**Based on your experience and this week’s material, what do you feel are the primary reasons compacting is essential for our gifted and talented learners? Justify your response with your experiences and/or the class material.**

At the beginning of each school year, I have an ideal goal for myself that I will be able to pre-assess students and differentiate their learning so that they are able to learn material at their own challenge level. However, I admit that as the year picks up speed and gets going, I find myself overwhelmed with class sizes and all the different ability levels of my students. Additionally, in Humanities, there seems to be an endless array of skills and concepts that would need to be pre-assessed (i.e. grammar, spelling, vocabulary, reading comprehension, social studies material, research skills, etc.). Sometimes, it just seems easier to teach all students the same material at the same time. Prior to starting this endorsement program, I would have had to agree with Winebrenner when she writes, “Complacency sets it when gifted students get high grades and everyone (including the students themselves, their parents, and their teachers) sees this as evidence that real learning is taking place” (37). Compacting the curriculum, whether for skills or new material, seems to be a practical way to keep students from becoming complacent, frustrated and bored with school.

Winebrenner writes, “Compacting helps students deal with the part of the curriculum that represents ‘trash’ to them because it’s expendable. They can throw it away without missing it and without incurring any academic harm, because they already have enough of it to demonstrate mastery” (38). I’d never thought of compacting in this way before, but it an essential strategy to help students get rid of the “trash” in their curriculum and learn new material in engaging ways. I’ve sat in classes before, generally technology related professional development classes, where I realize that I know all the material being presented and it is frustrating. I spent most of the class time trying to figure out more advanced tools on my own or planning my shopping list for the day. Realizing that really helped me get into the shoes of my gifted students who may feel cheated out of learning each day they come to school. Using extension activities as a part of compacting is essential in helping gifted students expand their knowledge in an area of mastery and become an expert. This will ensure that they are motivated to learn the material, challenged each day they come to class, and should lessen the amount of frustration and boredom that that student has probably experienced in class.

This year, I have a student in class who is highly interested in ancient Rome; which is the last unit that we cover during the school year. I already expect that he would be able to pass the unit exam with at least an 80% grade, and compacting for new content will be essential for him to feel like he is learning new material that is far beyond the level of content that the rest of the class will be learning. Winebrenner writes, “In content areas where the material is new for them, gifted students should be allowed to move through it at a faster pace than the rest of the class” (73). I’d like to try the study guide method with this student so that he is able to explore the topic of ancient Rome at a much deeper level and become a resident expert on the topic. I like that the study guide method (with or without the extension menu) includes the same standards that the rest of the class will be addressing, but gifted students are given the independence to address these standards in their own ways. This strategy of compacting gives gifted students the independence to learn the material faster, at a deeper level, and in a way that lets them know that their teacher respects the fact that they are ready to move at their own pace.