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The Multiple Menu Model for Developing Differentiated Curriculum

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Teachers and others associated with the educational process often create successful lessons plans that they would like to turn into curricular units either to publish or share with their colleagues. As these emerging curriculum writers try to use these lesson plans as a basis for writing curriculum, they soon realize that developing curriculum is a difficult and demanding process. They also find that there is little practical guidance available to help them translate their ideas into a publishable unit of instruction. A second dilemma that emerges is illustrated with the following question: How does a curriculum developer balance rigor and content authenticity with motivating instructional techniques that accommodate individual differences? The Multiple Menu Model helps can help to solve these dilemmas by providing a. set of six practical guides or menus that a curriculum writer can use to design in-depth curriculum units for classroom use. It provides a curriculum writer with a range of options within each component of the model. The menus encourages a curriculum developer to design in-depth units that bring together an understanding of the structure of a discipline, its content and methodologies, and the wide range of instructional techniques educators use to create meaningful teaching and learning experiences. The Multiple Menu Model is based on theories of knowledge, theories of curriculum development, and research on related issues in learning such as a focus on higher level thinking skills, developing student motivation, and optimal instructional sequencing. The curriculum developer is responsible for determining the degree of complexity within each unit of instruction that might be appropriate for a given age or ability group. In the final analysis, it is the curriculum developer's understanding of the content field and instructional techniques plus an understanding of cognitive and developmental psychology that will determine the level of knowledge and content that is appropriate for a particular age group. Three conditions are necessary for the effective use of this model. First, the curriculum writer must understand the concepts presented on the menus. The appropriate use of an instructional activity will elude authors of curricular materials if they do have a practical understanding of the concepts being taught and how they can put them to work in a learning situation. Both the curriculum developer and teachers who will use the materials must understand the basic principles, functional concepts, and methodologies of the field of study on which the unit is based. The second condition for successful use of this model involves a plan for synthesizing the menus at the practical or output level. In developing this model we have chosen to place knowledge at the center of the planning process and require curriculum developers to carefully consider what content and process understandings will become the focus of the instructional unit. Lesson Planning Guides, a Multiple Menu Model Unit Plan, and an Artistic Modification Template are

available to assist the curriculum developer in the planning process. The curriculum developer using this model will be more effective if she or he has thought about the following issues and questions. What will the end product be? What group of students is the target audience for this curriculum? What is a discipline or a field of study? Where does the curriculum developer go to find out about and learn the principles, concepts, and methodologies of a field of study? How does the curriculum writers go about making sure that the unit of study "appeals to the imagination" of students? What artistic modification can be suggested to enhance this unit?

OVERVIEW

The Multiple Menu Model emerged from our work over the last ten years in looking for strategies teachers can use to improve the curriculum writing process. Overloaded with volumes of state curriculum guides, caught on a seesaw between the importance of authentic knowledge (content) and instructional techniques (process), and challenged to include activities from the latest educational bandwagon, the Herculean task of curriculum writing often falls to an intrepid committee relegated to work during summer vacation. Their stories of frustration are common, and the ever present black, three-ring curriculum binder that sits on their colleagues' shelves collecting dust serves as a reminder that their work is not always relevant to their colleagues' instructional needs. While the curriculum writers' intentions are good and the work is rigorous, we have all come to realize that the hours of toil often result in a conglomeration of activities that does little to enhance the teaching and learning process in any meaningful way.

It is our belief that for a curriculum guide to be effectively applied to the learning process in the regular classroom, teachers must be equipped with the tools and the time to translate these lists of curricular outcomes into meaningful units of instruction. The Multiple Menu Model respects this goal by providing six practical planning guides for menus that all teachers, K-12, can use to design in-depth curriculum units for classroom use. It is based on the work of theorists in curriculum and instruction (Ausubel, 1968; Bandura, 1977; Bloom, 1956; Bruner, 1960, 1966; Gagné & Briggs, 1979; Kaplan, 1986; Passow, 1982; Phenix, 1964; and Ward, 1961) and differs from traditional approaches to curriculum design in that it places a greater emphasis on balancing authentic content and process, involving students as firsthand inquirers, and exploring the structure and interconnectedness of knowledge.

We chose to create a "menu" because, like the choices that appear in the pull-down menus of many computer software programs or on a restaurant menu, it provides the teacher-as-curriculum-designer with a range of options within each of the components of the model. The menus encourage teachers to design in-depth curriculum units that bring together an understanding of the structure of a discipline, its content and methodologies, and the wide range of instructional techniques teachers use to create teaching and learning experiences.

