



## What do we mean by enrichment?

When considering the place of enrichment in your school, first ensure that colleagues are agreed on a definition.

### WHAT IS ENRICHMENT?

**Enrichment** is a form of **differentiation**, as is **extension**. They can, of course, overlap, though each has its own essential characteristics.

Enrichment might be said to involve

- staying with a theme, subject or skill and developing it in *depth*;
- 'rounding out' the basic curriculum subjects with a wider context;
- relating learning to new areas;
- and/or providing pupils with experiences outside the 'regular' curriculum (*breadth*).

Extension, on the other hand, gives students opportunities for accelerated progress and access to new, more challenging concepts or content, etc. Most evidence submitted to the Education and Employment Committee for its Report on the Highly Able (1999) supported the use of both enrichment and extension to improve provision for the more able. Indeed, many activities in school involve the two in combination. When this happens, the result is of particular value in the development of the able child, a process which has been dubbed a 'two-way stretch' (Eyre and Marjoram, 1990).

Enrichment has been defined in a number of ways. One such is that of Teare (1997), who described it as

- 'A higher quality of work than the norm for the age group
- Work covered in more depth
- A broadening of the learning experience
- Promoting a higher level of thinking
- The inclusion of additional subject areas and/or activities
- The use of supplementary materials beyond the normal range of resources.'

Enrichment is sometimes seen in terms of the development of certain qualities of mind. These include problem solving, creative thinking, initiative and self-direction, discovery, higher order thinking skills, profound personal interests, self-acceptance, and the courage to be different. Opportunities for these kinds of enrichment should be created throughout the curriculum, as well as beyond lesson time – and both in school and outside it. An important feature of enrichment is that it must enhance the curriculum and the student's general learning experience. This applies both to work done in the classroom and to activities outside school. It is certainly important that *all* learners should receive an enriched diet in their everyday school life, but the word 'enrichment' when applied to more able learners usually implies something markedly extra or beyond what is normally on offer. As Freeman (1998) expressed it, enrichment is '*not* a supplementary diet which depends on whether there is enough money for 'extra' material and tuition'. It should always be integrated with whole-school provision.

### **WHY IS ENRICHMENT AN IMPORTANT FOCUS IN THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED PUPILS?**

Able children need as much motivation and recognition as other pupils, sometimes more. There is always need to guard against the assumption, especially in mixed ability classes, that these children will motivate themselves and keep themselves interested. This belief is not borne out by the research. It is also evident from a scrutiny of Ofsted reports (Wallace 2000) that even in a 'good' school there is all too often not enough differentiation of classroom activities to extend the very able child. Enrichment can have an important contribution to make here.

A project devised by the National Association for Gifted Children initiated enrichment activities in seven schools. The views of students, parents and teachers were then sought on the benefits or otherwise of the activities. Ten key points emerged from the study:

- 1 Enrichment activities can be of great benefit to a more able student's experience of school.
- 2 Able students are highly motivated by challenging activities which are different from those they do in class.
- 3 Able students welcome the opportunity to discuss and debate, especially when given a suitable stimulus or 'framework'.
- 4 Brainteasers and puzzles seem to be particularly enjoyed by more able students, and can make suitable starters to any enrichment activity.
- 5 Enrichment activities are enjoyable and should form part of a programme for more able students, but what happens in the classroom daily is also of vital importance to a child's overall experience of school.
- 6 Continuity is an extremely important element in any project, and planned activities must be realistic and achievable.

- 7 It is particularly important to honour any commitments to the students, as they remember what they were promised and may be looking forward to it keenly.
- 8 It is preferable to use lesson time for enrichment projects if possible, as it eliminates problems with attendance and competing commitments.
- 9 Monitoring and evaluation are important. It is extremely valuable to collect student feedback – even though this is time-consuming - as this can enhance and inform future projects.
- 10 Parents have many insights to contribute, and a way should be found to collect these effectively.’  
(Counsell 2005)

## **WHAT ARE THE KEY ISSUES TO CONSIDER?**

The first step in devising enrichment opportunities will be to identify who should receive them. To do this most effectively means establishing consistent methods of assessment in all contexts, and at all levels, and using them flexibly and imaginatively. (The launch pad on Extension suggests methods which are relatively quick and easy to administer.) Of course, students of *all* abilities should be given enrichment opportunities from time to time, as suggested below. Apart from the obvious benefits, this will encourage seemingly ‘average’ students to show unexpected abilities and interests.

