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The Changing Roles of Higher Order, Critical, and Creative Thinking Skills in Gifted Education:  
A Mastery Model Perspective

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We have documented elsewhere a shift in practice in gifted education from a mystery model to a mastery model, an evidence-based understanding of what giftedness is and how it develops. Some of the main features of the mastery model include an understanding that giftedness is domain-specific (rather than global, as might be measured by IQ); that it develops with appropriate opportunities to learn (rather than being an innate characteristic of a person); and that it is dynamic, with children's learning needs changing over time (rather than being static or predictable). There are therefore as many ways of becoming gifted as there are children, and the best way to address gifted learning needs and also foster giftedness in diverse learners, is to provide a range of learning options from which children, parents, and teachers can select, in order to ensure the best possible learning matches over the course of a child's development. In this article, we will consider the importance of higher order, critical, and creative thinking skills from a mastery model perspective. We will discuss the roles of each these different kinds of thinking skills in responding to children's domain-specific gifted learning needs as these change over time.