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PREFACE

The approach described in this book was first developed (in a tongue-in-cheek manner) to answer a series of “yeah buts” we encountered in various workshops we have given for classroom teachers. What is a “yeah but”? It’s our term for the many objections and excuses given by teachers for not providing a differential curriculum for gifted students.

Here are a few typical “yeah buts”:

Yeah, but—

- ... What do I do with the rest of the class?
- ... He hates to write.
- ... I don’t have time for “creative” activities.
- ... It’s too complicated.
- ... Who’s got the time?
- ... How can I motivate them?
- ... We don’t have the money.
- ... She’s only interested in maths.
- ... Where can I get the materials?
- ... How could a group with such wide abilities work together?
- ... Where would I keep the materials?

In answer to these objections, we decided to develop a materials display for teachers. We felt that the approach presented in this book would provide the solution.

Since all of us are hopeless packrats, we went through our own teaching files and filled dozens of boxes with anything we could find pertaining to a variety of topics. We then brainstormed activities for primary year levels that related to each topic. We tried to include activities for as many diverse talent areas as we could. Each box contained suggested activities in the arts, academic subject areas, creative and productive thinking, and high level thinking skills.

We tried the boxes out with a group of gifted year two children with a wide range of abilities. The children were allowed to explore all of the boxes and choose one to work on. Two or three children could work from the same box.

After a two hour period we collected the boxes and the children returned to their classroom with their projects to share them with the class. Several of the children pursued their topics in their spare time and developed new boxes for the classroom.

Do the boxes answer the “yeah buts”? We feel they do because:

1. They were simple to collect.
2. They worked with all levels.
3. They were easy to store.
4. They were inexpensive (who doesn’t get junk mail?).
5. They encompassed all academic and talent areas.
6. They gave the child a chance to develop interests.
7. They allowed the child to work with minimal guidance.
8. They let the child work within his or her chosen media.

We have shared this idea with many teachers and the reception was always enthusiastic. It’s simple! It’s challenging! It works!

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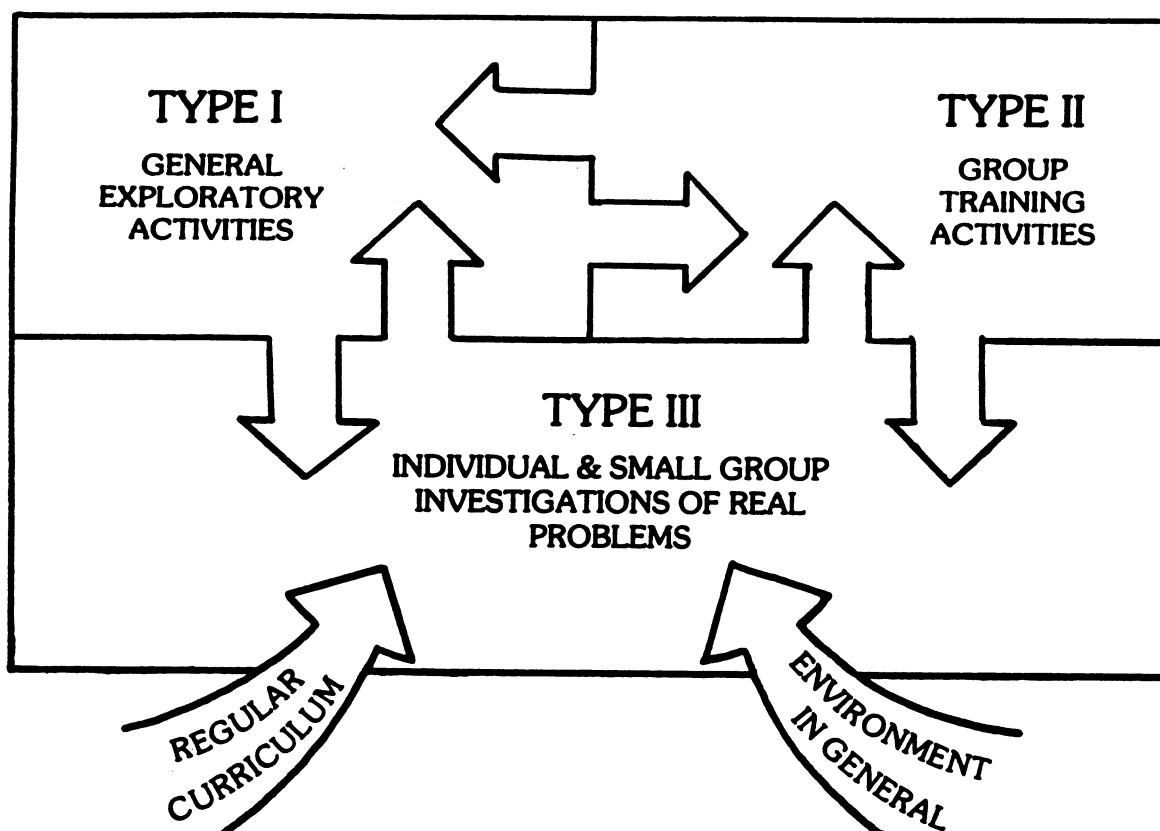
CHAPTER 1

