

**ENRICHMENT IS NOT A PACKET!**



# ENRICHMENT IS NOT A PACKET!

OUT OF THE BOX STRATEGIES TO ENRICH  
YOUR HIGH LEVEL STUDENTS IN A TRULY  
DIFFERENTIATED CLASSROOM

Michelle J. Marks



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*Enrichment is not a Packet! Out of the Box Strategies to Enrich Your  
High Level Students in a Truly Differentiated Classroom*

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# DEDICATION

*To the boys in my life, Bobby, Jake and Cooper, who inspire me to chase my dreams  
and who remind me that the only limits in life are the ones we set for ourselves.*

*#hometeam*

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## CHAPTER 1

# WHAT IS ENRICHMENT? DIFFERENTIATION DOESN'T MEAN MORE WORK!

### ■ WHY ENRICHMENT AND DIFFERENTIATION ARE IMPORTANT

In the ever-challenging world of education it is easy to become overwhelmed by the thought of adding enrichment to an already overflowing list of to-dos. As the hot button terms, “differentiate” and “enrich,” buzz around school districts big and small and through the halls of public and private schools alike, educators are seeking out more meaningful and practical strategies for engaging and challenging highly capable learners. It’s time to go beyond the “enrichment packet” strategy and give teachers fresh and exciting ideas for ways to truly give our leaders of tomorrow what they really need. Students soar highest when they become the leaders of their own learning. As teachers it is our job to light their fires and allow them to discover their interests and pursue their passions. When classrooms encourage students to be a part of the process, children excel. When they have been included in choosing the path they will take to a learning destination students will become much more motivated to travel down it.

### ■ COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ENRICHMENT

The title of this book references one of the biggest misconceptions when it comes to enrichment in American education. Enrichment is not a packet! While working with teachers in various schools over the years I often hear the same version of how they are meeting the needs of the gifted or highly capable learners in their classroom. It always involves a PACKET! This can be in the form of

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a packet students keep in their desks that they work on when they've completed the assignment the class is working on. It can be a packet filled with extra math problems and spelling word searches. It is sometimes a book report form for an additional book the student is to read after they finish the weekly story. None of these before mentioned items are truly enrichment.

First and foremost I want to say that I don't judge teachers for going this route. They are managing a vast array of education levels, health issues, and emotional needs and much more on a daily basis. The needs of the highly capable students can easily be seen as less pressing than those of the students with severe academic deficiencies or behavioral challenges. The thought of creating a separate, more challenging curriculum for these gifted learners seems an unmanageable task. I am here to tell you it doesn't have to be. By following and implementing the strategies presented in this book, teachers will find that they can actually make their classroom management less stressful and more streamlined. Once students are comfortable in their roles as teachers' partners in learning, it is amazing how independently and successfully they can work and what they can achieve. Being a gifted or highly capable student shouldn't win you an extra packet of work or a seat at the back table with an additional book to read. These students should be given the tools to take their learning to the next level...without a packet.

## ■ ENRICHMENT DOES NOT EQUAL MORE WORK

Instead of focusing on what additional assignments highly capable students should be completing, I say shift your thought process. What assignments can these students complete instead of the prescribed lessons for the whole class. In this book teachers will discover approaches to offer choices within the classroom that allow students to work on their individual level while still meeting the objectives of the daily or weekly lessons. For example, not everyone in the class needs to complete workbook page 43 on multiplication facts just because it is lesson 4.5 and that is what the teacher's edition prescribes as classwork for the day. For students who are already proficient with the times tables a different option can, and should be offered. A math simulation where students need to apply multiplication strategies in order to solve a real world problem would be a much more meaningful and worthwhile task for those who are capable. Students may work on this simulation individually or in a group over the course of a few days, while others in the class work on more concrete practice tasks. Teachers need to feel confident that it is perfectly acceptable that Suzy did not complete page 43 in her workbook. Suzy will demonstrate her knowledge of the same skills in a more advanced way. She can still be assessed on her knowledge of the multiplication facts as evidenced in her problem solving in the simulation. She doesn't even need to do the same homework assignment as some of her classmates. This doesn't mean she should do the practice page for homework

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AND an enrichment page. It means that she ONLY has to do the enrichment page or another more challenging assignment.

