

COLCHESTER ENRICHMENT PROGRAM



C.L.I.M.B

**CHALLENGING LEARNERS, INSPIRING MINDS, BEYOND
BOUNDARIES**

Colchester Public Schools Enrichment Program

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Schoolwide Enrichment Model

I. PHILOSOPHY

In the past, giftedness was often associated with manifest traits (i.e., unique and high levels of cognitive or academic achievement) as measured by academic aptitude and achievement tests. In the last ten to twenty years, many researchers have broadened the conception of giftedness to include strong abilities in the arts, in leadership, and with regard to creativity. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences has helped many to appreciate the fact that many children and adults can eventually come to demonstrate gifted behaviors in a wide variety of areas that may or may not be related to academic achievement. Sternberg's work with his triarchic theory of intelligence emphasizes the importance of analytic abilities, as well as creative and practical intelligences. Lastly, Renzulli's work with talent development has provided us with a clear prescription for developing talent in young people who may not yet manifest superior levels of performance. His research stresses the important role that enrichment activities, mentors, teachers, the home environment, and other factors contribute to talent development.

Many educators now agree that gifted education should address the needs of children who have potentials and proclivities, yet who have not had the opportunity to develop these potentials into talents and recognized achievements. It is our responsibility not only to identify manifest talent, but also to mentor and promote talent development in as many students as possible.

Gifted education exists to achieve three goals: (1) to promote and address talent development as it relates to individual proclivities, potentials, strengths and interests, (2) to increase academic achievement by providing a curriculum that offers challenge, complexity, authenticity, problem solving, and self-directed and active learning opportunities, (3) to enhance intrinsic and lifelong learning by providing motivational, relevant, active, and interest-based learning activities.

Perhaps more than ever before, the goals of gifted education are aligned with the goals of general education. Success in an Information Age demands increased cognitive abilities in order to address more complex societal issues and an ever competitive global economy. The basic skills of our former Industrial Age are being replaced with new basic skills that require increased academic achievement, enhanced cognitive abilities, better concept development, problem-solving, and analytic and creative skills. All students need to recognize and develop their unique potentials and direct their abilities toward an increased knowledge base that will be used to promote problem solving and product development.

Since the pedagogy that supports the development of these abilities is standard fare in the field of gifted education, many educators are examining the curriculum and instructional strategies used in gifted education with an eye toward using these strategies with *all* students. In other instances, parents, teachers, and administrators are becoming increasingly aware that students who already exhibit high degrees of cognitive and academic abilities are not provided with a general education curriculum that accommodates their advanced learning abilities. For both of these reasons, many school districts are interested in applying gifted education pedagogy to the regular classroom. Personnel in these school districts hope to collect evidence that demonstrates increased achievement and talent development for the students who participate in classrooms that employ these pedagogies.

Just exactly what is the pedagogy of gifted education? The strategies used to support gifted education generally fall into four categories of components: (1) procedures that help teachers identify students' unique interests, achievements, strengths, talents, and learning preferences; (2) strategies for modifying and improving the quality of our curriculum units; (3) techniques for differentiating assignments, resources, teaching and learning activities for students with varying levels of prior knowledge, distinct learning styles, interest or cognitive ability; and (4) tactics for addressing talent development through the use of interest-based enrichment activities.

Research in general education and gifted education suggests that there are at least 14 methods for addressing these four components. (See Table 1.) Studies that examined the effectiveness of these 14 strategies in promoting increased student achievement and talent development. Used together in proper sequence within a given curriculum unit, however, students demonstrate greater achievement gains reflected in stronger effect sizes.

Research also suggests that the use of these strategies currently varies from teacher to teacher, and that many teachers incorporate only a few of these strategies. It seems reasonable to assume, then, that one goal of a gifted education staff development project should be to increase individual teachers' use and expertise with more of these strategies. Research also suggests that it takes two years for teachers who are implementing these new strategies to become adept enough to have an impact on student achievement.

II. VISION STATEMENT:

We believe that Colchester's enrichment program should address and develop the gifts and talents of all students. We believe that gifts and talents can be manifest, emergent or latent, and that the community, the family and the schools have a joint responsibility to provide the experiences, education, and encouragement for students to enhance their cognitive abilities, academic achievement, creativity and leadership. Our vision of the ideal enrichment program is one that would offer a wide variety of services and involve all personnel. In addition gifted education must also address the unique needs of recognized students by identifying students with exceptional creative and intellectual abilities and providing additional differentiation of instruction to help them reach their potential.

III. PROGRAM GOALS:

1. To recognize that each learner is unique and therefore all learning experiences must be examined in ways that take into account the abilities, interests and learning styles of the individual.
2. To make learning meaningful, all content (i.e., knowledge) and process (i.e., thinking skills) is learned within the context of real life situations.
3. To create a learning community that honors ethnic, gender and cultural diversity; mutual respect and caring attitudes toward one another, respect for democratic principles and preservation of the Earth's resources.
4. To improve the academic performance of all students in all curriculum areas through interdisciplinary activities that will engage students in meaningful learning.
5. To promote continuous, reflective, growth-oriented professional development through the provision of consultation, collaboration, training and coaching.
6. To ensure that identified gifted students receive appropriate educational programming.