Some able children, despite their ability, are not used to, or happy with, encountering risk or the unfamiliar. They may fear that they will be unable to cope or may grow over-dependent on routines. The best way to help them is to let them meet failure and new experiences in a climate of support and understanding.

It is important to allow students of high ability to work together on occasion. Enrichment sessions, outside the classroom, allow a ‘gathering of like minds’ (Teare, 1997), even if the school’s normal grouping policy is to mix abilities. Such sessions can be a valuable means of meeting these students’ particular needs and might also be used to celebrate high achievement in a supportive environment. It goes without saying that enrichment sessions of this kind need to be arranged and timetabled sensitively. Freeman (1998) highlights some potential difficulties with ‘separate’ enrichment sessions. Children who have taken part in them have been known to experience problems with their peer-group when they return to lessons. There is also a risk that external activities may not be tied into or followed up by classroom work which would help embed and consolidate the extended learning. These are not, of course, factors which should discourage the practice, but they need to be taken into account in the planning.

Rather than plan separately for enrichment, it is best to design the tasks, materials and opportunities in the course of the normal planning of lessons or schemes of work. This is an aspect of the principle of integrating enrichment opportunities with the mainstream curriculum, and with other in-school and out-of-school activities. A criticism of enrichment activities has often been that they are simply a bolt-on extra rather than ensuring continuity and progression

as part of a coherent strategy. Staricoff (2005) pressed the case for a 'thinking skills' approach to provision for the gifted and talented, seeing it as an essential element of the general classroom atmosphere. An 'open-ended, questioning, discussion-filled, and enrichment-based approach to the curriculum' not only benefits children already recognised as able, but allows children to reveal high abilities that might sometimes be unexpected. This may result from their being exposed to a teaching approach 'based on the premise of enriching provision for every child in the classroom.'

Freeman (1998) warns that enrichment activities for the highly able often lack clear goals. This problem is particularly noticeable in 'decontextualised' activities out of class or out of school. Eyre and Marjoram (1990) advocate applying a model of enrichment at whole school level, incorporating into the curriculum itself a focus on higher order skills and 'outstanding qualities'. This enables clear goals to be set for any enrichment opportunity, whatever the context. Eyre and Marjoram describe two models – Bloom's *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (1956) and Renzulli's *Enrichment Triad Model* (1977). The Bloom taxonomy emphasises the higher order thinking skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Renzulli's model posits a notion of three types of activity: general exploration, group training and investigations of group problems, between which pupils should move freely. Both models allow teachers to identify processes and qualities that they wish their pupils to develop. Eyre and Marjoram (1990) describe and list these in detail. It goes without saying that the opportunities most likely to have real and long-term effects are those with two essential features. They will be wide in range, and they will be integrated with all planning for provision, assessment and progression at whole school level.

Planning for enrichment opportunities in the classroom can be incorporated into existing planning documentation. Columns specific to highly able pupils could contain additional concepts, skills, attitudes, knowledge or resources, or new applications of these in different contexts. Cross-references can be made to enrichment opportunities being offered out of lesson time. Of course, not all enrichment opportunities can be planned for. Teachers need to be alert to the special interests of individuals and groups - interests which may emerge in lessons but not be appropriate for all the class to pursue in depth. They also need to recognise where students already have skills or knowledge in what at any given moment is being taught. Teachers might provide further resources, information, or talking points for such pupils in subsequent lessons, or they could encourage students to broaden their existing knowledge or pursue these interests at another time.

