

11 *Eclecticism: A Comprehensive Approach to Education of the Gifted*

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Abstract

The argument is advanced that an eclectic, or integrative, approach, utilizing all possible resources, is most appropriate for meeting the needs of gifted students. Characteristics of the integrative approach and descriptions of classes utilizing it are provided. The Program for Academic and Creative Enrichment (PACE) and the Individual Educational Program for the Gifted (IEPG), both based on the author's three-stage model for educating the gifted, are presented. The author concludes that since "gifted, creative, talented, and high-ability students have diverse needs, they should have individual counseling and guidance."

The major purpose of this paper is to discuss educational provisions for the gifted, especially the intellectually and artistically gifted, and to argue that acceleration is a vital ingredient of all effective programs. An argument is also advanced that the concept of acceleration may be too narrow for a suitably comprehensive approach to the education of the gifted. Concepts derived from enrichment, acceleration, and extended learning opportunities are all essential for the development of a full-scale concept of education for the gifted. The term *eclectic* sums up and defines this process, since the new concept is derived from several current approaches to gifted education. The key terms describing the eclectic or integrative approach to acceleration are faster pace, higher level, greater depth, cognitive complexity, challenge, higher cognitive processes, and more information.

Various definitions of giftedness have been proposed. The most widely held conception, promulgated in Public Law 95-561, suggests five different categories of ability: (1) intellectual, (2) academic, (3) creative, (4) leadership, and (5) artistic. This view, perpetuated from the time of the Marland Report (1972), has little support from research or any theory of human abilities. A more parsimonious and yet inclusive conception of the fundamental areas of giftedness might be the following:

1. *Intellectual*, academic, curriculum-related aptitudes (e.g., abilities such as those measured by the Differential Aptitude Test);
2. *Artistic* talent;
3. *Social*, leadership, affective; and
4. *Motor*, athletic, movement, dance.

Each of these categories is subject to numerous divisions, but overall they define fundamental areas of human performance fairly well. Creativity in itself is an unlikely area of unique performance, even though it has been recently suggested that one may be creatively gifted (Khatena 1978; Willings 1980). Alternatively, as Renzulli (1978) suggested, creative ability may be a fundamental aspect of excellent performance in any area.

The concern of this paper is chiefly with the intellectually and/or academically gifted, and secondarily with the artistically gifted. Intellectual giftedness was defined as curriculum-related because giftedness in this category most likely manifests itself in and becomes nurtured in one or more of the broad curricular areas such as science, mathematics, language arts, or social science. Most of the concepts presented are also relevant to the education of those who are artistically gifted.

ENRICHMENT VERSUS ACCELERATION

One of the most unfortunate dichotomies in the field of education is the enrichment-acceleration conflict (George, Cohn, & Stanley 1979). It has led to extreme narrowness in conception on the part of advocates on both sides of the controversy and to crystallization of programs that fall far short of meeting the needs of gifted students. Our current state of knowledge about how best to provide for the gifted should lead educators to be eclectic with reference to both enriching and accelerating instruction. The single experimental study that has compared enrichment and acceleration found that a combination of the two provided the best educational benefits for the gifted (Goldberg et al. 1966). It should be acknowledged, however, that the preponderance of solid evidence supports acceleration (George, Cohn, & Stanley 1979).

Perhaps the best way to approach the problem of how to educate the gifted appropriately is in terms of needs of the gifted. Feldhusen and Wyman (1980) and Van Tassel (1980) have argued that gifted, creative,

and talented (GCT) students have special needs. The needs of the gifted as delineated by these researchers can be seen in table 11.1 It should be noted that the *first* two needs on the Feldhusen and Wyman (1980) list call for accelerated learning experiences. Acceleration or some closely related concepts characterize pursuit of most of the other needs on this list (see Feldhusen & Wyman 1980). For example, needs 3, 4, and 5, even if pursued in a so-called enrichment program, would have to be taught at an appropriately challenging level and at a more rapid pace to be suitable in educational programs for the gifted. Similarly, needs 7, 8, 11, and 12 imply a need for instruction at a level appropriate for the gifted. Stimulation in reading, for example, ought surely to be at levels appropriate to the gifted child's achievement level. Furthermore, nine of the ten needs statements on the Van Tassel (1980) list contain the word *challenge*. Challenge is developed through appropriate acceleration.