IV. STUDENT OBJECTIVES:

Every student, to their optimum potential, will:

- develop individual strengths and talents
- develop creative and critical thinking skills and research skills
- acquire the skills to be independent, self-directed learners

- improve written, oral and visual communications skills
- develop self-understanding (e.g., recognizing and using one's abilities) and appreciation of the likeness and differences of oneself and others.

V. CURRICULUM:

RESEARCH-BASED STRATEGIES FOR MODIFYING, DIFFERENTIATING, AND ENRICHING THE GRADE-LEVEL CURRICULUM

1. Assessing students' strengths, interests, experiences and preferences.
2. Curriculum modification and development.
3. Assessing students' prior knowledge and experience.
4. Preassessment with respect to curriculum objective(s).
5. Varied large group teaching strategies.
6. Use of community resources.
7. Process instruction.
8. Small group instruction.
9. Differentiated assignments.
10. Independent learning centers.
12. Problem solving simulations.
13. Self-directed learning opportunities
14. Parent involvement.

Curricula for all students will embed critical thinking, creative problem solving and research skills in its goals, objectives, and program delivery standards.

This will be achieved through the following four strategies:

- A. Curriculum Enrichment**
- B. Curriculum Modification**
- C. Curriculum Differentiation**
- D. Curriculum Integration**

A. CURRICULUM ENRICHMENT:

Curricula will be enriched to promote and extend the talents, interests, and abilities of all students through the implementation of the enrichment Triad Model in the regular education program. The Triad Model encourages the utilization of a wide variety of teaching strategies, the development of student interests, and multiple opportunities for student choice.

Enrichment Triad Model

- **Type I Activities – Content and Introductory Activities**
Type I activities are general exploratory experiences which stimulate interest and increased awareness of an area of study. Type I activities can include interest development centers, outside speakers, field trips, exhibits, and community resources.
- **Type II Training Activities**
Type II Activities accompany the Type I experiences and provide students with the necessary skills for further explorations. Type II skills include:
 - research skills
 - creativity training
 - critical thinking skills
 - organizational and learning skills and strategies
 - communication skills
- **Type III Investigations – Interest-based Independent Projects/Studies**
Students learn the independent study process to become more self-directed learners.
Students work industriously on self-selected topics and can pursue their subject to whatever extent they desire.
Important components of Type III investigations are:
 - Teacher/mentor/specialist facilitation of process, serving as a guide to students.
 - Student choice – students must “own” their study
 - Sharing of project/process/product with an authentic audience.

B. CURRICULUM MODIFICATION

Curriculum and instruction at all grade levels and in all subject areas will be modified to represent “high-end” teaching and learning activities. High-end learners are active students who facilitate, question, and respond in order to construct knowledge and solve problems.

1. Analysis and Enhancement of Curricula

Curricula are enhanced by district subject area curriculum committees to:

- eliminate redundancy
- increase authenticity of topics
- promote active learning
- challenge students

2. Development of Higher Level Student Learning Objectives

Student learning objectives for all areas of study represent each of the following instructional categories:

- facts
- concepts
- principles
- methodology
- attitudes
- problem solving

3. Key Unit/Lesson Components

When planning and implementing curricular units and lessons, teachers will include the following components:

- Learning objectives
- Introduction of unit
- Teaching activities
- Resource
- Assignment
- Assessment

C. CURRICULUM DIFFERENTIATION

The assessment of students' skills, abilities and interests will determine the direction of the curricula for individual students.

Goals:

- To identify or create procedures for detecting relevant differences among students.
- To make provisions to accommodate the most relevant differences (curriculum compacting)
- To develop procedures for creating flexible groups and individual learning activities for identified students.

D. CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

Instructional units will be analyzed for the way they connect to:

- Various academic disciplines (literature, language, performing and visual arts, math, social sciences, physical sciences, life sciences, and natural sciences).

VI. PROGRAM OPTIONS

| OPTIONS | PK-2 | 3-5 | MIDDLE | HIGH SCHOOL |
|---|------|-----|--------|-------------|
| Trained personnel working specifically with students of high ability | | X | X | |
| Use of community resources and mentors | X | X | X | X |
| Instructional strategies such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent learning centers • Knowledge trees • Advanced organizers • Learning hooks • Differentiated assignments • Tiered activities • Telescoping • Curriculum compacting | X | X | X | X |
| Problem-solving simulations | | X | X | X |
| Advanced placement courses | | | | X |
| Directed independent study | | | | X |
| Community service projects | X | X | X | X |
| Academic Choice | X | X | X | X |
| Extension Activities | X | X | X | X |
| Theatrical and musical groups | X | X | X | X |
| Corporate/school partnerships | | | X | X |
| Apprenticeships consisting of advanced level learning opportunities | | | | |
| Competitions | | X | X | X |
| Artist in residence | | X | | |
| Internships | | | | |
| Acceleration/compression of courses | | X | X | X |
| Seminars, mini-courses | | | | X |
| Peer teaching | | | | |
| Grade skipping | | X | X | X |
| General exploratory experiences carried out through a variety of procedures (speakers, demonstrations, interest center, use of audio and technology resources) | X | X | X | X |
| Move to a higher grade for specific subject area instruction | | | X | X |
| Field trips | X | X | X | X |

Additional resources:

The school system will investigate and communicate to parents additional educational support opportunities outside the Colchester Public School System. These may include, but not be limited to summer programs, weekend programs, extended excursions, science expeditions and special schools.