Several assumptions and beliefs about curriculum development are inherent in the Multiple Menu Model. These assumptions provide the foundation for this model and help clarify the role of the teacher, the learner, and the curriculum. First and foremost, we believe that teachers who are able to inspire young people to explore a discipline have a genuine interest or passion in the discipline themselves. These teachers have gathered stories, realia, and documents to make the curriculum authentic, and they employ strategies to effectively engage learners in the process of inquiry. Second, we believe authentic learning consists of investigative activities and the

development of creative products in which students assume roles as firsthand explorers, writers, artists, and other types of practicing professionals. Therefore, the overriding purpose of curriculum development should be to create situations in which young people are thinking, feeling, and doing what practicing professionals do when they explore the content and methodology of a particular discipline.

The Multiple Menu Model is designed for individuals or small groups of teachers, who want to write comprehensive curricula and who understand that this endeavor is rewarding but time consuming. The model offers more suggestions and guidelines than any one teacher can possibly use. The model consists of a series of six interrelated components (see Fig. 1), called menus because each contains a range of options from which curriculum developers can choose as they create units of study.

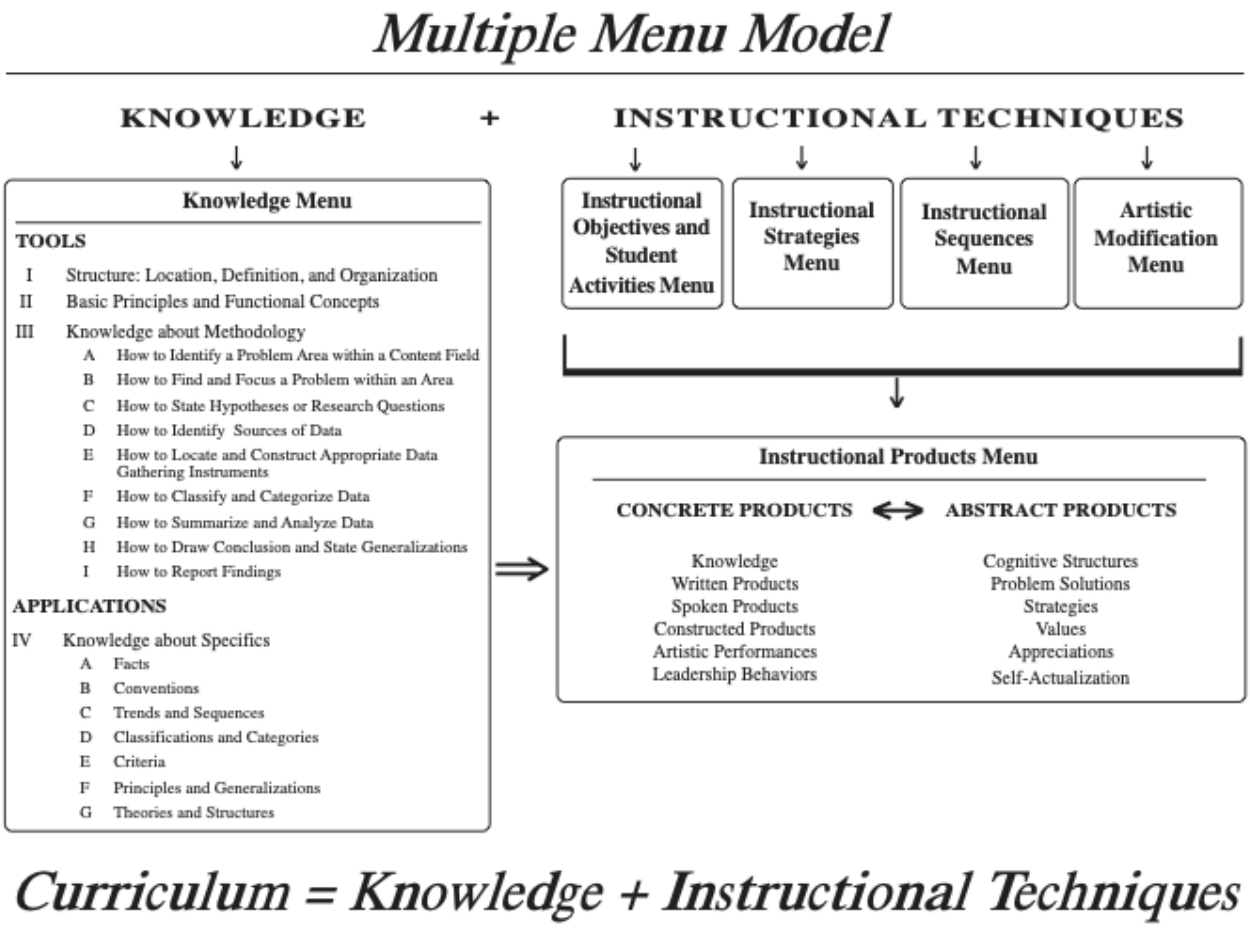

Figure 1. *Multiple Menu Model*

The six components include: the Knowledge Menu, the Instructional Objectives and Student Activities Menu, the Instructional Strategies Menu, the Instructional Sequences Menu, the Artistic Modification Menu, and the Instructional Products Menu, which is composed of two interrelated menus, Concrete Products and Abstract Products Menu. The first menu, the Knowledge Menu, is the most elaborate and concerns the field of selected study (e.g., mythology, astronomy, choreography, geometry). The second through the fifth menus deal with

pedagogy or instructional techniques. The last menu, Instructional Products, is related to the types of products that may result from student interactions with knowledge about a domain or interdisciplinary concepts and how that knowledge is constructed by firsthand inquirers. Although it was originally developed as a way of differentiating curriculum for high ability students, the guide can easily be used by teachers who want to encourage firsthand inquiry and creativity among all students.

THE KNOWLEDGE MENU

This menu is underpinned by two particularly important assumptions: (1) the belief that it is futile, if not impossible, to teach everything important in a discipline, and (2) the necessity of inquiry. Rather than focusing on the conclusions of a discipline, the Multiple Menu Model focuses on inquiry itself, asking curriculum developers to select the most important concepts to teach learners. Accordingly, the first menu, The Knowledge Menu, requires curriculum developers to examine a discipline from four perspectives: its purpose and placement within the larger context of knowledge, its underlying concepts and principles, its most representative topics, and contributions to the universe of knowledge and wisdom, and its methodology. A brief description of these perspectives follows.