Acceleration refers to all those activities that involve the gifted youngster in instruction outside the normal or regular school-grade placement and involve a relatively bold advancement of pace and level of instruction. Stanley's (1976) definitions of *enrichment* and *acceleration* may further clarify the distinction. "Enrichment," he says, "is any educational procedure beyond the usual ones for the subject or grade that does not accelerate or retard the student's placement in the subject or grade" (p. 66). In contrast, he says, "Academic acceleration is vertical because it means moving the student up into the higher school level of a subject in which he or she excels, or into a higher grade than the chronological age of the student would ordinarily warrant" (p. 68).

A list of accelerative options for the gifted includes eleven appropriate types.

1. Early admission to nursery school
2. Early admission to kindergarten or first grade
3. Grade-level advancement
 - Midyear advancement
 - Grade skipping
4. Access to junior-high-school courses at the elementary level
5. Condensation of junior high school or high school from three years to one or two years
6. Access to high-school courses in junior high school
7. Access to advanced courses in junior or senior high school, including Advanced Placement Program courses meant to lead to college credit by examinations conducted nationwide each May
8. Access to college courses in high school or junior high school
9. Admission to college early and/or with advanced standing
10. Earning a bachelor's degree in fewer than four years
11. Earning a master's degree concurrently with a bachelor's degree

TABLE 11.1. Two Concepts of the Needs of Gifted Students

Feldhusen and Wyman (1980)	Van Tassel (1979)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maximum achievement of basic skills and concepts 2. Learning activities at appropriate level and pace 3. Experience in creative thinking and problem solving 4. Development of convergent abilities, especially in logical deduction and problem solving 5. Stimulation of imagery, imagination, spatial abilities 6. Development of self-awareness and acceptance of own capacities, interests, and needs 7. Stimulation to pursue higher level goals and aspirations (models, pressure, standards) 8. Development of independence, self-direction and discipline in learning 9. Experience in relating intellectually, artistically and affectively with other gifted, creative and/or talented students 10. A large fund of information about diverse topics 11. Exposure to a variety of fields of study, art, professions, and occupations 12. Access and stimulation to reading 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To be challenged by activities that enable them to cooperate cognitively and affectively at complex levels of thought and feelings 2. To be challenged through opportunities for divergent production 3. To be challenged through group and individual work that demonstrates process/product outcomes 4. To be challenged by discussions among intellectual peers 5. To be challenged by experiences that promote understanding of human value systems 6. To be challenged by the opportunity to see interrelationships in all bodies of knowledge 7. To be challenged by special courses in their area of strength and interest which accelerate the pace and depth of the content 8. To be challenged by greater exposure to new areas of learning within and without the school structure 9. To be challenged by the opportunity of applying their abilities to real problems in the world of production 10. To be taught the following skills: (a) critical thinking, (b) creative thinking, (c) research, (d) problem solving, (e) coping with exceptionality, (f) decision making, and (g) leadership

SOURCES: J. F. Feldhusen and M. B. Kolloff, "A Three-Stage Model for Gifted Education," *Gifted/Creative/Talented* 4 (1978): 3-5, 53-57; and J. Van Tassel, "A Needs Assessment for Gifted Education," *Journal for the Education of the Gifted* 2 (1979): 141-48.

Any combination of those options can be appropriate for the highly gifted. These options make up in part the "smorgasbord of special educationally accelerative options" used successfully by the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth (Stanley 1978). A student is considered "radically" accelerated if by the end of high school or college his or her educational placement has been speeded up by three or more years (Stanley 1980).

METHODS OF ACCELERATION

In the Gifted Education Resource Institute at Purdue University several major forms of educational activity for gifted students which can be characterized as "acceleration" are utilized. For example, highly gifted children are encouraged to advance in grade at the elementary- or junior-high-school level. A child's readiness for acceleration is assessed through individual diagnostic testing of his or her intellectual ability, achievement levels, and personal-social adjustment. The general rule for positive signs for acceleration is that the IQ should be at or above 130, achievement levels three or more years advanced beyond current grade placement, and adjustment essentially normal.

