



EFFECTIVE PRACTICES in Special Programs

No. 3 Spring 2002

Teaching Students Who Are Gifted and Talented

Shaping the Future for Students with Special Needs: A Review of Special Education in Alberta, Final Report provided government and other partners with recommendations about programming for students who are gifted and talented. There was a recognized need to develop more resources to assist in the identification of these students and development of special programs to meet their needs.

This issue of *Effective Practices* features both the Authentic Product Real Investigation Learning (APRIL) Program at Duffield School and the Centre for Gifted Education in Calgary.

CURRENT RESEARCH ON PROGRAMMING FOR GIFTEDNESS

Joseph Renzulli stated that gifted behaviour reflects an interaction among three basic clusters of human traits — above average ability, high levels of task commitment, and high levels of creativity.



Renzulli's "Three Ring Conception" of Giftedness

Renzulli, J. (1986). "The Three ring conception of giftedness: A developmental model for creative productivity." In R. J. Sternberg & J. E. Davidson (Eds.) *Conceptions of Giftedness* (53-92). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Current research shows that rather than being fixed at birth, intelligence is dynamic and grows and changes as a child matures. Students who are gifted and talented show a well above average ability in one or more of the abilities identified by Joseph Renzulli, show dedicated commitment and are highly creative. Research shows that programs for students who are gifted and talented include the following characteristics.

- G** Giftedness is that endowment of potentially outstanding abilities which allows a person to interact with the environment with remarkably high levels of achievement and creativity.*
- I** Intensity, combined with advanced cognitive abilities creates inner experiences and awareness different from the norm, leaving students who are gifted and talented often vulnerable.
- F** Facilitated enrichment for all activities.
- T** Tracking individual student's performance through the Individualized Program Plan (IPP).
- E** Exceptional performance is encouraged.
- D** Differentiated learning styles and intelligences are recognized.
- N** Natural problem-solving that separates relevant from irrelevant information and insightful solutions are encouraged.
- E** Early intervention for students who are gifted and talented includes accelerated and enriched programs and individualized programming.
- S** Self-directed learning enhances gifted and talented programs.
- S** Stamina and motivation are honed as students develop their gifts and talents.

* Taken from *Giftedness and the Gifted: What's It All About?* ED 321 481, ERIC EC Digest #E476, 1990.

Authentic Product Real Investigation Learning (APRIL)

How does Duffield School provide for students who are gifted and talented?

Duffield School serves a student population of 300 (K-9) students in a rural setting, approximately 30 minutes west of Edmonton. In the 1999/2000 school year, the administration and staff at Duffield School initiated an Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISi) project focusing on providing unique learning opportunities for their exceptional students.

"Students need to work in their areas of exceptionality and interest to create and investigate in authentic ways. And they need to do this in the company of teachers who are also passionate about, and talented in those same areas of learning."

Mary Sullivan, Principal

Based on Dr. Joseph Renzulli's School-Wide Enrichment Model, teachers offer challenging activities that enable students to investigate individual areas of interest and produce "real" products with which they share knowledge with their peers, school, community or another "real" audience.

How are students chosen for the Authentic Product Real Investigation Learning (APRIL) Program?

Students in the APRIL Program at Duffield School are selected based on three key areas.

- Ability in a specific subject area, based on grades, performance and teacher(s) observation.
- Aptitude, demonstrated by a high personal interest in a specific area as observed by the teacher(s).
- Task commitment, as demonstrated by a work ethic to get the job done.

Students are occasionally selected based on the "need" for an opportunity for success. These students are seen as "Children of Promise" and are identified by a staff member who believes that given the opportunity for success, these children have the chance to transfer that feeling of success to other areas in their school day or life.

"It's critical that the student's creativity is expressed through their creation of a real product or service."

Mary Sullivan, Principal

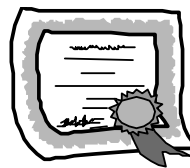
How does the APRIL Program work?

- The majority of the funding is used to provide teachers with time to guide, support, and accompany students to various destinations (project specific).
- Teachers focus on specific areas of interest and aptitudes of their students, taking that information and proposing an APRIL project to the school principal.
- The principal uses a general guideline for approval and looks for opportunities for students to challenge and extend themselves in meaningful ways.
- Creativity and divergent thinking skills are emphasized, along with peer group social interaction and the pursuit of individual interests within a thematic framework.
- Real-world research is encouraged, including non-text and electronic sources.
- Materials are acquired as needed, based on the theme studied.
- Now in the second year of the project, more than 40 students have participated in a variety of projects locally and around the province.
- The projects already completed through the APRIL Program have convinced the school to continue to provide this opportunity for teachers and students after the AISi funding is used up.

What does an APRIL project involve?