## **WHAT KINDS OF ENRICHMENT CAN WE PROVIDE?**

There is now a copious amount of material available in books and online to support many kinds of enrichment activity, both in and out of the classroom. The G&Twise website is currently being developed as a portal site with links, reviews and information about various resources. Eyre and Marjoram (1990) and Teare (1997 and 1999) have much practical advice on devising

enrichment activities and writing materials, and they give numerous case studies of effective practice. Teare (1999) includes many full examples of activities, and in his 1999 publication he supplies titles of commercially produced resources and lists organisations which provide enrichment opportunities. Battersby (1996) and Sempala-Ntege (1997) give two detailed accounts of approaches to enrichment, the one by a Devonshire community college, the other by a residential centre. These are all valuable sources of advice, but when it comes to devising enrichment programmes, activities and materials it is best always to start with discussions within school. The foundation for all successful enrichment activities is a sharing of enthusiasms and ideas among the staff, and close co-operation at every point. The common ground will be that the activities should include:

- challenge
- enjoyment
- exposure to new knowledge and ideas
- thinking in different or unusual ways
- risk-taking.

Among the many kinds of opportunities to consider are:

- separate sessions, as discussed above
- support within class
- self-directed projects
- homework enrichment
- access to enrichment materials
- opportunities to work with talented adults or older peers
- work experience
- clubs and societies
- targeted visits
- school newspapers, magazines and radio stations
- suspension of the normal timetable.

Some of these speak for themselves, and invite the imaginative interpretation of the teachers who organise them. One or two are worth expanding upon here. Support within class, for example, might involve experts or mentors from outside the school working alongside pupils during lessons. Mentors could provide pupils with extra intellectual stimulus, introduce unusual elements that are not normally covered, or mediate in the use of alternative or new resources. Work with talented adults or older peers can include shadowing, special workshops, coaching, and master classes, for instance at the local university. Suspension of the normal timetable would entail replacing normal lessons, for anything from a day to a week, with a programme of enrichment opportunities involving all pupils.

Examples of possible enrichment activities which have been suggested include the following:

### **In class**

- In the course of a literacy or an ICT lesson, where students are working on a news story, the teacher can email certain students with a controversial newsflash to which they have to respond quickly with an article, mimicking the pressures of a busy newsroom.
- Enrichment offers able pupils a chance to enhance their metacognitive skills, i.e. to become aware of, and discuss, their own learning. They can, for example, keep logs in which they reflect upon their learning, and create questionnaires and surveys to evaluate the learning experiences of their fellow students.
- Able pupils can be helped to develop the ability to assess the complexity of a task and complete it in a prescribed time. 'Real-time simulations' offer an enjoyable challenge and a sense of fulfilment.
- 'Challenge Boxes' containing enjoyable and demanding activities can be kept in every classroom for students to use when they have finished their work. The challenges can be developed for different subjects and topics and can be exchanged between teachers to provide a continuing supply of activities.
- A regular feature of a lesson might be a 'thinking slot', or, in the words of Coates and Wilson (2003), a 'Bright ideas time'. Students are thus stimulated to 'think outside the box', a process for which, in fact, there is a website: <http://www.thinkingoutofabox.co.uk>, offering a thinking activity for each day of the school year. Other examples are brainteasers, 'cognitive cartoon' activities, PMI challenges (Plus, Minus, Interesting), and problems in the style of 'Countdown'.

### **In school**

Lunch-time or after-school clubs should, of course, be freely mixed activities open to all students, but within this framework certain ones could be aimed at more able students. They might, for example, focus on subjects not normally experienced in the classroom, such as philosophy or Latin. Or they might take a different angle or offer a different type of activity in curriculum subjects, for example mathematics or science. It is often a good idea to mix the age groups in this kind of experience, as students benefit from working with those they may not normally meet but who share a particular interest.

## **COLLABORATION**

The notion of collaboration between schools runs through all the significant educational programmes introduced by the government in recent years and the number of partnerships of various kinds is steadily growing. With this development is associated the notion of personalised learning or 'individual learning pathways', through which a student's needs and aspirations can be

met by drawing upon a wide range of expertise and specialisms in one or more schools (Arnold, 2006). The important contribution that this can make to provision for able students is clear to see, and Arnold gives a number of examples of how the resources of any given school can be greatly extended, to the advantage of all students.

'Vertical partnerships', involving one or more secondary schools and their associated primary schools, are in a strong position to provide for the highly able throughout the age range, bringing collective resources to bear. The following example illustrates the possibilities.

