power. The <i>parallels</i> between advocates for social justice across cultural groups. The <i>parallels</i> between White privilege and racism over time.	The <i>parallels</i> between bias and hate crimes for marginalized groups over time. The <i>parallels</i> between social action and trends in social change. The <i>parallels</i> between personal and social accountability to stand up to injustice.
Paradox	A <i>paradox</i> between multiple group memberships with conflicting ideologies (religious and social). A <i>paradox</i> between expressing pride in one's culture and recognizing the history of injustice it has. A <i>paradox</i> in aligning one's individual beliefs with social, political, and familial affiliations.	The <i>paradox</i> of responding to racial attacks and building empathy with others of different points of view. The <i>paradox</i> of being both similar to and different from people of various cultures. The <i>paradox</i> of having a philosophical belief and being open-minded to other perspectives.	The <i>paradox</i> of being the victim of a stereotype in some situations and the perpetrator in others. The <i>paradox</i> of recognizing greatness in countries and individuals as well as facelices. The <i>paradox</i> of being an individual and navigating institutional power dynamics.	The <i>paradox</i> between standing up for others and wanting to fit in. The <i>paradox</i> in seeing a solution to an issue of social justice and lacking the resources to accomplish the task. The <i>paradox</i> in recognizing one's own culpability in acts of prejudice and being an advocate for social justice.
Convergence	The <i>convergence</i> of family, self, and society values in the creation of individual identity. The <i>convergence</i> of home and societal culture on one's identity and self-esteem. The <i>convergence</i> of support systems to develop and affirm one's identity.	The <i>convergence</i> of multiple perspectives and differing beliefs in developing respect and empathy. The <i>convergence</i> of social, cultural, and political contexts in analyzing racism and oppression. The <i>convergence</i> of current trends and historical patterns in responding to diversity.	The <i>convergence</i> of implicit and conscious bias in recognizing stereotypes. The <i>convergence</i> of privilege, wealth, and opportunity on institutional levels of racism. The <i>convergence</i> of time, place, and beliefs on figures and philosophies of social justice.	The <i>convergence</i> of social, cultural, and political trends that carry out collective action around the world. The <i>convergence</i> of internal and external factors that help individuals stand up to injustice. The <i>convergence</i> of personal and group values that promote community change.

can enhance and extend the core content through the lens of a culturally authentic access point. Teachers introduce students to the multiple meanings of each *Content Imperative* and provide opportunities

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Figure 2. The Content Imperatives as Access Points into Content



for students to apply the prompts in different activities and configurations. Each prompt becomes the entry point for students to make personalized connections into the core content based on their home and community funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). Students can manipulate the order and direction of their learning as they “circle” the content standards via the *Content Imperatives*. Circling a topic or area of study with several *Content Imperatives* accomplishes four major goals for gifted and advanced learners: (1) the development of generative and divergent thinking, (2) the analysis of various points of view in the content, (3) the building and sustaining of interests, and (4) the targeting of individual readiness levels and aptitudes.

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Students' individualized use of the *Content Imperatives* provide the culturally authentic context within a classroom that makes the content accessible to all learners. When students are provided with options related to the way they access the resources, or products of a lesson, they begin to develop intrinsic motivation necessary to find the value in the task. This creates inclusive classrooms where all learners engage in the exploration of content for their own "interest and satisfaction" rather than rote compliance (Tian & Wu, 2019, p. 852).

APPLICATION TO CONTENT STANDARDS

The *Content Imperatives* can be reoriented through the lenses of identity, diversity, justice, and action and directly applied to content standards to create learning experiences that are culturally authentic and specific. Without the connection to identity, diversity, justice, and action, the differentiated learning experience is culturally neutral or generic. Moving from a culturally neutral to a culturally authentic translation of the standards can be accomplished through the targeted integration of the *Content Imperatives*. Examples of culturally authentic and specific differentiated experiences are described in Table 4.

The process for reorienting the standards from a culturally neutral to a culturally authentic learning experience via the *Content Imperatives* is not prescriptive or exact. Translations are not classified as "right" or "wrong." They are simply justified and substantiated based on the degree to which:

- The *Content Imperatives* have been used purposefully to make the content relevant to the lives of the learners
- The *Content Imperatives* reinforce an already established interest or talent that the learners possess
- The *Content Imperatives* provide gifted and advanced learners with an opportunity to explore new interests and demonstrate strengths and talents in ways that are representative of their cultures and communities
- The *Content Imperatives* drive the use of inclusive resources that are culturally connected and culturally sustaining as a means of accessing content
- The *Content Imperatives* provide for products differentiation to allow students to demonstrate knowledge in culturally relevant and responsive ways

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Knowledge is power, and the access to knowledge and skills through culturally sustaining, spill over practices is necessary. Educators in every grade level and discipline can attest to the fact that not all curriculum for the gifted is created equal. Teachers must recognize the relevancy gaps that exist in their curriculum and construct alternatives that value students' cultural wealth, promote social justice and action, and honor the strengths and interests students bring to the learning experience (Yosso, 2005).