If the child and his or her parents are positive in their motivation to proceed and the psychological evidence is positive, a meeting of the child's current teacher, the teacher who would receive the child, the principal, and the parents is set up. At this meeting it is proposed that the child spend the first half of the year in his or her normal grade placement and move midyear to the next higher grade. The teachers are asked to cooperate in making sure that essential elements of curriculum are not missed. If the grade advancement involves skipping a grade, receipt by the student of summer tutoring by a teacher of the grade to be skipped may be desirable.

Another form of acceleration promoted by the institute is to introduce college-level courses into the high-school curriculum. Professors from nearby universities come to the high school each semester and offer juniors and seniors college-level courses for college credit. Thus these students become accelerated in subject-matter content. A model program is offered at Gary, Indiana. In the 1979-80 school year ninety-two gifted students were enrolled in six English composition courses taught by Purdue or Indiana University professors. Twenty-three students earned *As*, forty-three earned *Bs*, and twenty-one earned *Cs*, while none earned a *D*; two students withdrew, one received an *F*, and three took incompletes. The overall grade point average (G.P.A.) of these classes was 3.0 on a scale where $A = 4$, $B = 3$, etc.

The three-credit university course offered on the Purdue campus during the summer of 1980 for highly gifted students in grades seven to twelve illustrates further the institute's use of acceleration. The subject matter, PASCAL programming, was presented in a fast-paced lecture format by a

staff member from the computer science department of Purdue University. Of the fourteen high-ability youth who entered this class, five earned *As*, six earned *Bs*, and three earned *Cs*. The G.P.A. for the class was 3.1. Their grade levels were as follows: seven in grade seven, two in grade eight, three in grade nine, and two in grade ten. None of the students who registered dropped the course. The distribution of grades earned by students' grade level in school was as follows:

Grade in School	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>
seventh	3	3	1
eighth		2	
ninth		1	2
tenth	2		

It can be seen that the seventh-graders performed better than the eighth- and ninth-graders. All of these seventh-graders had had two years in a special mathematics enrichment program prior to this university course (Hersberger & Wheatley 1980).

These forms of acceleration are clearly appropriate for highly gifted students. While their focus was certainly on the academically gifted, similar acceleration occurs in Suzuki violin classes for three- to five-year-olds and in dance classes for children at the same age levels. In most art forms it is crucial for children with high-potential talent to start instruction early.

Integrative Acceleration

To meet the needs of a wide spectrum of gifted students, however, an alternate or extended conception of acceleration is needed. Although it appears that acceleration deals merely with pace, in reality it implies undertaking instruction at advanced levels commensurate with students' achievement. Aspects of the extended conception of acceleration, called the *integrative approach to acceleration*, are listed here.

Characteristics

1. Rapid pace
2. Compression of content
3. Advanced level of material
4. Extended diversity of topics or curriculum
5. Objectives, questions, or activities at higher levels of cognitive processing
6. Greater amounts of information
7. Intellectually challenging
8. Requiring complex, full formal operations

9. Less didacticism, more inquiry
10. More independence
11. Greater depth of investigation

Activities

1. A pull-out program meeting two or three periods per week or one-half or one full day per week
2. Cluster grouping of gifted students in one classroom with a teacher who can find special time for their instruction
3. Enrichment in the regular classroom by the regular teacher
4. Special topic classes as electives in such areas as logic and foreign languages
5. A full-time class for gifted students

In contrast to the accelerative options listed earlier, integrative acceleration includes all the forms of providing for the gifted without altering students' grade placement and without formal advancement of the subject matter to a higher-level book or specified curriculum. The net effect, however, of integrative enrichment is to involve the student in learning activities characteristic of grade levels considerably above his or her current grade-level placement. An example is a class on research methods for fifth- and sixth-graders in the institute's Saturday program (Feldhusen & Wyman 1980). Twelve students were enrolled, and all achieved satisfactory ratings of their performance. While the approach in this course is viewed largely as enrichment, it is nevertheless accelerating, since the content of research methods often is not taught until high school or college.

Integrative acceleration is a term synonymous with *enrichment*. Yet the concept of acceleration is vital in education for the gifted because it provides challenge. The most important elements of integrative acceleration are:

1. rapid pace,
2. compression of content,
3. advanced levels of material,
4. extended diversity of topics,
5. greater amounts of information, and
6. intellectual challenge.

