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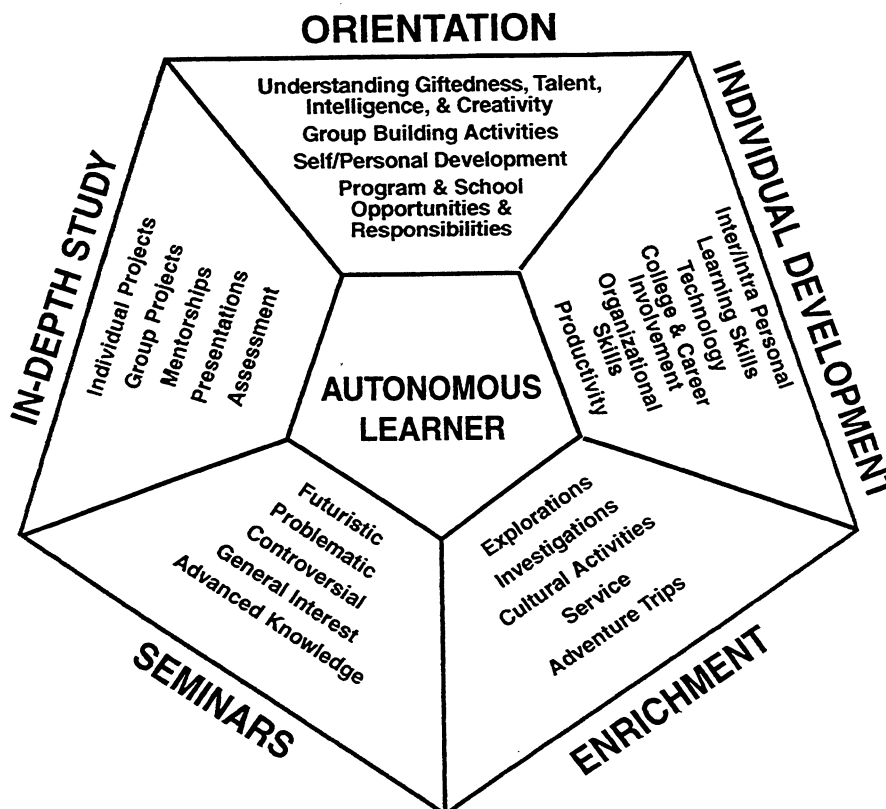
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## Introduction

Models of teaching which meet the diversified needs of all learners vary in form and substance. Some models may be applied to pullout or resource settings, while others provide opportunities in the regular classroom. Furthermore, teachers are continuously faced with designing activities that are appropriate for different levels of ability and learning.

Additionally, although it is generally accepted that intellectually gifted, creatively gifted, and talented children are all in need of special help in developing their gifted potential (Feldhusen and Treffinger 1980), these ideas are often ignored. Programs addressing not only the needs of all learners but, specifically, the needs of the gifted and talented, have not been extensively developed.

On closer examination, the major goals of gifted programs are to help gifted and talented learners realize their full career potential and to experience a sense of personal fulfillment or self-actualization in maturity (Feldhusen and Treffinger 1980). Clark (1983) states that gifted youngsters learn early in life that their ideas and interests are quite different from their chronological peers. Once they are able to be together, they will begin to develop their potential for self-actualization. As a result, it is important to examine models for teaching that adapt easily to providing learning situations that address these considerations.



## **The Autonomous Learner Model**

The Autonomous Learner Model (ALM) for the Gifted and Talented was developed specifically to meet the diversified cognitive, emotional and social needs of learners. Originating at Arvada West High School in Arvada, Colorado, it is now successfully implemented in kindergarten through high school with the gifted and talented as well as all learners in the regular classrooms. Emphasis is placed on meeting the individualized needs of learners through the use of activities in the five major dimensions of the model:

### ***I. Orientation***

### ***II. Individual Development***

### ***III. Enrichment***

### ***IV. Seminars***

### ***V. In-Depth Study***

The **Orientation Dimension** of the model provides learners, teachers, administrators and parents the opportunity to develop a foundation of the concepts of giftedness, talent, intelligence, creativity, and the development of potential. Learners discover more about themselves, their abilities and what the program has to offer. Activities are presented to give learners an opportunity to work together as a group, to learn more about group process and interaction, and to learn more about the other people in the program.

During the Orientation Dimension, a series of inservices are presented for educators, parents and involved community resource people. Again, emphasis is placed on the opportunities possible for learners, the responsibilities for learners and involved personnel, and information is given regarding the overall format of the Autonomous Learner Model.

The **Individual Development Dimension** of the model provides learners with the opportunity to develop the cognitive, emotional, social and physical skills, concepts, and attitudes necessary for life-long learning. In other words, learners become autonomous in their learning.

Areas within this dimension include opportunities for the inter/intra personal development

of the learner, the appropriate learning skills for life-long learning, and the area of technology. Also, learners will participate in college and career involvement, the development of organizational skills and the importance of productivity skills, which are almost always used when information is presented in a variety of ways.

The **Enrichment Dimension** of the Autonomous Learner Model was developed to provide learners with opportunities to explore content which is usually not part of the every day curriculum. There are two types of differentiation in this dimension. The first is the differentiation that is made to the regular curriculum by the teacher, and the second type is differentiated by the learner. Since most content in the schools is prescribed, the Autonomous Learner Model differentiated approach frees the teacher and the learners to go beyond the usual content, which may be surface learning for the learner or may already be known. The highest level of learning is manifested when a learner has the freedom to select and to pursue content or topics in their own style.

The **Seminar Dimension** of the model is designed to give learners in groups of three to five opportunities to research a topic, present it as a seminar to the rest of the class and other interested people, and to assess it by criteria selected and developed by the learners. A seminar is essential because it provides learners the chance to move from the role of a student to the role of a *learner*. If students are to become learners, they must have the opportunity for independent individual and group learning, which means having a structure which allows and promotes the development of new knowledge for the individuals.

The **In-Depth Study Dimension** of the Autonomous Learner Model empowers learners to pursue areas of interest through the development of a long-term small group or individual in-depth study. The learners determine what will be learned, how it will be learned, how it will be presented, what facilitation will be necessary, what the final product will be and how the entire learning process will be assessed. In-depth Studies are usually continued for a long period of time. Plans are developed by learners, in cooperation with the teacher/facilitator, content specialist, and mentors. The plans are then implemented and completed by the learners with presentations being made at appropriate times until the completion of the project. A final presentation and assessment is given to all who are involved and interested.

## Philosophy

As the needs of learners are being met, they will develop into autonomous learners with the abilities to be responsible for the development, implementation and assessment of their own learning.