Locating the Discipline

Teachers using curriculum units based on the Multiple Menu Model must first locate for students the targeted discipline in the larger domain of knowledge (e.g., the novel is a field within the domain of literature). Teachers and students construct a knowledge tree to illustrate how the selected area of knowledge fits within the larger domain. Next, they examine the characteristics of the discipline and subdisciplines to learn the reasons why people study a particular area of knowledge, and what they hope to contribute to human understanding. This first dimension of the Knowledge Menu helps students examine, for example, What is sociology? What do sociologists study and why? How is sociology similar to and different from other disciplines, (e.g., psychology and anthropology)? What then, is social psychology or social anthropology, and how does each fit into the larger picture and purpose of the social sciences? These questions about the structure of disciplines help students understand not only where the discipline is located but also the discipline's connectedness with other disciplines.

Selecting Concepts and Ideas

Subsequently, the teacher identifies and selects basic principles and concepts to teach—the second perspective of the knowledge menu. Representative concepts and ideas consist of themes, patterns, main features, sequences or organizing principles, and structures that define an area of study, With respect to science, for example, organizing principles and structures include, not exclusively: change, stability, systems, interactions, energy, chemical composition, volume, light, and color. With respect to the novel, representative elements that cut across all literary contributions include plot, setting, character, and theme. Large concepts exist within each of these elements, as well. For example, the buffoon and tragic hero are archetypal characters who appear in literary contributions throughout time. It is precisely because these concepts and ideas exist across time that they can be used as the bases for interdisciplinary units. Accordingly,

curriculum developers must select representative concepts that will most clearly define the discipline being taught.

Selecting Representative Topics

Third, teachers select curricular topics to illustrate the basic principles and representative concepts. In some ways, the selection process is similar to the process that teachers have used in the past; namely, the material must take into consideration the age, maturity, previous study, and experiential background of the students, Beyond age, grade, maturity level, and experience, however, the Multiple Menu Model selection process is different. Unlike traditional instruction, which asks teachers to cover an entire text by the end of the year or semester, the Multiple Menu Model asks teachers to winnow down all the possible pieces to those few that truly represent the field's principles and concepts. A three-phase approach to the selection of content is recommended. This approach takes into consideration the interaction between intensive coverage and extensive coverage as well as group learning and individual learning situations. The following example points out how the procedure has been used in a literature course.