Major approaches to integrative acceleration include the so-called "accelerated" classes that are used in many schools from the elementary level upward. The Gifted Education Resource Institute designed a special mathematics curriculum for fifth- and sixth-graders (Hersberger & Wheatley 1980). A group of about twenty high-ability students are identified through administration of the junior-high-school level of the Stanford Achievement Test at the end of the fourth grade. They are required to have grade-equivalent scores at or above the 6.0 level in math concepts and 8.0 in math application. Then, beginning in fifth grade, the students meet

one period daily as a special group and pursue a unique mathematics curriculum that stresses topics beyond those usually covered at the grade level. Probability, estimation, and problem solving are some of the special topics. The students use calculators, and with microcomputers they learn how to use the computer language BASIC for programming and solving problems. Traditional mathematics topics are compressed, and the general pace of the class is fast. The entire approach used in this class fits the concept of integrative acceleration. Others, however, might see it as an essentially enriching approach to mathematics.

During the 1978-79 school year this class's pre-test and post-test scores in grade equivalents on the junior-high level of the Stanford Achievement Test were as follows.

	<u>Mean Grade Level, Math Concepts</u>	<u>Mean Grade Level, Problem Solving</u>
Pre-test (end of fourth grade)	8.1	8.7
Post-test (end of fifth grade)	10.1	10.1

These students were far advanced in achievement at the end of fourth grade, and they still made substantial gains during the special fifth-grade mathematics program.

A Three-Stage Model

The major efforts of the Gifted Education Resource Institute in designing curricula for gifted, creative, talented, and high-ability students are embodied in a three-stage model developed for educating the gifted at the elementary- and junior-high-school levels (Feldhusen & Kolloff 1978). This model operates within a format of integrated acceleration or enrichment, aspects of which are listed here.

<u>Stage 1</u>	<u>Stage 2</u>	<u>Stage 3</u>
Basic convergent and divergent thinking skills Essential curriculum content	Inquiry skills Research methods Creative problem solving Convergent problem solving Synectics Morphological analysis Logical analysis and deduction Brainstorming	Independent projects Inquiry activities Self-directed research

In stage 1 basic knowledge and thinking skills are taught. In stage 2 special cognitive processing strategies are taught within each discipline. In stage 3 students learn techniques of independent inquiry and investigation.

The basic concepts of our three-stage model have been elaborated in two other papers (Feldhusen & Kolloff 1979; OrRico & Feldhusen 1979) and in a substantially funded project in the elementary schools of the Tippecanoe School Corporation in Indiana. The project is titled PACE (Program for Academic and Creative Enrichment). While considered essentially an enrichment model, PACE's title connotes a penchant for an underlying accelerative approach to gifted education. It serves students in grades three to six.

Students are selected for the PACE program on the basis of Metropolitan Achievement Test scores, teacher nominations, teacher ratings on the Scale for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students (Renzulli et al. 1976), and teacher ratings on the Checklist of Creative Positives (Torrance 1969). Nominees must score at or above the ninetieth percentile on one major area of the Metropolitan Achievement Test and have high scores on the two rating scales. Local norms are used for the rating scales.

In the PACE program itinerant resource teachers meet with students outside their regular classroom two class periods per week in groups of eight to twelve at a grade level. All of the instruction follows our three-stage model. Some of the special features of PACE are as follows:

1. close cooperative working relationships between the regular classroom teachers and resource teachers;
2. substantial in-service training for resource and regular teachers;
3. a curriculum guide for regular teachers providing activities for the regular classroom to support the program for the gifted and other children;
4. close liaison with parents;
5. periodic student evaluation reported to students and parents; and
6. comprehensive program evaluation.

For the independent inquiry work of stage 3 a special project planning form called IEPG (Individual Educational Program for the Gifted) was developed. It can be seen in figure 11.1. This format provides excellent guidance to the gifted student, the teacher, and the parents in planning an independent inquiry project.

An intensive experimental evaluation of the PACE program focusing on school achievement, creative abilities, self-concept, and higher-level thinking skills was carried out. The evaluation involved experimental and control groups, both of which were drawn from a group identified as eligible for the program. The results show that the PACE program is highly successful in increasing the creative abilities of gifted children.

