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Introduction

“All students, including those who are exceptional, are entitled to a public-supported education in which instruction is geared to their needs, interests and developmental levels.”

It is the desire of schools to cater for the individual needs of all students, yet very few schools seem interested or able to implement such a policy statement. Many of our brightest youngsters are frequently forced to participate in practice exercises or instructional groups that deal with skills or content that they have previously mastered. These same students also suggest that school is “too easy” and that they spend far too much time during the school day doing assignments that they already know how to do.

The parents of these youngsters may also be less than satisfied with the way schools are meeting the needs of their children. Many bright students are bored and disinterested at school, and their parents frequently wonder when or if their children’s academic needs will be met. Unfortunately, even with the creation of a gifted program or the implementation of enrichment options, these students still may not have a challenging program available to them in their regular classroom.

Many educators would like to develop curriculum that is adapted to the learning needs, rates and interests of their students of above-average ability. Yet, these same educators frequently find that there are many obstacles that make it difficult to accomplish such a goal. Too little planning time, a need for a better organisational structure and unclear curricular objectives often make the task even more challenging. This book has been developed in order to provide the interested teacher with the knowledge and techniques that might be used to overcome such obstacles. The book’s major purpose is to help teachers learn how to modify or “streamline” the year-level curriculum in order to eliminate repetition of previously mastered material. In doing so, these same teachers will be able to better challenge their above-average-ability learners and provide them with time for appropriate enrichment or acceleration activities while ensuring mastery of the basic skills curriculum.

Frequent examples are located throughout the text providing the reader with an opportunity to examine the skills that will be needed in the classroom when making such curricular modifications for their high-ability students. A rationale for curricular modification is also included, as well as detailed instructions for systematically planning for student pretesting, instruction, enrichment and acceleration options. Practical issues such as record keeping, commercial materials and administrative support are also covered.

It is our intent that this book be used as an “inservice experience” for concerned teachers who are tired of the frustration that comes from assigning

Chapter 1 • Compacted Version

➤ A Definition of Curriculum Compacting

Curriculum compacting is a procedure used to streamline the regular curriculum for students who are capable of mastering it at a faster pace.

The compacting process has three basic phases:

- Determine the goals and objectives of the regular curriculum
- Assess students for previous mastery of these objectives
- Substitute more appropriate (challenging) options

These components can be broken down into eight steps:

1. Identify the objectives
2. Find appropriate pretests
3. Identify students who should be pretested
4. Pretest students
5. Eliminate instructional time for students who show mastery of the objectives
6. Streamline instruction of those objectives students have not mastered but are capable of mastering more quickly than their classmates
7. Offer challenging alternatives for time provided by compacting
8. Keep records

Compression, enrichment, acceleration and ability grouping are referenced repeatedly in the literature on gifted education. Acceleration is often used interchangeably with compression and includes skipping a year level, early entrance into university, secondary school or primary school, the opportunity to complete two semesters of work in one; and the option of taking part in independent study or small group training. Acceleration may begin with or result from the compacting process.

Although enrichment and acceleration may be part of the process, compacting encompasses much more. It is, in fact, more closely associated with diagnosis and prescription: a method used in remedial education to point out learning objectives students have not yet mastered. Instruction is intended to help them "catch up" with the rest of the class. With compacting, pretesting identifies learning objectives already mastered, and students are allowed to "test out" of certain academic exercises and move on to new material.