

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 456 574

EC 308 361

AUTHOR Renzulli, Joseph S.; Richards, Susannah  
TITLE Addressing the Needs of Gifted Middle School Students.  
Practitioners' Guide A0023.  
INSTITUTION National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, Storrs,  
CT.  
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED),  
Washington, DC.  
PUB DATE 2000-00-00  
NOTE 6p.  
AVAILABLE FROM National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented,  
University of Connecticut, 2131 Hillside Rd., Unit 3007,  
Storrs, CT 06269-3007; Tel: 860-486-4676; Fax: 860-486-2900;  
Web site: <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/nrcgt>.  
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055)  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS Acceleration (Education); \*Cluster Grouping; \*Educational  
Strategies; Elementary Secondary Education; \*Enrichment  
Activities; \*Gifted; \*Middle School Students; Middle  
Schools; Portfolio Assessment; Program Design; Program  
Implementation; Special Programs; Student Needs; Talent  
Development; Teaching Models  
IDENTIFIERS Curriculum Differentiation; \*Schoolwide Enrichment Model

## ABSTRACT

This pamphlet discusses the benefits of using the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) for providing numerous enrichment and acceleration alternatives that are designed to accommodate the academic strengths, interests, and learning styles of all middle school students, including gifted students. It explains the different components of SEM including the Total Talent Portfolio, a vehicle for systematically gathering, recording, and using information about students' abilities, interests, and learning style preferences. Curriculum modification techniques that are used in the SEM are then described and include adjusting the pace and level of required material to accommodate variations in learning and providing enrichment and acceleration alternatives for students who have, or can, easily master regular material faster than the normal pace. The use of enrichment clusters for non-graded groups of students who share common interests and come together to pursue these interests during specially designated time blocks is also explained, along with types of enrichment clusters and cluster goals.  
(CR)

# National Research Center on the Gifted & Talented

## Addressing the Needs of Gifted Middle School Students.

### Practitioners' Guide A0023

**Joseph S. Renzulli**  
**Susannah Richards**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION  
CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
  - Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- 
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND  
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS  
BEEN GRANTED BY

E.J. Gubbins

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

**BEST COPY AVAILABLE**

ering a service for a real-world audience. rule ensures that students learn only relevant content and use only authentic processes to create a product or develop a service.

Middle school enrichment clusters have studied the stock market, learned carpenter's construction techniques, explored the insect world, and created an editorial board to learn how to evaluate and edit manuscripts for a literary magazine. Students enter a cluster based on interests and other information gleaned from their Total Talent Portfolios. Common goals make cooperation a necessity, and divisions of labor within the clusters allow for differentiated levels of expertise and involvement, varying levels of challenge, and different leadership roles. This type of learning environment is highly supportive of individual differences and, therefore, promotes the development of self-concept, self-efficacy, and positive feelings that result from being a member of a goal-oriented team. To put it another way: *Every child is special if we create conditions in which that child can be a specialist within a specialized group.*



### Inside an Enrichment Cluster

Enrichment clusters can revolve around major disciplines, interdisciplinary themes, or cross-disciplinary topics. A theatrical/television production group, for example, might include actors, writers, technical specialists, and costume designers. Within such a cluster, students direct their how-to knowledge, thinking skills, and interpersonal relations toward producing a product or service. Instead of lesson plans or unit plans, they are guided by six questions.

- What do people with an interest in this area—for example, filmmaking—do?
- What products do they create and/or what services do they provide?

- What knowledge, materials, and other resources do we need to authentically complete activities in this area?
- What methods do they use to carry out their work?
- How, and with whom, do they communicate the results of their work?
- In what ways can we use the product or service to affect the intended audience?

Recently, a number of schools have begun experimenting with an expanded enrichment cluster concept called the Academies of Inquiry and Talent Development. With academies, students and teachers who share a common interest in a curricular area (e.g., science, literature, or math) are clustered over the three or four years that they are in middle school. We have found that strong associations develop between and among both students and adults, due to their common interest and collaboration in developing a product or a service.



### Additional Resources

- George, P. S., Renzulli, J. S., & Reis, S. M. (1997). *Dilemmas in talent development in the middle grades: Two views*. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association.
- Purcell, J. H., & Renzulli, J. S. (1998). *The total talent portfolio: A systematic plan to identify and nurture gifts and talents*. Mansfield Center, CT: Creative Learning Press.
- Renzulli, J. S., & Reis, S. M. (1997). *The schoolwide enrichment model: A how-to guide for educational excellence* (2nd ed.). Mansfield Center, CT: Creative Learning Press.
- Renzulli, J. S. (1994). *Schools for talent development: A practical plan for total school improvement*. Mansfield Center, CT: Creative Learning Press.



