

Involving All Students in Advanced Activities

The Schoolwide Enrichment Model Injects Enjoyment, Engagement, and Enthusiasm for Learning Into Instruction to Improve School Climate and Achievement

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Our research has shown that applying the pedagogy of gifted education to all classrooms can lead to total school improvement in both attitudes and achievement, and most importantly, enjoyment of school. That is the aim of our work, and we use an enrichment-infusion process called The Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM).

Curricular infusion simply means that we do not argue with the reality of today's standards and achievement test-driven approaches to school improvement. Rather, we examine materials and teaching strategies that can make the prescribed curriculum more interesting, engaging, and enjoyable. It also means we provide the professional development and technology-based resources that allow teachers to promote the three goals of our model (the 3 Es): Enjoyment, Engagement, and Enthusiasm For Learning. The 3s apply to teachers as well as students because happy teachers always produce the best results. They know what will work best in their classroom, and they also know that no amount of standardization, regulation, curriculum focused on test preparation, or reams of supervisory paperwork have made sustainable differences in achievement scores or the culture of their school.

Common Goals

Our research with schools using The Schoolwide Enrichment Model has shown that anything that saves teachers time, promotes the 3 Es and avoids needless paperwork is more likely to be adopted and sustained.

An enrichment-based approach (rather than drill-and-practice) actually improves student achievement, improves attendance, minimizes suspensions, increases student and teacher engagement, and promotes greater job satisfaction on the part of teachers. Our model also promotes ownership and educator involvement by providing opportunities for each school to design its unique approach to SEM. Ownership and creative involvement are what produce sustainability and pride. We believe in common goals like the 3 Es but unique means for achieving these goals.

Advanced Levels for All

Most overly prescribed "flavor-of-the-month" school improvement models lack sustainability because they are overly prescriptive. They also factor out the kinds of creative program development and joyful learning opportunities that make teaching the

innovative and enjoyable process that attracts people to the profession. Our broadened conception of total talent development advocates general enrichment opportunities for all students, and opportunities for advanced level follow up for students who exhibit high levels of interest, motivation, and creativity. This is a radically different approach from other models that require a student be certified as “gifted” before advanced opportunities, resources and encouragement are provided.

An emphasis in our work is on infusing highly engaging and enjoyable activities into any and all required curriculum topics. It is amazing to see how quickly students acquire analytic skills and creative and investigative mindsets—rather than simply memorizing material for the next round of tests. Our studies have shown that when teachers enjoy and are engaged in enrichment activities, the entire atmosphere and the culture of the school changes.

Individualized Enrichment

Technology has made this enrichment infusion process easily available to most schools and classrooms. Information about student strengths can be quickly obtained by using an electronically produced profile that documents each student’s interests, learning styles, preferred modes of expression, and academic strengths.

A powerful search engine then scans through thousands of enrichment activities and matches them to each student’s profile. Teachers can also use the program to find and infuse enrichment resources from a categorical 50,000 item data base. All items are tagged by interest area, topic, sub-topic, curriculum standards, and grade or reading level. This technology is a one-of-a-kind tool developed at the University of Connecticut that makes personalized learning and differentiation easy. Teachers can use the search engine to differentiate in any curricular area by entering topics, events or other keywords to quickly locate high-engagement enrichment activities. The system is available in many languages and includes a machine-scored creativity test in the student profiler, the first of its kind in the world. The program also has access to many Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in addition to the thousands of enrichment resources that are already in the system. It also allows for the input of any resources by persons who have access to the program. This feature provides opportunities for unlimited growth and the ability for international educators to share resources that are useful for academic growth, creativity, and the development of investigative learning skills that are the pedagogical basis for our enrichment model.

A more detailed version of this article can be found at:

Renzulli, J. S., & Reis, S. M. (2010). The Schoolwide Enrichment Model: A focus on student strengths and interests. *Gifted Education International*, 26(2&3), 140–156. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026142941002600303>

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