PHASE I (INTENSIVE/GROUP)

In Phase I a representative concept in literature, such as the genera of tragic heroes, was dealt with through intensive examination of three prototypical examples (e.g., *The Merchant of Venice, Joan of Arc, and The Autobiography of Malcolm X)*. Selections of more than a single exemplar of the concept allow for both in-depth analysis and opportunities to compare and contrast authors' styles; historical perspectives; ethnic, gender, and cultural differences; and a host of other comparative factors that single selections would prohibit. Preteaching/learning analysis dealt with an overview of the concept and why it was being studied . Since one of the main purposes is to learn *how* to study tragic heroes, *who* should be studied (i.e., which tragic hero) is less important, as long as the hero is representative of the genera. An emphasis on how rather than who also legitimizes a role for students. The payoff as far as transfer is concerned is to follow the in-depth coverage with a postlearning analysis that focuses on factors that define the representative concept of tragic heroes (e.g., characteristic themes, patterns, etc.). The goal of the postlearning analysis is to help consolidate cognitive structures), and patterns of analysis developed through in-depth study of a small number of literary selections so that they are readily available for use in future situations.

PHASE II (EXTENSIVE/GROUP)

Phase II consists of the perusal of large numbers of literary contributions dealing with tragic heroes to which similar cognitive structures and patterns of analysis can be applied. In our sample situation, students working in small interest groups compiled categorical lists and summaries of tragic heroes within their respective areas of special interest. For example, groups focused on tragic heroes in sports, politics, science, civil rights, religion, the women's movement, arts and entertainment, or other area(s) in which special interests were expressed. Identifying tragic heroes within categories and preparing brief summaries of them developed research and writing skills as well as communication skills for group discussions and oral presentations that were a part of the planned activities. A key feature of this phase of the work was that students were not expected to read entire books about the persons on their lists.

Summaries of nonfictional persons were pre pared from descriptions found in textbooks or encyclopedias, and fictional tragic heroes were summarized from material found in *Master Plots* or *Cliffs Notes.* Although perusal of large numbers is recommended, coverage should be *purposefully* superficial, but geared toward stimulating follow-up on the parts of interested individuals or small groups.

PHASE III (INTENSIVE/INDIVIDUAL OR SMALL GROUP)

Phase III consists of in-depth follow-up of selected readings based on the personal preferences of students that emerge from Phase II. Phase Ill in our example was pursued in a variety of ways. Activities included formal study modeled after the procedures used in the Great Books or Junior Great Books study groups, informal discussions about selected tragic heroes by interested groups of students, or simply the more sophisticated appreciation that could now be derived from reading for pleasure or viewing a play or film based on the life or exploits of a tragic heroine. Some of this follow-up took place immediately, and in other cases it was deferred until a similar process was followed with other genera. And, of course, it can take place on a personal level at any time in the future. Once students learned how to analyze genera, and after they explored categorical representatives of a genus, they were empowered to apply these skills to future assignments or reading for pleasure.

The three-phase process described here requires that teachers understand the pivotal ideas, representative topics, unifying themes, and internal structures that define a field of knowledge or that horizontally cut across a number of disciplines. This is not an easy task for teachers who traditionally have relied on textbooks for curricular decision making. There are, however, excellent resources available to assist in this process. Books such as the *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (Wiener 1973) contain essays that cover every major discipline, but the emphasis of the essays is on interdisciplinary, crosscultural relations. The essays are cross-referenced to direct the reader to other articles in which the same or similar ideas occur in other domains. Similar resources for teachers can be found in books such as the *Syntopicon* (Adler and Hutchins 1952), which is an organizational structure for the great ideas of the Western world.

New curricular materials are also available to assist teachers in the development of in-depth learning units. The recent concern about excellence for all students has prompted the development of new content area standards, including mathematics, science, and social studies standards. The development of these standards has, in turn, prompted the assessment of curricular materials. Some of these curriculum review initiatives are using criteria aligned with the central concepts of the Multiple Menu Model. Unlike traditional review criteria that focused on readability levels and the sheer amount of factual material included within the text, the criteria for this new review were concerned, for example, with the significance of the scientific concepts covered and the amount of practice provided in the processes of scientific inquiry.