**The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented**  
 2131 Hillside Road Unit 3007  
 Storrs, CT 06269-3007  
 Phone: 860-486-4676  
 Fax: 860-486-2900  
[www.gifted.uconn.edu](http://www.gifted.uconn.edu)

# Addressing the Needs of Gifted Middle School Students

Joseph S. Renzulli  
 &  
 Susannah Richards

*One of the main tasks of adolescence is to achieve an identity—not necessarily a knowledge of who we are, but a clarification of the range of what we might become.*

Terri Apter

11 C 308361

In an effort to infuse a broad range of highly challenging learning experiences into their programs, many middle schools have adopted the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM). Through a "continuum of services" approach, the SEM provides numerous enrichment and acceleration alternatives that are designed to accommodate the academic strengths, interests, and learning styles of all middle school students. By labeling services rather than students, it allows for a less restrictive identification process than the traditional approach of only labeling a few kids as gifted.

The model is flexible enough to allow each school to develop its own unique program based on local resources, student populations, school leadership dynamics, and faculty strengths and creativity. Although the SEM is based on successful practices that originated in special programs for gifted and talented students, its major goal is to promote both challenging and enjoyable "high-end learning" across the full range of school types, levels, and demographic differences. The model is not intended to replace or minimize existing services to high achieving students, but to integrate these services into "a-rising-tide-lifts-all-ships" approach to school improvement. With the SEM, creative teaming efforts involve the entire faculty and enrichment specialists.

### **The Total Talent Portfolio (TTP)**

The Total Talent Portfolio (TTP) is a vehicle for systematically gathering, recording, and using information about students' abilities, interests, and learning style preferences. Students and teachers cooperatively review and analyze best-case samples of students' work, as well as information resulting from interest and learning styles

assessment scales to make meaningful decisions about necessary curricular modifications and enrichment opportunities.

Part of the process involves helping students develop skills for evaluating portfolio items according to their own set of internal criteria and developing procedures for examining portfolio items according to the external criteria of teachers and other students. Students achieve autonomy and ownership of the TTP by assuming major responsibility in the selection of items to be included, maintaining and regularly updating the portfolio, and setting personal goals by making decisions about items that they would like to include in the portfolio at some future point in time. Although the teacher should serve as a guide in the portfolio review process, the ultimate goal is to turn portfolio management over to the students.

### **Curriculum Modification Techniques**

The second component of the Schoolwide Enrichment Model is a series of techniques that are designed to assess each student's mastery level of regular curricular material; adjust the pace and level of required material to accommodate variations in learning; and provide enrichment and acceleration alternatives for students who have, or can, easily master regular material faster than the normal pace.

For individuals and for small groups of students working at approximately the same level, teachers conduct a systematic modification process called curriculum compacting. This process consists of defining the goals and outcomes of a particular unit of study; determining and documenting which students have already mastered most or all of a specified set of learning outcomes (or are capable of mastery at an accelerated pace); and providing activities for students to pursue during the time

gained by compacting the regular curriculum. Students can accelerate their own learning, undertake individual or group research projects, or participate in out-of-class or non-school activities. Curriculum compacting is easy for teachers to learn and implement at all levels.

Another modification procedure that permits widespread adjustments to the regular curriculum is to examine textbooks and workbooks to determine which parts, especially repetitive practice material, can be removed. Based on the "less is better" approach, this technique promotes greater depth of learning by providing time for the direct teaching of thinking skills. It also permits curriculum differentiation emphasizing problem-based learning and the use of thematic and interdisciplinary units. In-depth learning requires students to move up the hierarchy of knowledge from facts to generalizations and theories. These skills and problem-solving strategies will endure long after students have forgotten the factual material that is the focus of so much traditional learning.

### **Enrichment Learning and Teaching**

Enrichment learning and teaching strategies are designed to actively engage both teachers and students. Although enrichment learning and teaching can be integrated with the regular curriculum, we have found that creating a special place in the schedule is the best way to guarantee that every student will have an opportunity to participate.

Enrichment clusters are non-graded groups of students that share common interests, and come together to pursue these interests during specially designated time blocks, usually consisting of one-half day per week. There is one "golden rule" for enrichment clusters: *Everything students do in a cluster is directed toward producing a product*



**U.S. Department of Education**  
*Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)*  
*National Library of Education (NLE)*  
*Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)*



## **NOTICE**

### **Reproduction Basis**



This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.



This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").

EFF-089 (3/2000)