

Renzulli, J. S., & Reis, S. M. (2012). A powerful tool for powerful learning: A computerized strength assessment and internet based enrichment program. *District Administration*, 4–5.

A Powerful Tool For Powerful Learning: A Computerized Strength Assessment and Internet Based Enrichment Program

By Joseph S. Renzulli, Ph.D. and Sally M. Reis, Ph.D.
University of Connecticut

Although "differentiation" is the contemporary buzzword in curriculum and instruction, powerful learning requires that teachers have the time and resources to do it well. Remarkable advances in instructional communication technology (ICT) have now made it possible to provide high levels of enrichment and the kinds of standards-based differentiation that facilitate powerful learning services to students who have access to a computer and the internet. The Renzulli Learning System (RLS) is a strength-oriented 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 Renzulli Learning System extends beyond the popular "worksheets-online" or courses online 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 full capacity of ICT, and in many cases simply turning the internet into a gigantic encyclopedia rather than a source of information for the application of knowledge in powerful learning situations.

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, as well as academic challenge level. A search engine then matches internet resources to the student's profile from fourteen carefully screened data-bases 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 evaluate 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.

Teacher functions allow downloading of hundreds of reproducible creativity and critical thinking activities as well as numerous offline 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 online 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 the 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. Renzulli Learning also provides individual differentiation, with appropriate levels of academic challenge for every student in a way that honors differences and ensures that true differentiated learning occurs for each child with engaging, challenging work in areas of interest.

In research on Renzulli Learning, Dr. Garo Field of The University of Georgia investigated the use of RL to increase students' reading fluency and comprehension when they were able to use RL for three hours per week. In this study, quantitative procedures were used to investigate the use of Renzulli Learning on reading fluency and comprehension in two schools, an urban middle school where a majority of students are placed at risk due to poverty or other factors, and a suburban elementary school in a middle class neighborhood. The sample included 385 students from two schools with administrators who volunteered to have students in both schools participate in the study. After only 16 weeks, students who participated in Renzulli Learning demonstrated significantly higher growth in reading comprehension, significantly higher growth in oral reading fluency, and significantly higher growth in social studies achievement than those students who did not participate in Renzulli Learning.

Persons interested in examining the Renzulli Learning System can tour the website at <https://renzullilearning.com/> and further descriptive information can be obtained at info@renzullilearning.com.