MAGIC KITS: A Rationale

The characteristics frequently mentioned in the literature describing gifted children include:

1. Performance above year level in subject matter.
2. An intense curiosity about many areas.
3. Task commitment to a chosen subject of interest.
4. An ability to use higher level thinking skills, including analysis, synthesis and evaluation.
5. A desire and ability to investigate topics independently without teacher mandate.

Various models which recognize these characteristics have been proposed to help in the development of appropriate instruction for gifted children. One of these, "The Enrichment Triad", advocated by Dr. Joseph Renzulli (Renzulli, 1977), proposes three types of activities. The Renzulli diagram below illustrates the Triad Model.



Type I, or General Exploratory Activities, are designed to expose students to a wide variety of topics not necessarily included in the year level curriculum. Exposure to these topics is provided through field trips, speakers, interest centres, library resources, etc.

Type II, or Group Training Activities, focus on instructional techniques to develop the student's ability to engage in self-initiated research and production. Some of these strategies include brainstorming, classification, interpretation, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, hypothesizing, and creative and productive thinking skills.

Individual and small group investigation and real problems, or Type III activities require that students synthesize their previous experience with Type I and II activities and then initiate and implement a meaningful project.

The MAGIC KITS strategy presented in this book delineates a method to implement levels I and II of the Enrichment Triad. The MAGIC KITS, by their very nature, encourage Type I exploration of numerous topics using a variety of materials. The suggested activities within the MAGIC KITS train students in Type II processes, which in turn may develop into self-initiated Type III projects.

CHAPTER 2

MAGIC KITS: A Guide for Their Use

At this point you may be asking yourself the following questions:

1. What are MAGIC KITS?
2. What kinds of materials go into the MAGIC KITS?
3. How do students use MAGIC KITS?
4. Why are the MAGIC KITS appropriate for gifted students?

This section will provide the answers to these questions.

What are MAGIC KITS? MAGIC KITS are Meaningful Activities for Gifted in the Classroom using Knowledge, Interests, Training and Stimulation. MAGIC KITS are a collection of available materials on a specific topic. This material can be packaged in boxes, ice-cream containers, file folders, A4 envelopes, paper bags. The packaging depends on teacher preference. However, it is essential that students have access to a multiplicity of assembled materials on the topic and be encouraged to freely explore the entire contents of the MAGIC KITS.

What kinds of materials go into the MAGIC KITS? You can use anything you can get your hands on. Here are just a few suggestions:

books	brochures	magazines	manipulatives
magazine articles	collections	pictures	charts & graphs
maps	wipe-off cards	posters	junk mail
coloring books	newspapers & catalogues	viewmasters	puzzle books
specimens—real or plastic	government publications	records/tapes	models
artefacts	puzzles & games	experiments	plays

Materials included should be as varied as possible. The content items may also be of differing degrees of difficulty so that the KITS may be used at many year levels. Since using the MAGIC KITS is an ongoing process, students should also be encouraged to add appropriate materials to the MAGIC KITS. These may be items students have selected from other sources or projects they have developed while doing the suggested activities in the MAGIC KITS. You need not laminate, cover or permanently bond any of these materials as no one item should be indispensable to the use of the MAGIC KITS.

How do students use the MAGIC KITS? The most important element of the KITS is the list of suggested activities for each topic. The Activity Sheet for each KIT should cover the Type II process included in the Triad as well as integrate as many subject areas as possible (see Chapter 5 for additional ideas on KIT construction). For example, a MAGIC KITS on Canberra with a major focus on Social Studies, would also include activities involving art, music, poetry and maths. Students should be encouraged to formulate their own activities and contribute these to the MAGIC KITS.

Why are MAGIC KITS appropriate for gifted kids? MAGIC KITS take into account the characteristics of gifted youngsters in the following ways:

Characteristics of Gifted Children

- Above year level performances in skill areas
- Intense curiosity about many subjects
- Task commitment to a chosen topic of interest
- Ability to use higher level thinking skills
- Desire to work independently on self-selected projects

MAGIC KITS Attributes

- Materials in MAGIC KITS can be at any level appropriate to the student's capabilities
- The MAGIC KITS approach allows an exploration of unlimited topics
- MAGIC KITS promote in-depth investigation
- The suggestions on the Activity Sheets provide students with opportunities to practise these skills
- The MAGIC KITS are a springboard for self-initiated research