### **An example of an enrichment project in a group of schools within Hastings and St. Leonards Excellence Cluster**

The 'Muse' project was based on an original project called 'Chinese Whispers'. The concept is a simple one; the first group works to create a product or outcome from an initial stimulus and its work in turn is passed to the next group to inspire a new piece of work which again is passed on. In the original 'Muse' project in Hastings four primary schools took part in and professional facilitators worked with students in years 4 to 6. The initial stimulus was 'Guernica' by Picasso and this was used with a group of students in the first school to create a dance. Still photographs from the dance were then taken to the next school and were used to produce poetry. One poem from this group was passed on to be the basis for artwork in the next school. This in turn inspired creative writing at the final school in the group. In the last session all the groups came together to see the outcomes of the project, a creative journey of which they had been a part.

This idea is flexible and can be used in many ways. For example, one of the participating schools used it in three parallel Year 4 classes with great success. A secondary school plans to carry out a similar project with its associated schools, concentrating on an activity for Years 6 and 7 (this also provides a 'transition bridge' between primary and secondary school). A second 'Muse' project has since been provided in the Excellence Cluster, this time including an infant school.

Summer schools and residential courses can also create valuable opportunities for such enrichment activities as film-making or large-scale art and drama projects.

## **EVALUATION**

The success of enrichment activities can be gauged by the enthusiasm they generate, but of course the members of staff devising them will want to assess how well they are fulfilling their educational purpose. The following list, partly drawn from Teare (1999), may be used as a list of criteria against which to measure the effectiveness of any enrichment activity, programme, or resource.

### **Enrichment checklist**

- Is it accessible to everyone at the start?
- Are the skills/knowledge it teaches 'transferable' to other areas, or 'cross-curricular'?
- Does it allow further challenges, i.e. can it be extended?
- Does it promote individuality of response?
- Does it allow pupils to search in a variety of directions?
- Does it encourage originality and invention?
- Does it involve:
  - information processing
  - analysing
  - speculating
  - evaluating
  - reflecting
  - hypothesis making and testing
  - problem solving, proving or explaining
  - synthesising
  - decision making?
- Does it promote discussion and communication?
- Does it address able pupils' 'frontiers of knowledge, understanding or skill'?
- Does it maintain a good balance between closed and open-ended elements?
- Does it involve varied inputs and ask for varied outcomes?
- Does it maintain a good balance of pace/urgency and reflection?
- Will it give a sense of satisfaction, fulfilment and enjoyment?
- Does it suggest opportunities for further development or research?
- Are the activities offered only to the highly able, or to those with a particular profile, for example those students who are considered 'well behaved'?
- Are only certain kinds of enrichment opportunities made available, e.g. clubs or group activities, and never activities for individuals?
- Are the only enrichment activities those which take place out of class, or even out of school?
- Are those that happen followed up with pupils and integrated as far as possible into normal classroom provision?

There are numerous ways in which enrichment activities can be evaluated, including the following:

- Feedback from students, and their engagement in evaluative research. Training in research methods can itself form part of an enrichment activity.
- Questionnaires to parents before and after the provision of enrichment. This is time-consuming but can reveal some interesting perspectives on the way the students perceived the activity.



- Questionnaires to teachers, to gauge the success of the enrichment and suggest areas where further learning might take place, including in the ordinary classroom.
- Independent observations from those involved in devising or supervising the activity, including professional providers, teachers, teaching assistants, and governors.
- Whole school, department and/or cohort audit.

When able students are given enrichment opportunities, it is rewarding to involve them in setting their own achievement targets and in evaluating the opportunities offered to them. They could even help in the design and planning of such opportunities in the first place.

#### REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READING

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Wallace, B (2000). *Teaching the Very Able Child – Developing a Policy and Adopting Strategies for Provision*. NACE/Fulton.

## RESOURCES AND LINKS

- London Gifted and Talented: <http://www.londongt.org>
- National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth: <http://www.nagty.ac.uk>
- G&T Wise: <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/gtwise>
- Nrich Maths resources: <http://www.maths.org>
- Online puzzles and brainteasers: <http://www.puzzling.caret.cam.ac.uk>
- NAGC Young Digitals (Members' site): <http://www.nagcbrtain.org.uk>
- Creative Generation: <http://www.creativegeneration.org.uk/home/index.php>

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