A key phrase to remember in all this is: *Fair is not giving every child the same thing; fair is giving every child whatever it is they need to succeed.*

## ■ MORE SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES THAT LEAD TO GREATER STUDENT SUCCESS

The goal of this book is to streamline teacher and student workloads, making them more meaningful, not to increase them. In this book teachers will discover how to integrate proven techniques to motivate students to reach beyond the bar of the standards. There are examples and lesson suggestions that can be implemented throughout elementary grade levels and across disciplines. All strategies and lesson examples either involve little or no preparation. Any materials needed are those that can be easily found in most classrooms and can often be recycled for multiple activities. In the pages that follow there are engaging yet realistic ideas, lesson plans and activities that have been designed and implemented by a veteran teacher. No lofty ideas that sound great on paper but any seasoned teacher will tell you are nightmares to put into practice in an actual classroom. These are tried and true best practices that can correlate to multiple grade levels, subject areas and standards.





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## CHAPTER 2

# WHO NEEDS ENRICHMENT?

### ■ IDENTIFICATION IS KEY

Getting to know your students is the first and foremost task of any teacher. Students who are in need of enrichment are not always as easy to spot as one would think. Depending on state and/or district requirements, various students come into the class each year with a gifted classification. These students should always be offered enrichment opportunities when possible. However many other students in the class can benefit from enrichment depending on the subject matter. A student *does not* need to carry a gifted classification in order to benefit from enrichment!

As we all know, no two children are alike and each comes with their own set of strengths and weaknesses. Finding out what “lights their fire” is the key to reaching even the most challenging child in the room. There may very well be a student in the class who is advanced in math but struggles with grammar. There will be another who is reading way beyond their grade level yet has a hard time memorizing multiplication facts. Enrichment does not need to be an all or nothing idea. Enrichment can even be flexible within one discipline. For example a student may excel in geometry but his or her other math skills are strictly average. Whenever a teacher encounters an area of strength in a student it needs to be fostered. This is how we will find our future engineers, designers and authors. There are a few easy ways to identify students who would benefit from enrichment that utilize quick and sometimes fun activities.

### ■ THE POWER OF PRE-TESTS

The idea of pre-testing students to gain information is not new in the world of education but it is definitely underutilized. The thought of “I have to teach this unit no matter what so there is really no

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need to spend time on a pre-test” can easily creep in. Teachers need a new perspective on the value to pre-testing. You are not pre-testing to see if you can skip a unit altogether. The chance that the entire class has a firm grasp on fractions before they are taught is slim to none. What a pre-test can however provide a teacher is an easy way to see which students do actually already know the key concepts that will be presented. The freedom then comes in when the teacher realizes that these students do not need to do the prescribed activities and workbook pages in addition to another “enrichment” activity. This is often where the previously mentioned *packet* comes into play. Once a teacher can identify which students are ready for an enrichment activity she/he can get them going on an alternative project. A meaningful, often self directed activity that will extend their learning into a real world setting. This activity should take the place of the prescribed classwork and not be an addition to the work. In reality it allows the teacher more one on one time to give the students what they truly need, either a smaller group and reteaching or an opportunity to apply their skills to the next level.

Pre-tests do not need to be long or need to take more than a few a minutes to administer. They do not need to be fancy or formal and should never be taken for a grade. The goal should simply be to gauge where the class stands as a whole on a subject or skill. Identify who in particular does not need additional instruction on this topic and is ready to move on to a more advanced activity.

A simple 5 – 10 question sample of key skills is plenty to get a clear picture of where the class stands. They can be traditional paper pencil tasks or a technology based activity. Both have their place and can be extremely useful. Paper and pencil pretests can be as simple as projecting (or writing) 5 – 10 examples or questions on the board and having students answer and turn it in as a “ticket out the door” before leaving class. (This avoids the dreaded copier line in the morning!) “Mad Minutes” are usually thought of as timed math facts tests. They can also be used to incorporate other skills. “Here are the 5 types of figurative language will be investigating during our literature unit. Write an example for each. You have 5 minutes....Go!” *Quick, easy and effective!*

There are some great technology based pre-testing activities out there as well. When looking for online activities to use as pre-tests try to focus on what is simple, time effective and fun. A few fan favorites include:

- [www.kahoot.com](http://www.kahoot.com). This website allows students to answer questions in a game show type format. It can be used in many ways, however using it as a pre-test is an often-overlooked feature. This will give a teacher a quick view of which students are ready for enrichment in a certain area while allowing the kids to have a fun and interactive activity.
  - [www.quizlet.com](http://www.quizlet.com). This website allows teachers to create their own activities or just search by topic to see ones that have already been created. (Why reinvent the wheel?) Students can choose from different game-type activities to demonstrate their knowledge on a wide variety of topics.
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## ■ FINDING THE FIRE