A Final Consideration: Appeal to the Imagination

Within the context of in-depth teaching and learning, there is still one additional consideration that should be addressed. Phenix (1964) termed this concept the appeal to the imagination, and he argues very persuasively for the selection of topics that will lift students to new planes of experience and meaning. First, he points out that the means for stimulating the imagination differ

according to the individual, his or her level of maturity, and the cultural context in which the individual is located. Second, the teacher must model the imaginative qualities of mind we are trying to develop in students and be able to enter sympathetically into the lives of students. Finally, imaginative teaching requires faith in the possibility of awakening imagination in any and every student, regardless of the kinds of constraints that may be placed on the learning process.

There are, undoubtedly, different perspectives about how to select content that will appeal to the imagination. Topics with such a focus could easily fall prey to material that deals with seductive details or esoteric and sensational topics. Seductive details are not inherently inappropriate as topics for in-depth study. Indeed, they often serve the important function of stimulating initial interests and creating what Whitehead (1929) called the romance stage with a topic or field of study. But if seductive details and sensational topics become ends rather than means for promoting advanced understanding, then we have traded appeal to the imagination for romanticism and showmanship.

How, then, should we go about selecting curriculum material that appeals to the imagination but that is not based purely on sensationalism? The answer rests, in part, on electing topics that represent powerful and controversial manifestations of basic ideas and concepts. Thus, for example, the concepts of loyalty versus betrayal might be examined and compared from political, literary, military, or family perspectives, but always in ways that bring intensity, debate, and personal involvement to the concepts. An adversarial approach to ideas and concepts (e.g., loyalty versus betrayal) also guarantees that the essential element of *conjiontations with knowledge* will be present in selected curricular topics. In a certain sense, it would be feasible to write the history of creative productivity as a chronicle of men and women who confronted existing ideas and concepts in an adversarial fashion, and who used existing information only as counterpoints to what eventually became their own unique contributions to the growth of knowledge. It was these confrontations that sparked their imaginations, and it is for this reason that an appeal to the imagination should be a major curricular focus for the coverage of in-depth topics.

EXAMINING THE METHODOLOGY OF THE DISCIPLINE

Throughout a unit of study, teachers explain, illustrate, and involve students in the process of research as defined by the methodology dimension of the Knowledge Menu (e.g., identify a problem area in the study of tragic heroes, focus the problem, state a hypothesis, locate resources, classify and organize data, summarize data, draw conclusions, report findings). The cluster of diverse procedures that surround the acquisition of knowledge—that dimension of learning commonly referred to as process or thinking skills—should themselves be viewed as a form of content. It is these more enduring skills that form the cognitive structures and problem-solving strategies that have the greatest transfer value. When we view process as content, we avoid the artificial dichotomy and the endless arguments about whether content or process should be the primary goal of learning. Combining content and process leads to a goal that is larger than the sum of the respective parts. Simply stated, this goal is the acquisition of a scheme for acquiring, managing, and producing information in an organized and systematic fashion.

Armed with the tools learned in the knowledge menu and a more mature understanding of the methodology of the field, students are no longer passive recipients of information and are able to begin the process of generating knowledge within the field. With respect to the tragic heroes unit that has been discussed above, students may want to interview contemporary authors regarding which characteristics they believe define the tragic heroes of today.

THE INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES MENUS

The second, third, fourth, and fifth menus from the model concern pedagogy or instructional practices. Specifically, these menus provide curriculum developers with a range of options related to how they will present learning activities to students based on the principles and concepts they have selected. The Instructional Objectives and Student Activities Menu focuses on the thinking and feeling processes (e.g., application, analysis, synthesis) that are used by learners as they construct knowledge about a discipline. Examples of instructional activities include classifying, sequencing and patterning, gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data, drawing conclusions, exploring alternative solutions to problems, making judgments about the functional and aesthetic qualities of material. It is important that curriculum writers design learning activities that incorporate a balanced variety of these thinking and feeling processes. The balance provides learners with practice in the spectrum of encoding and recoding activities associated with learning new information, concepts, and principles. The next menu, the Instructional Strategies Menu, provides a range of specific teaching methods that teachers can use to present new material. Items in this menu range from less to more structured approaches for presenting material and include strategies such as: lecture, discussion, simulation, role playing, problem-based learning, concept mapping, literature circles, Socratic inquiry, peer tutoring, and individual and small group research projects. A variety of carefully selected instructional strategies from this menu provide students with multiple ways to be engaged with knowledge and to employ the full range of their intellectual abilities and learning styles.

