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## SECTION I: GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ASSUMPTIONS

Before we describe the Individualized Programming Planning Model (IPPM) approach in detail, we should establish the specific goals and objectives to which this book is addressed, and present explicitly the fundamental assumptions upon which the IPPM builds.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

By studying this book, and the material in it, you should be able to:

- Describe the goals and purposes of the IPPM approach to "programming for giftedness"
- Describe several important steps in program planning
- Describe the "keys" to blend gifted and regular programs successfully
- Define giftedness
- Describe characteristics associated with giftedness
- Describe several ways of gathering data to assist you in understanding students' characteristics and needs
- Explain the relationship between student characteristics and instruction
- Plan and conduct procedures for gathering and analyzing student information
- Describe the needs of learners in relation to characteristics
- Describe and give examples of a variety of appropriate ways to respond to students' needs
- Plan and conduct appropriate procedures for organizing, managing, and documenting programming efforts
- Describe the role of the regular classroom program and staff in programming for giftedness
- Describe the role of the Catalyst in programming for giftedness
- Describe the nature and role of a Building Committee
- Compare and contrast a variety of models and approaches for responding to students' needs
- Describe several useful methods and resources for planning and conducting effective professional development (including awareness, needs assessment, and staff development)
- Develop a plan for establishing gifted programming successfully in your own school or district.

This is *not* a book about Gifted Programs; it is concerned with *programming for giftedness*. The distinction is very important, not merely semantic.

**Giftedness** refers to a set of characteristics and potentials, dimensions of behavior that can be observed and documented among many individuals in different ways, in different contexts, and at various times. It is *not* a fixed designation or label which can be "permanently affixed" to a person in all circumstances.

**Programming** represents a decision-making process in which we analyze the characteristics and needs of students in order to determine the most effective instructional responses. It may lead us to conclude that services presently being provided should be modified or changed in some ways. By contrast, a "program" is generally viewed as a fixed set of services offered to a designated group of students.

Most importantly, this is a book about students, with particular emphasis on the unique characteristics and needs that lead (either in present manifestations or potentially) to talented performances and accomplishments in any domain of human endeavor. Secondly, and only so, it is about the policies, procedures, and resources that enable us to serve those needs of our students more effectively.

In attempting to examine our instructional programming as it addresses these concerns, two basic questions will be addressed:

- (1.) How does the staff of a school district, or an individual school, increase its effectiveness in programming for giftedness?
- (2.) How will *individual students* benefit most effectively from gifted programming?

Thus, we will be concerned both with the general issue of designing school- or district-wide programming and with the more specific challenge of responding to the needs of particular students. In each instance, however, we will build on the same "cornerstone." The fundamental assumption of programming for giftedness is:

**Nothing is more central for gifted programming than responsiveness to the unique needs of each student; this is our fundamental and most important "mission" in gifted education.**

## ASSUMPTIONS

There are several assumptions upon which this point of view is based. These involve assumptions about the nature of giftedness, of the school program, and of gifted programming. These assumptions include:

- Giftedness is an abstract concept, not an entity. We make inferences about giftedness based on people's accomplishments and performances over time; giftedness should not be viewed as a static label.
- Giftedness and talent refer to human potentials -- strengths and characteristics which can be nurtured through deliberate instructional efforts.
- Identification should be more concerned with obtaining information to help us teach students effectively than with establishing reasons for including or excluding students from fixed programs.
- Students do not "save" their unique characteristics and needs for a single block of time that is set aside for a gifted program. Their interests, characteristics, and concerns are relevant to their instructional needs all day long, every day.
- Characteristics and strengths can be observed among significant numbers of students in all schools; students are now being taught in regular classrooms, and will continue to be there for the foreseeable future.
- Classroom teachers are asked each year to do more, for more needs of more students, with stable or declining resources.
- Although it is a desirable goal, individualization of instruction happens more in theory than in practice in many schools, but even when successful, does not eliminate the need for specialists who know how to respond to particular characteristics and needs.

- All effective educational programming is concerned with offering appropriate services to students based on their needs; gifted programming's goals must be embedded in that concern, not detached from it.
- People are motivated to pursue their strongest interests and express their best talents independently and in creative productivity; giftedness involves behavior that is much more complex than memorization and recall.
- "Curriculum" refers to a dynamic decision-making process, not merely to the development of a fixed set of materials or activities.
- "More" is not synonymous with "better."
- Gifted programming should not be concerned with doing for a small group of students in a special time and place those activities we know can and should be available to many students in the regular program.
- Effective programming can make many different kinds of activities or services available to many different students.