As you reflect upon the many concepts, ideas and strategies presented in the resources studied in this LEARNING MODULE, what ideas challenged your thinking and current practices the most? Elaborate upon those differences.

* **Creating usable physical space in the classroom:** Although I completely agree with the theory behind creating a classroom with “sufficient ‘people space’ for students to move about and actively participate in their own learning” (Clark 233), some of the suggestions in the book seemed extremely challenging to implement in my current school. One of the most challenging suggestions for me to wrap my head around (and how it could be implemented) was “providing areas for designated activities” (Clark 235). In my current classroom, I have 33 students in my largest class. Even if I removed the computer tables and bookshelves (which I think are necessary to the environment), there still wouldn’t be sufficient space to have places in the classroom for quiet areas and louder areas for students to be involved in at the same time. Often, I can spread out into the hallway; but I can’t always depend on that usable space because many of the other classes send students to work in the hall as well. I’m interested to hear if anyone can figure out a way that that specific idea could be implemented in a small classroom with a lot of students.
* **Bibliotherapy:** Individually, or when a specific situation arises, I try to match a particular book to a student based on something they are going through or a prior experience they’ve had. However, to create a class wide bibliotherapy program seems impractical. Clark writes that, “A file of such books could be established as the teacher discovers them. [And] Follow-up activities and discussions are an important part of such a program” (Clark 304). The thinking behind the strategy is good, and there are clearly many advantages for such a program. However, in most public school with large classes (and 0-1 librarians), it seems like it would be impractical.
* **Search and Screening:** Chapter 9 discussed a variety of ways to search for and screen students in culturally diverse populations for gifted programs. Clark writes that, “the screening process use curricular activities rather than instruments to assess the abilities of students” and that “the nomination and screening phases in the identification of gifted African-American students would be more successful if they included nomination from community leaders, peers, and self, in addition to the teacher” (Clark 349). Although the instruments described (Verbal vs. Nonverbal, behavior, multidimensional, dynamic) would provide significant results and information for my districts advanced classes, the Issaquah School District does not currently use these methods to identify students for gifted classes (no matter what culture or SEC). Students are tested in elementary school, but once they move onto middle school, there is no gifted programming available and therefore no testing offered. It’s frustrating for me to know what our district should be doing, but have no control in the implementation of it.

Which concepts, ideas and strategies are compatible with regular classroom practices?

* **Visual Thinking:** Clark describes one specific strategy for developing creative behavior that I think would work well in my language arts classroom. In writing, I teach 6th graders a unit on figurative language. Most of my students easily comprehend the idea, and quickly discover that they like creating their own similes and metaphors where they get to compare two unlike things. Clark writes that, “visual similes and metaphors help us glimpse the profound reality that lies within each object….[and that] this associative flexibility allows students to break away from the objectivity so carefully taught in most school activities” (Clark 245). I would love to incorporate more of this visual thinking into social studies to help students use their imagination and see how seemingly unconnected things can be similar.
* **Simulations:** I love students to be active in their learning. The use of simulations was a big part of my own schooling (especially in junior high), and I can still fondly remember walking through the Battle of Bunker Hill on the school outdoor basketball court. Although I would like to incorporate more simulations in my classroom, I currently employ this strategy and few times throughout the year. We complete our entire ancient Greece unit as a simulation where student groups are city-states that are competing throughout the unit. I also have students participate in a simulation at the beginning of the year where they learn why humans stopped hunting/gathering and settled down. Often, these are the events my students talk about years later; especially since most of them are “real-life” simulations, which Clark says, “have the most impact” (Clark 251).
* **The Study of Futuristics:** I was really intrigued by Clark’s description of the field of futuristics. I’d never heard this term used before. Clark states that, “a futurist must deal comfortable with uncertainties, open-ended situations, and vastly divergent possibilities” (Clark 265). This type of open-ending thinking seems like it would fit in perfectly with the type of learning we are using in our gifted/highly capable classrooms. Torrence’s Future Problem Solving Program seems like an amazing project that encourages gifted students to think outside-the-box, be creative, and think of ways they can solve some of the world’s most complex problems.

From what you currently know about the Common Core State Standards, how do you perceive the way we need to teach highly capable or gifted students be impacted?

The ability to think creatively is becoming an increasingly important skill for students to have, and there is no mention of creativity in the CCSS. Our nation is moving towards standards that will help get all of our nation’s children on the same page, but will downplay the importance of innovative thinking, creativity, and the arts. Many of the strategies/ideas discussed in chapters 7 and 8 emphasize creative problems solving and social-emotional learning; neither of which seem to be highlighted in the CCSS. The CCSS for reading are rather broad, however, and I feel like they do give teachers (depending on district involvement in planning) the opportunity to create higher level activities that will still meet the standard. It would, however, be wonderful (In my ideal world) to have differentiated standards written for students at different levels. I’m not sure how this would be implemented, but we know we need to differentiate our instruction, yet we are given standards that don’t take into account student differences.