



# Contents

Foreword .....	4
Introducing the Guide.....	5
An Overview of Systematic School/Regional Programming .....	8
Measures Used to Assess Student Needs .....	22
Weaving a Web of Enrichment for Gifted Children in the Lower to Middle Primary Year Levels .....	47
Adapting the Learning Environment for Gifted Children in the Intermediate Year Levels .....	74
Extending the Horizons of the Gifted Child .....	107
Selected Resources .....	137



## **Enrichment of Gifted Children in the Classroom**

This book is a step-by-step guide; it provides a program to meet the needs of gifted children in the regular primary classroom. It is intended for use by the classroom teacher, but gifted co-ordinators, special needs teachers and parents will also find it helpful.

It provides specific details for meeting the special needs of the gifted individually, in a small group or with the whole class. Effective plans and processes for program organisation are explained.

Reproducible identification checklists, assessment records, forms for individual education plans and other helpful devices are included.

A partial listing of topics includes:

- Program overview on the school/regional and classroom level
- Parent information and advisement
- Nature and needs of the gifted child—identification
- Specific teaching/learning strategies
- Differentiated instruction
- Tips for the teacher of years P-3
- Tips for the teacher of years 4-6
- Evaluating student progress
- Enrichment planning
- Community/mentor talent bank

This book is based on the premise that a program for gifted children can begin with attention to the gifted children in every regular classroom. Emphasis will be placed on how a teacher can identify special needs and provide the personalised, differentiated learning experiences so vital to gifted children.

Even when schools have made certain limited provisions for gifted students (i.e. part-time

resource room activities), the fact remains that many gifted youngsters spend the major portion of their time in their regular classrooms. The classroom teacher must assess developmental needs, provide suitable instruction, guidance and emotional support. Each gifted child must be dealt with as a unique individual who differs from other children in his or her particular aspects of giftedness.

Children also differ in background and experience; a rich and nurturing classroom environment allows gifts and talents to be identified for cultivation. Children also vary in many aspects of development. Classroom enrichment supports an ongoing identification process by encouraging children to develop their abilities and deal with their disabilities while they gain in maturity and experience.

The process of co-ordinating and implementing a policy of classroom enrichment offers minimal problems to the school administrator. It requires involvement, support services and evaluation procedures.

A comprehensive written plan that clearly articulates philosophy, goals and identification procedures must be developed by the school or region. The structure of the self-contained class can meet individual needs, providing skilled teachers are adequately supported with human and material resources. The success of any organisational plan depends finally on the classroom teacher's ability and creative use of time, space and materials.

Encouraging good teachers to pursue goals of excellence in their professional skills enables them to provide challenge in the classroom and serve as stimulating role models for bright and able youngsters.

This book directly confronts a number of ethical questions. How do we meet the needs of the gifted child without removing leadership



potential from the classroom? How can a busy teacher work with all ability levels without compromising certain individual needs? Who is the gifted child? What is the school's responsibility? How can parents help their gifted and talented children? Or better yet, how can parents encourage children to develop their gifts and talents?

This manual provides tested approaches and activities which not only stimulate gifted children but also enhance the learning environment for all children.

The many practical suggestions presented here are not intended as a restrictive model for teaching gifted students. They are, rather, strategies to develop the framework for enrichment that can be adapted to the needs of many gifted children, their teachers, parents and communities.

This manual can be used effectively in a number of ways. For the individual teacher, it contains ideas and suggestions for learning activities suitable for gifted children. It can serve as a dynamic base for an informal teacher study-group. For schools or regions, it can be a valuable component of in-service education for teachers of the gifted.

While programs will, of course, differ in design, certain elements are non-negotiable. These

essential components of a systematic, school/region-wide approach are reviewed in detail.

### Objectives

To provide the classroom teacher with the ability to:

- identify gifted children in their classrooms by using checklists and information-gathering techniques
- evaluate their own potential for working with gifted children and be able to augment their abilities
- utilise methods in differentiating instruction at all levels of primary school
- facilitate co-operation with parents and other teachers
- become effective team members in developing the gifted child's education plan
- be able to monitor the gifted child's needs on an ongoing basis
- locate and select appropriate materials for classroom use
- identify potential giftedness in youngsters who might otherwise go unnoticed
- utilise community resources to extend and supplement classroom activities
- utilise evaluation and classroom management techniques



## School/Regional Program Planning

A major goal of this book is to provide a model for a school/region-wide comprehensive program for gifted children in the regular classroom. Too often guidelines for a policy of classroom enrichment are left vague and undefined. Co-ordinated efforts to maximise support services and extend enrichment opportunities require that administrators deal with specific concerns in detail. The necessary information, helpful forms and management procedures are in this section.

When everyone within a school or region realises how vital her or his commitment is in developing a network of support, teacher competence in dealing with the gifted child is an attainable goal. This section also provides an overview of some important issues for a school or region drawing up a clear and concise educational policy for the gifted.

A suitable program must:

- formulate a clearly defined statement of the

school or region's philosophy, goals and objectives for the gifted student

- establish adequate identification procedures for all gifted students, including the disabled
- provide in-service training, information, resources and materials for the staff
- develop differentiated curricula to meet the individual needs of the gifted student
- provide for parent information and meetings
- establish adequate ongoing evaluation procedures
- extend the horizons of the gifted by utilising community resources

Provisions for the gifted must become an integral part of the regular school program, weaving a web of enrichment that both encompasses and extends the basics.

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### **Formulate a Clearly Defined Statement of the School or Region's Philosophy, Goals and Objectives for the Gifted**

Schools and school regions have the primary responsibility for meeting the needs of their gifted students. They should provide "equality of opportunity" so that gifted youngsters can achieve their potential.

A broad-based committee should be formed to review existing procedures for the education of gifted children within the school or region. After assessing current practices, the committee should draft a plan that initiates, modifies or extends a sound educational program for gifted students.

The plan should show a sensitivity to and awareness of the nature and needs of gifted children. It should also include a comprehensive program of differentiated learning experiences.

Communities vary greatly and the differences will be reflected in the responses of the schools to the needs of gifted students.

Even though programs may vary in emphasis and structure, certain key elements must form the core of any plan for gifted children. Essentially, these humanistic goals seek to help gifted children develop into intellectually capable, productive and sensitive human beings.

The plan must:

- focus on a child-oriented approach that considers the individual as the basis for organisation