Each project must:

- be open-ended, to allow each child to "stand up in their learning"
- provide for a creative process that includes a real investigation where students must plan, collaborate, create and evaluate their learning experience(s)
- produce a "real life" product to share with others in a "meaningful" way
- be evaluated through student, parent and supervising teacher anecdotal feedback.



"I am very proud of the students and their teacher. I'm thrilled my daughter was chosen to participate in this project. I know it was a lot of hard work from all involved, but it was well worth it!"

Parent

What are some APRIL projects to date?

Ode to a School Board

Four students in grade 6 created a PowerPoint presentation on the role of school boards in Alberta. Students conducted surveys to assess the knowledge in the community about the work of trustees. They interviewed trustees and attended a board meeting. The resulting PowerPoint presentation was entered in the Alberta School Boards Association's (ASBA) pilot Student Writing Competition and won first prize for the province. Students presented to the Parkland School Board and to ASBA.

Careers in the Power Industry

Twelve junior high writers interviewed employees at TransAlta to put together a booklet for youth about careers in the power industry. TransAlta will publish the material this winter.

Let There Be Music

A dozen upper elementary students are participating in a workshop with a singer-songwriter to compose a song. Students will use computer software to create the score and will perform the song in the school community.

Mural Project

A talented student artist met with local artists to plan a small mural that she painted on the outside of the school building.

Science Olympics

A small group of girls in grade 6 attended the *WISEST* Conference at the University of Alberta. Then they made presentations to the student body about women in scholarship, engineering, science and technology. They worked with the school's science specialist to plan and execute the science Olympics activities later in the year.

Destination Conservation

A 5-member team of students in grade 4 went to Pincher Creek to research wind power and wind turbines. The students presented their information to 300 participants of the Destination Conservation Conference at the Space and Sciences Centre and will present again at the University of Alberta. The students also are conducting an environmental audit at Duffield School to assist administrators in decision-making about conservation issues.

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Centre For *Gifted* Education

Based at the University of Calgary, the Centre for Gifted Education began operation in the fall of 1988. The Centre has a provincial mandate to advance the teaching of gifted and talented students, carry out research and development, and serve as a resource to stakeholders in gifted education throughout Alberta.

Since the fall of 1999, the faculty members associated with the Centre have supported the offering of graduate level courses in the Graduate Division of Educational Research leading to a Masters in Gifted Education.

What kind of resource library does the Centre have?

- The resource library holds a comprehensive collection of books, journals, articles and videos about the theory and practice of gifted education.
- For educators it houses a model collection of classroom resource material and for parents it houses books, magazines and videos about assessment and parenting.
- The library's catalogue can be searched through the Centre's Web site.
- Parents and schools may purchase a borrower's card. The Centre will mail materials to borrowers outside the Calgary region.

Does the Centre offer programs or services to schools?

- Services to schools – The Consultative Services team offers programs and services for teachers, administrators and parents throughout the province of Alberta. Programs are available for group professional development or for individual advice and consultation.
- SAGE Conference – This conference is organized annually by the Society for the Advancement of Gifted Education, which is an umbrella organization consisting of three primary stakeholders in gifted education in Alberta:
 - Centre for Gifted Education
 - Gifted and Talented Education Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association
 - Alberta Associations for Bright Children.

Does the Centre offer programs for students?

- SUCCESS is a summer program that is designed to academically challenge students in their areas of strength. The 10-day program is conducted by the Centre for Gifted Education at the University of Calgary.
- Talent Search — The goal of a talent search is to identify, via above-level testing, students who need further educational challenge to fully realize their talent. Above-level testing is an educational procedure in which a test developed for older students is administered to younger students.

Does the Centre offer programs for parents?

- The Centre for Gifted Education regularly offers a three-part lecture series for parents on topics applicable to supporting and understanding the gifted child.

What does the Centre's Web site offer?

- <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~gifteduc/>
- The Centre's Web site includes:
 - articles by Centre staff
 - reading lists for parents

- *Differentiating for Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom: A Reading List for Teachers*
- a link to the resources of the Bright Site Library (from the Alberta Associations for Bright Children)
- links to other resources on the Internet.

For more information, please contact:



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Alberta Learning Resources

Teaching Students who are Gifted and Talented
Programming for Students with Special Needs
Series (Book 7)

To order this resource please contact:
Learning Resources Centre
Customer Service
12360–142 Street NW Edmonton, AB T5L 4X9
☎ (780) 427–5775; or toll-free in AB 310–0000
Fax: (780) 422–9750
Web site: www.lrc.learning.gov.ab.ca

Effective Practices in Special Programs is a newsletter developed in response to the Special Education Review Recommendations #51-52 identified in *Shaping the Future for Students with Special Needs* (November 2000). Each issue includes a summary of current research on a topic and resources or featured school(s) in Alberta that have developed and implemented effective practices.

If you want to share information about your school's effective practices, please contact:
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