FIGURE 11.1. IEPG: Individual Educational Program for the Gifted

NAME Tommy Ames TEACHER M. Smith DATE 3/17

Child's Major Interests

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. <u>Dinosaurs</u> | 3. <u>Camping</u> |
| 2. <u>Circuses</u> | 4. <u>Stamp collecting</u> |

Major Strengths

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Skills <u>Reading</u> | <u>Computation</u> |
| Concepts <u>Science</u> | <u>Math concepts</u> |

Major Needs (assessment results)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Skills <u>Reading speed</u> | <u>Spelling</u> |
| Concepts <u>None</u> | <u>None</u> |

Plan for Study or Project

Will do an in-depth study of North American dinosaur regions.

Reading and Study Sources

Dinosaurs, Guided Discovery Program, Educational Progress,
informational books on dinosaurs in school library.

What is to be Produced? (e.g.: a report, a model, a set of worksheets, a drawing, a play, problems, a presentation)

Will produce a written report, a bulletin board display, and an
illustrated oral report.

With Whom Will He Work, If Anyone?

Might work with Sally Thomas.

Approximate Date to Complete Project?

May 8, 1981.

Plan for Teacher Contribution and Consultation

Will meet with teacher once a week.

Role for Other Resource People

Will meet with Peter Lewis, a professor of paleontology, and Robert Drew,
a professor of geology.

Parent Role and Contribution

Parents will assist in taking field trip to Natural History Museum.

In all applications of the three-stage model, and especially in PACE, the need for the resource teachers to provide challenge, increase the pace, compress routine learning at stage one, press for high-level thinking, and, above all, induce challenge is stressed. Without these emphases the program would degenerate into routine and boring enrichment activities.

Different activities are appropriate for moderately gifted students than for highly gifted ones. PACE and the three-stage model best serve moderately gifted students. Acceleration, sometimes radical acceleration, is necessary for the highly gifted. Thus the guide in table 11.2 was developed to meet the differential needs of moderately able and highly gifted students.

Conclusion

Because gifted, creative, talented, and high-ability students have diverse needs, they should have individual counseling and guidance. The schools can do a great deal, but members of the broad community, especially parents, should be utilized in developing educational experiences and opportunities. Acceleration of learning experiences is essential, but, for the present, program coordinators should be eclectic and utilize all possible resources in trying to meet the needs of these students.

Some parents and teachers worry about the gifted students' emotional development and even advocate neglecting their intellectual and artistic needs. Many parents and teachers assert that they just want the gifted student to grow up "normal" and "happy." They seem not to realize that forcing a gifted person to be like an average person is forcing him or her to be abnormal. Giftedness is a total package of high potential, intellectually (and/or artistically) and emotionally. Ability and emotion are inextricably linked.

The best and happiest balance for the gifted student is attained by finding emotional fulfillment in high-level intellectual or artistic activities. The world provides many examples of disgruntled, dissatisfied people who had the talent or ability to achieve at a very high level but did not get the opportunity to do so. Thus it appears that through appropriately accelerated and enriched learning experiences we can help the gifted individual achieve intellectual and/or artistic fulfillment, a strong self-concept, and good emotional adjustment.

Perhaps the major issue is to plan educational programs for the gifted carefully and to provide the individual counseling necessary to meet their diverse needs. Enrichment *versus* acceleration is probably a false dichotomy. The following quotation from Keating (1979, p. 188) seems an appropriate way to conclude this discussion: "Thoughtless acceleration can be harmful, and unplanned enrichment can turn out to be mostly busy-

TABLE 11.2. Programming Guide for Use in Educational Planning for the Gifted

Ability Level	Program Needs
I. Highly Gifted	I. Acceleration
I.Q.s 130 and above	Individual psychological and ability testing
Achievement: 3 or more grade levels advanced	Individual counseling
Grade average in top 5 percent	Several forms of acceleration
Achievement test scores at or above the ninety-fifth percentile	Integrated acceleration
II. Moderately Gifted	II. Integrated Acceleration or Enrichment
I.Q.s 120 and above	Careful identification but no individual psychological testing
Achievement: 1-3 grade levels advanced	Might be candidate for some forms of acceleration
Grade average in top 10 percent	Integrated acceleration or enrichment activities
Achievement test scores at or above the ninetieth percentile	

work. Good educational acceleration is always enriching, however, and solid enrichment programs always advance the student's learning of new and relevant material."

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