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A Technology Based Resource for Challenging Gifted and Talented Students

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“Differentiation” is the contemporary buzzword in curriculum and instruction, but the reality is that most teachers simply do not have the time necessary to do it well, especially when it comes to finding advanced-level resources for gifted students. Remarkable advances in instructional communication technology (ICT) have now made it possible to provide high levels of enrichment services to students who have access to a computer and the Internet. The Renzulli Learning System (RLS) is an Internet-based enrichment program that is built on a high-end learning theory that focuses on the development of creative productivity through the application of knowledge rather than the mere acquisition and storage of knowledge. The system, which is sponsored by the University of Connecticut Research and Development Corporation, is based on more than 30 years of research dealing with student strength assessment and advanced-level learning guided by the Enrichment Triad Model (Renzulli, 1977).

The Renzulli Learning System goes beyond the popular “worksheets-on-line” or “courses-on-line” that, by and large, have been early applications of ICT in most school situations. These early applications have been based on the same pedagogy that is regularly practiced in most traditional teaching situations, thereby minimizing the role of the Internet to a gigantic encyclopedia rather than a source of information for first-hand investigative and creative endeavors.

The Renzulli Learning System is a comprehensive program that begins by providing a computer-generated profile of each student’s academic strengths, interests, learning styles, and preferred modes of expression. A search engine then matches Internet resources to the student’s profile from fourteen carefully screened databases that are categorized by subject area, grade level, state curricular standards, and degree of complexity. A management system called the Wizard Project Maker guides students in the application of knowledge to teacher- or student-selected assignments, independent research studies, or creative projects that individuals or small groups would like to pursue. Students and teachers can evaluate the quality of students’ products using a rubric called The Student Product Assessment Form. Students can rate each site visited, conduct a self-assessment of what they have gained from the site, and place resources in their own Total Talent Portfolio for future use. RLS also includes a curriculum acceleration management system for high-achieving students that is based on the many years of research and widespread use of a curricular modification process called Curriculum Compacting. Students and teachers can use the RLS anytime and anywhere there is Internet access.

Teacher functions allow downloading of hundreds of reproducible creativity and critical thinking activities as well as numerous off-line resources for lesson planning and curricular integration. Management functions allow teachers to group students by interests and learning styles. The management tools also allow teachers to place teacher- selected resources in individual, whole class, or selected students' portfolios for classroom or special project use. Teachers can oversee all students' activity including where and when students have been on-line using the RLS, projects or assignments underway or completed, and areas where curriculum has been compacted. The system can be used at home and during summer, and parents can view their own son or daughter's work on the system. The principal or designated project manager can also examine all activity taking place in a given building or program. This feature allows for accountability, system assessment, and guidance in staff development and program planning needs.

Persons interested in examining the Renzulli Learning System can tour the Web site at <https://www.renzullilearning.com> and further descriptive information can be obtained at info@renzullilearning.com. The RLS is being widely used by school systems throughout the U.S. and in other countries. A home-school and individual use version will be available in 2008.

Reference

Renzulli, J. S. (1977). *The Enrichment Triad Model: A guide for developing defensible programs for the gifted and talented*. Mansfield Center, CT: Creative Learning Press.