

TEACHER GUIDE

The Autonomous Learner Model

The Center for Autonomous Learning is based on the philosophy of the Autonomous Learning Model developed by George Betts and Jolene Knapp Kercher at Arvada West High School in Jefferson County, Colorado (see Figure 1). The model was designed to meet the diversified cognitive, emotional and social needs of gifted and talented children.

Although the model has proven to be extremely successful with gifted and talented children, it is now being used in regular classrooms (K-12) with ALL children. Gifted children respond differently and more in-depth than other children, but the model also is positive for all children and allows for cognitive, emotional and social growth. The model has five dimensions: Orientation, Individual Development, Enrichment Activities, Seminars, and In-depth Study.

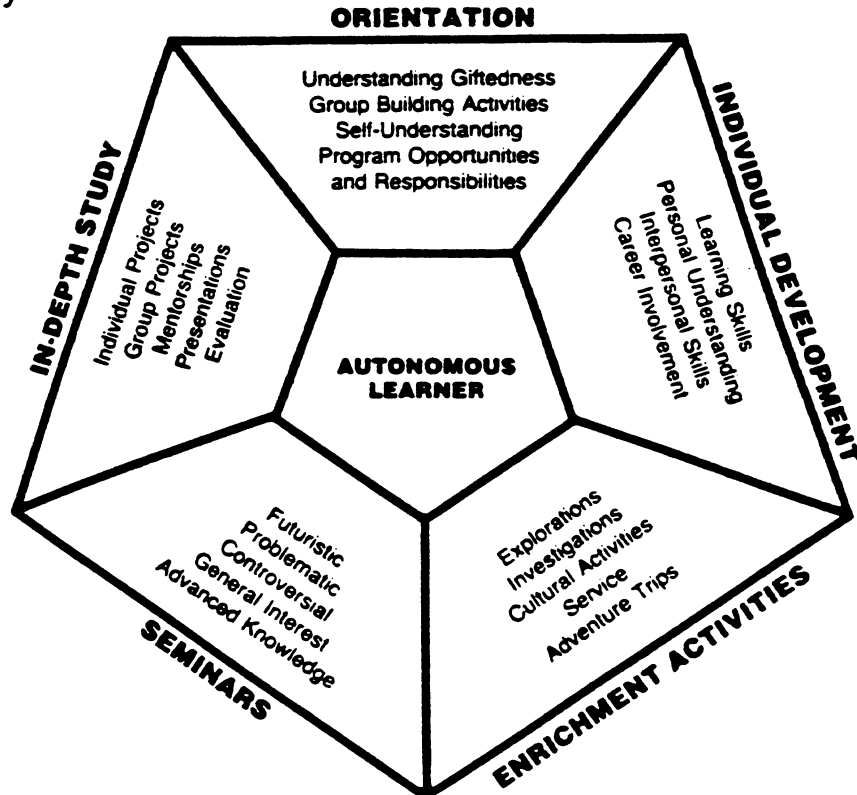
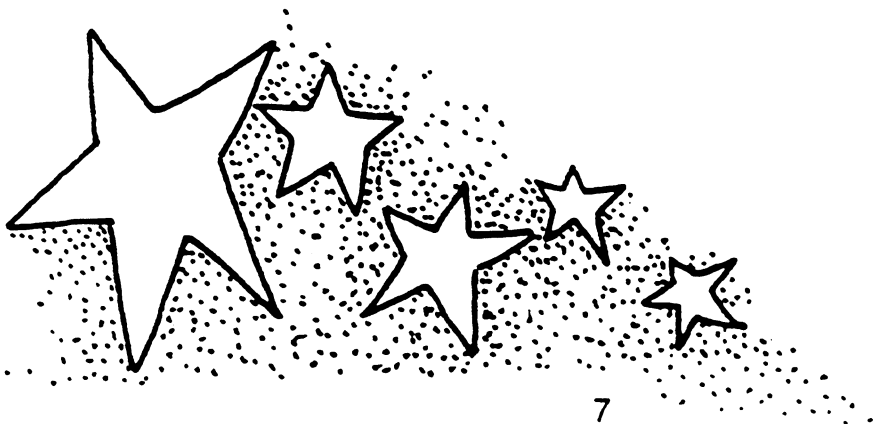


Figure 1.
The Autonomous Learner Model

Why The Center?

Many educators and administrators realize that schools today are not equipping students to become life-long learners. Too much emphasis is placed on teaching what the system wants students to learn, what is prescribed and what is in the textbooks. The Center encourages the students to reach life-long learning goals of:

1. Learning how to learn
2. Learning student-based knowledge
3. Thinking critically and creatively
4. Making choices and decisions
5. Planning activities
6. Participating in The Center
7. Self-evaluating and assessing
8. Planning for transference of content, processes and products
9. Developing new centers for on-going learning and knowledge



Steps to Develop The Center

- 1. Brainstorm and define a topic**
- 2. Write questions about the topic**
- 3. Design Activity Cards**
- 4. Select and gather materials and people resources for completing the activity cards**
- 5. Select activity cards of your choice and begin completing these cards**
- 6. Share completed projects with appropriate audiences**
- 7. Assess and evaluate your completed projects**
- 8. Become involved with more activity cards, brainstorm new activity cards, or brainstorm new uses for your learning center**

Components of the Center

The Center is designed specifically for students who are becoming learners. Teachers and parents will facilitate rather than direct. Learning which focuses on areas of interest to the students in the goal of The Center. The following are the basic components of The Center:

Bull's Eye Form, Information Please, Interest Cards
Question Cards
Process List and Product List
Activity Cards
Materials Form
People Form
Interview Form
Assessment Form, My Thoughts Form
The Autonomous Learner Award

To begin, the learner will select a topic of interest. For many children this is a challenging task. Some have so many interests that it can be difficult to converge on one topic, while others have no ideas at all.

The teacher/parent role is to facilitate the learner, when needed, in determining a topic. There are several processes which can be used to brainstorm a topic

1. Bull's Eye Form
2. Information Please
3. Interest Cards