As mentioned earlier, figuring out what interests your students is often the key to having a successful year as an educator. Knowing the topics and activities that peak your students' curiosity will make for a much more cooperative classroom. For example, if you have a student who is extremely musical but not very mathematical...find a way to marry the two. Or better yet, let them find a way! There are tons of videos and Vlogs online that show teachers performing songs about math concepts. Put this musical student in charge of creating her own math music video. If she can effectively demonstrate the steps of Order Of Operations in her rap then count it as her grade for that portion of the assessment. Why not? There is nothing that says students have to write the steps out or memorize the same mnemonic device that you were taught 20 years ago! Knowing the interests and learning styles of your students will help teachers to more effectively offer student choices and build delivery menus in the future.

Ways to find your students fire can be fun as well. The app "Would You Rather?" is a big hit in the middle school world these days. Create your own version. On the following page "Would You Rather." This can also be done as an online survey within your classroom website if you have one. Once the results are in this can be segued into a great data and graphing lesson. While keeping the answers anonymous, you and your students will learn a lot about who they are as a class and where their interests lie. This makes for an excellent first week of school activity.

be fearless  
in the  
pursuit  
of what sets  
your soul  
on fire

— Jennifer Lee

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## WOULD YOU RATHER?

Read a book or Write a story

Solve a math problem or Write a math problem

Watch a play or Act in a play

Listen to a speaker or Give a presentation

Draw a picture or Sing a song

Make a poster or Create a slide show

Use a map or Find your way

Do math or Read a story

Build something or Draw something

Do a science experiment or Watch an experiment

Eat a delicious cake or Create your own recipe



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**STUDENT INTEREST SURVEY – MY BIG****3**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

3 Things That Make Me Happy	3 Things I Like To Do Outside Of School	3 Things I Like About School
3 Things I Don't Like About School	3 Qualities I Look For In A Friend	3 Wishes I'd Like To Be Granted
3 Favorite Books I've Read	3 Places I'd Like To Visit One Day	3 Things I Might Like To Be When I Grow Up

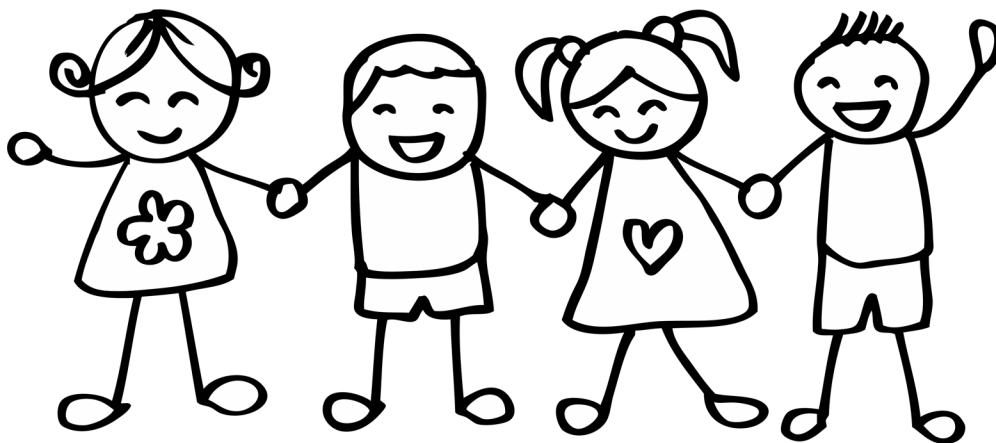
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## CHAPTER 3

# BUILDING YOUR CLASSROOM TO SUPPORT ENRICHMENT STRATEGIES



### ■ STARTING EVERYONE OFF WITH THE RIGHT MINDSET: LET'S BE A TEAM!

Creating a learning environment that supports and celebrates students' diversity in their learning styles and abilities is paramount to having a successful year. Students need to know that we are all collaborators on the same team with a common goal. Just like on a sports team, each player has a different role and contributes in a different way. Children need to learn from an early age that everyone is different and therefore understands concepts and new ideas at different times and in different ways. This is something that should be celebrated, not swept under the rug. What an uninteresting place our world would be if we all did things in exactly the same way and at exactly the same time!