VII. IDENTIFICATION OF TALENTED STUDENTS

Colchester's enrichment model supports formal identification of students in grade 3. It also provides for the continual assessment of each student's needs and strengths and matches the student with appropriate curriculum and task specific enrichment as the need arises.

It is an approach designed to increase substantially the number of students involved in special services both in and out the traditional classroom setting at the time and in the performance area where such services have the highest potential for doing the most good for a particular youngster. As a result, all students will have the opportunity to benefit from this program at the same time that identified students will be ensured of additional differentiation.

Students are identified for specific academic ability in Language Arts, Math and Science, as measured by achievement data; general intellectual ability as measured by non-verbal reasoning assessment; and creative thinking as measured by a creativity assessment. The three measurements are then placed into a matrix. Established criteria are used with acceptance into the formalized program by parent permission. Recommendations are solicited from teachers and parents.

VIII. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTAION

Role of the Specialist

Coaching of Classroom Teachers

The Enrichment Specialist will provide support, materials, and sample lessons for classroom teachers to support the needs of both identified students and regular education students in the clustered classrooms. This can occur through committees, collaborative teams, and sharing of resources, as well as through co-teaching and modeling of lessons in the regular classroom. In addition, the Enrichment Specialist will provide professional development seminars, consultation, and resource materials for classroom teachers throughout the year.

Content Delivery

In addition to classroom support, the Enrichment Specialist will provide small group learning opportunities for students identified for the program. This may include research projects, online collaboration, creative problem solving, and presentations.

Process

While each student can benefit from the ongoing support of the Enrichment Specialist to compact curriculum, enhance lessons, and suggest outside activities, the small group instruction provides an opportunity for differentiation to meet the students' special needs. Program offerings include content-area lessons, integrated thematic units, studies of learning style and leadership to incorporate higher order thinking skills ranging from knowledge and comprehension to application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

School-wide Opportunities

Opportunities for students to participate in enriching activities at Jackter Intermediate School include the following:

- HOT School Production Companies
- Town Meetings
- Jazz Band and Chorus
- Invention Convention
- Math Olympiads
- Lego Robotics

Professional Development for Educators

- Professional Book Clubs
- Attendance at UCONN Confratute
- Peer Coaching model

IX. PROGRAM EVALUATION

The evaluation of the Schoolwide Enrichment Program will follow a similar process used to evaluate our current curricular programs. Surveys will be used to collect data from students, teachers and parents.

The focus of the evaluation will be to determine next year the extent to which program goals and student objectives have been achieved. The effectiveness of each program component will also be evaluated. Questions will reflect the particular phases of implementation as it evolves through years one to five (staff development, curriculum strategies, etc.).

The evaluation team will be responsible for designing and conducting the surveys. The team will analyze the results, review student work samples and generate future program recommendations.

The program will be evaluated in the Spring of each of the three years of implementation by students, teachers and parents.

DIFFERENTIATION: ENRICHING STUDENT LEARNING at CES

Meeting the social, emotional, and educational needs of all students is our goal at CES. This is achieved by differentiated instruction and by using a variety of instructional practices that encourage children to be actively engaged in their own learning. At CES, students are not identified or serviced as part of the Colchester Enrichment Program.

All students are strategically placed in classrooms to enhance teacher effectiveness in meeting individual learners' needs. Working collaboratively with specialists, teachers are therefore able to maximize opportunities for students to work together both in classrooms and in other learning environments.

Teachers are expected to teach the core reading and math content to all students, regardless of their ability, using *Open Court* and *Everyday Math* programs. These programs lend themselves to large group and flexible small group instruction, and provide opportunities for challenging activities differentiated to student needs.

Classroom teachers effectively supplement and enrich classroom instruction, leading students to use higher order thinking skills and multiple intelligences. Teachers design lessons taking into account the individual learning styles, strengths, interests, motivation and maturity of students. Teachers create tiered lessons to build on students' learning and encourage students to extend their learning beyond the classroom doors.

As we, the staff of CES, prepare the children for higher levels of learning, we recognize the need to stimulate the thinking of our students, to encourage them to develop their interests in meaningful ways, and to provide multiple opportunities for self-expression. It is the school's belief that parents play an important role in extending students' interests and activities beyond the scope of the school day. Parents are our most valuable partners.

Bibliography

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