According to Ford and Trotman Scott (2013), a students' success in the classroom is directly impacted by their teachers' willingness and ability to provide a curriculum that uses culturally and academically relevant and responsive practices. School districts, administrators, and educators committed to promoting equity for diverse gifted and advanced learners must address the following in regards to curriculum construction and modification:

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Table 4. The Progression to Culturally Authentic and Specific Learning Experiences with Content Standards

Origin	
Kindergarten Science: <i>K-ESS2-1. Use and share observations of local weather conditions to describe patterns over time.</i>	
Culturally Neutral or Generic Differentiation	Culturally Authentic and Specific Differentiation
Students will be able to determine the origin of a specific type of inclement weather and its effects on people.	Students will be able to determine the origin of the ethical issues related to disaster relief efforts after an incident of inclement weather on various groups of people.
Contributions	
3rd Grade English Language Arts: <i>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.9 Compare and contrast the themes, settings, and plots of stories written by the same author about the same or similar characters (e.g., in books from a series)</i>	
Culturally Neutral or Generic Differentiation	Culturally Authentic and Specific Differentiation
Students will be able to compare and contrast the contributions an author has made to establish a theme.	Students will be able to compare and contrast the contributions and consequences of stereotypes on people and groups over time as reinforced by a theme.
Parallel	
5th Grade Social Studies: 5.8 Students trace the colonization, immigration, and settlement patterns of the American people from 1789 to the mid-1800s, with emphasis on the role of economic incentives, effects of the physical and political geography, and transportation systems.	
Culturally Neutral or Generic Differentiation	Culturally Authentic and Specific Differentiation
Students will be able to describe the parallel motives that influenced the development of the transportation system in the mid-1800's.	Students will be able to describe the parallel motives associated with racism and systems of power that reinforced the development of the transportation system in the mid-1800's.
Paradox	
7th Grade Science: <i>MS-LS1-5. Construct a scientific explanation based on evidence for how environmental and genetic factors influence the growth of organisms.</i>	
Culturally Neutral or Generic Differentiation	Culturally Authentic and Specific Differentiation
Students will be able to describe a paradox that has inhibited the environmental and genetic factors that have impacted the growth of an organism.	Students will be able to describe a paradox that has inhibited the environmental and genetic factors that have impacted the growth of an organism. Furthermore, they will describe how this demonstrates an issue of ecological justice that can also be applied to social justice scenarios, as there are many examples of how ecological structures and social structures lack the resources to maintain growth.
Convergence	
High School English Language Arts: <i>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).</i>	
Culturally Neutral or Generic Differentiation	Culturally Authentic and Specific Differentiation
Students will be able to determine how words and phrases converge to impact meaning and tone in a text.	Students will be able to determine how words and phrases converge to acknowledge the author's family and self to construct a tone and meaning that responds to socially constructed values.

- *Teachers must be willing to challenge deficit-based assumptions about diverse gifted and advanced learners.* Students display their talents, interests, knowledge, and skills in different ways that are influenced by their cultural backgrounds, funds of knowledge, and lived experiences (Moll et al., 1992). The underrepresentation of diverse learners in gifted programs is a result of stereo-

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types and misconceptions held by teachers about what diverse learners know and can do (Ford & Grantham, 2003). Giftedness exists among all sociodemographic and socioeconomic groups. Opportunities must be created within the curriculum for diverse gifted and advanced learners to display their potential, develop their talents, and make connections to their cultural identity.

- *Teachers must be willing to monitor their own progress in making purposeful modifications to the curriculum for diverse gifted and advanced learners.* This requires teachers to constantly examine their own implicit bias and to acknowledge how that bias, either consciously or unconsciously, impacts their curricular and instructional decisions. Wynter-Hoyte et. al., (2019) contend that this monitoring requires teachers to view themselves as well as their students as “cultural beings” (p. 431). When teachers recognize and value the backgrounds of diverse gifted and advanced learners, they begin to use students’ identities to construct experiences that reflect the cultural and linguistic needs of the learners.
- *Teachers must be willing to acknowledge that static and singular forms of assessment perpetuate systems of inequity within a classroom.* Traditional forms of assessment fail to consider the readiness levels and prior life experiences of diverse gifted and advanced learners. According to Ecker-Lyster and Niileksela (2017), the structure and means of assessment in a curriculum must be adjusted to enable students to view content and demonstrate their understanding of the subject matter through a cultural lens. Non-traditional assessments should provide students with opportunities to investigate real-world problems in authentic contexts, and produce meaningful, action-oriented products. The addition of multi-modal assessment methods into the curriculum for gifted and advanced learners showcases students’ academic abilities, capitalizes on their strengths, and values the cultural wealth they bring to any learning experience (Moll et al., 1992; González et al., 2005).

The implementation of a curriculum for gifted and advanced learners that capitalizes on students’ assets and honors students’ lived experiences requires intentional focus on the part of the teacher. Teachers must critically examine their own curriculum and challenge the status-quo regarding the opportunities they provide for students to utilize their funds of knowledge and cultural identity in the classroom. Bianco and Harris (2014) contend that when intentional focus is placed on students’ culture, linguistic abilities, interests, and strengths, they lower the risk of “perpetuating a flawed system of inequality” for historically underserved and marginalized populations (p.169). If teaching is a political act, then the strategic and purposeful modification of curriculum is a manifestation of that act, and one that all educators of the gifted must act on.

The intent of this chapter is to help classroom teachers of any grade or subject area critically reflect on their own practice and take the steps necessary to create culturally authentic differentiation in their classrooms. Through the reorientation of the *Content Imperatives*, students are provided opportunities to infuse themselves into the content, and to create their own context for learning. Students who are the true consumers of the curriculum, and therefore, need to see themselves and their community as controlling the production of the narrative in response to the learning experience. Too often, the curriculum is designed and implemented without any input, thoughts, or reflections from the students themselves. Culturally neutral differentiation implemented without input from the students needs to be removed from the instructional experience. Students are exceptionally knowledgeable about how they best think and learn; what excites, interests, and challenges them. Students are the primary source when it comes to describing their culture and funds of knowledge (Paris, 2012; Moll et al., 1992; González et al., 2005).

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We, as teachers, just never ask. Reorienting seminal differentiation practices to create culturally authentic learning experiences is a first step in creating a brave and safe space for students to create, design, and develop their own sense of self as rooted in the assets from their home and community (Yosso, 2005).

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