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We all don't need to be marching single file in line, one step exactly in sync with the other. That would make for a pretty boring day and one in which few would get to contribute or excel. Wouldn't it be better if we thought of ourselves as a team, each of us a player with our own responsibilities and plays to execute? Can you imagine if a coach told her star player to slow down when she runs because her teammates are not as fast? Or to tell the All-Star point guard not to shoot from behind the three-point line because not everyone on the team can make a shot from that far? These thoughts sound ridiculous but that is exactly what can happen to gifted or high achieving students in many classrooms. In the end we need to set up our classrooms as teams that work together to win the game of a successful school year for everyone.

Once students are identified as those who would benefit from enrichment, taking the next step to implement this can be tricky if the whole learning community is not on board. This means students, parents, and administrators all need to understand how your classroom will be run and that no one should expect that all students will be completing the exact same assignments throughout the year. Once everyone is on the same page and recognizes that you will all be reaching the same destination of success but in different ways; it will be easier to move forward.

During the start of the school year Open House or Meet and Greet, proudly emphasize that your classroom will be one of differentiation. You will work hard to recognize each student's strengths and interests and allow them to explore and foster them. At the same time you will work to address the areas that need more development. Explain that your bulletin boards will not consist of 24 projects looking exactly the same; all neatly cut out and colored in. Yours will have a variety of types of work, some artfully constructed and some not so pleasing aesthetically but chalk full of amazing content. Your homework assignments will be varied. If some students already know their multiplication facts by heart, they will not be completing the workbook page that asks them to solve 25 facts that evening. Instead they will be writing their own word problems that apply multiplication skills. At the same time, there is no shame for those who need to complete the workbook page. That is simply their means to the end.

Your classroom will consist of multiple and flexible groups. Just because a student works on an enrichment project during a geometry lesson does not mean they will be working on the most advanced novel during literature circle time. We will not be a room of the "Blue Birds" and "Robins" grouping method where the "smart" kids always get to do all the "fun stuff." That is not how enrichment works. EVERY child has strengths, and weaknesses as well. After all they are human, just like the rest of us. Groups can and will change throughout the quarter, the week and even sometimes the day. It should not be looked at as moving up or down, but just transitioning based on the task at hand. Some groups will be homogenous based on ability levels and some will not. As long as we are all working toward our common learning goals, we are winning!

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You will be asking students to take ownership of their learning by offering them choices when appropriate throughout the day. When students have a say in even the smallest ways about how a classroom operates they feel a stronger attachment to the process and will do more to make it a success. Many assignments and projects will have multiple delivery options. If a student can most effectively demonstrate their knowledge of the Revolutionary War by creating a board game about it...fantastic! If another student best expresses her knowledge through song...wonderful! Paper and pencil tasks will be mixed in side by side with technology tasks. We need to work with both in the real world so our students should learn to effectively use both as well.

Our day will consist of movement. Our classroom is set up so that different areas offer different learning opportunities. Literature circle time will bring us together with one group of collaborators in one section of the room, while math rotations will move us to another location with a new partner in learning. Each day will be filled with variety yet we will operate in a structure that we are all comfortable with and used to.

Although transitioning a classroom to a truly differentiated environment with enrichment opportunities can take some time in the beginning; it will make a teacher's life as an educator run more smoothly and more effectively. Teachers I have trained and worked with on transitioning to this model have overwhelmingly found it to be an excellent decision on their part. They spend less time planning and "talking at" their kids and more time facilitating their students' learning process.

This is what learning looks like!

# **TEAMWORK**

Alone we can do so little.

Together we can do so much.

*Helen Keller*

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## CHAPTER 4

# OFFERING STUDENT OPTIONS

**O**ne size does not fit all. Period. The days of cookie cutter assignments and bulletin boards with identical projects adorning them are a thing of the past, or at least they should be! Differentiation should be evident not only in teacher's delivery methods but also in the students' demonstration of knowledge. Allowing for student options is an easy and motivating way to enrich your classroom. Option menus can readily be used for multiple assignments across the curriculum. Giving students an active role in choosing how they are assessed promotes greater ownership of their work. Gifted and high achieving learners can feel free to run with their ideas and not be boxed in to one way to show what they know. The following ideas can be easily integrated into a wide range of units from primary on up.

### ■ MENU MAKING

Menus can be used from homework assignments to class projects. Offering a menu of spelling homework options makes what can be a repetitive task more fun. Again, the goal is that the students practice their words, not that they all do it in the same way. To offer more differentiation and enrichment bonus boxes can be added. Often times these are the corner or middle boxes. Teachers can require some of the gifted or higher achieving students to choose from the bonus boxes. Teachers can also have different menu options, one being a "Gourmet Menu" that consists of higher-level assignment choices, or one with some blank boxes where students have to come up with their own ideas for practice tasks.

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