Teachers and curriculum writers are provided with a relatively fixed order of events for teaching information through the next component, The Instructional Sequences Menu. For example, teachers open most lessons by gaining the attention of their students, linking the present lesson with previously covered material, and pointing out other applications for what has been introduced. Based on the work of major learning theorists such as Gagné and Briggs (1979), Ausubel (1968), and Ausubel, Novak & Haneian (1978), a major concern in this menu is to relate the content of any given lesson to the student's knowledge base, experiential background, and capacity to learn. This menu differs from the others in that the items on it likely to be followed in a sequential manner. These item are: gaining attention and developing interest and motivation, informing students about the purpose/objective of the lesson, relating the topic to previously learned material, presenting the material through a combination of instructional strategies, providing options for advanced level follow-up, assessing performance and providing feedback, providing advanced organizers for future topics, and pointing out transfer opportunities and potential applications of learned material. Accordingly, the Instructional Sequences Menu is a rubric that can accommodate any instructional or pedagogical strategy. Finally, the Artistic Modification Menu invites teachers to personalize lessons by sharing an anecdote, observation, hobby, or personal belief about an event, topic, or concept. As such, it can be used with any instructional strategy and during any point in the instructional sequence. Personalizing lessons in this fashion generates interest and excitement among students.

THE INSTRUCTIONAL PRODUCTS MENU

The Instructional Products Menu is concerned with the outcomes of learning experiences presented by the teacher through the curricular material and various forms of pedagogy mentioned above. In the Multiple Menu Model outcomes are viewed as much more complex learning behaviors than the lists of basic skills typically found in the literature on standards and outcomes. This menu focuses on expression style preferences—the ways in which people prefer to share their prescribed work and creative productivity with others. Preferences may be oriented toward developing specific products or engaging in specific leadership situations. Some special subject areas such as art, music, technical studies, and physical education are based on expression styles inherent in the individual discipline; but despite a wide variety of alternatives, most classroom activities depend on written, computational, or oral expression products. Eisner (1997) cogently argues that the forms of representation that schools emphasize influence who succeeds and who does not. If the primary focus is on the use of language and the calculation of numbers, then students whose aptitudes or out-of-school experience include these skills are advantaged. If the school's curricular agenda is diverse, than educational equity is promoted through a range of activities where diverse products allow for a broader range of expression. An awareness of the multitude of potential products and the preferences of young people can produce a greater variety of ways in which students can express themselves. Solomon (1997) suggests that different symbolic forms of representation address distinct aspects of the world and thus each form of representation provides children with the opportunity to learn something unique. Knowledge from a history unit could culminate through essays; oral presentations; debates; role-play simulations; the development of a board game, timeline or photography exhibit; the creation of artwork or computer software; or the production of a video or TV show. A knowledge of expression style preferences and a range of product options can also be a valuable tool for organizing cooperative learning and project groups. Flexible groups for complex projects such as the production of a school magazine or environmental action campaign can also be established by dividing tasks based on style preferences rather than in a random manner (Renzulli, 1994).

This menu deals with concrete products and abstract products. The concrete products are physical constructions that result from learner interaction with the knowledge, principles, and concepts. These physical constructions include, for example, speeches, essays, dramatizations, and experiments. Abstract products include behaviors (such as leadership activities related to an issue), increased self-confidence, and the acquisition of new methodologies (such as interviewing skills), and the formation of problem solving skills and cognitive structures. Although the concrete products are more apparent and easier to evaluate, the abstract products have a much greater transfer value to other learning situations. Thus, for example, when students develop a strategy for solving matrix logic problems, they can apply this strategy to similar situations where such logic is required. Note that the two kinds of products are mutually reinforcing. As students produce new kinds of concrete products, they will also demonstrate new abstract products, such as methodological skills and self-assurance. As self-confidence and leadership opportunities increase, it is likely that additional physical products will emerge as well.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

What makes the Multiple Menu Model unique is its deep connections with the how-to of the disciplines. Other models provide teachers with the skills to enrich curriculum by increasing the amount of material related to a subject, the rate at which it is covered, or by varying the products that emerge from learner interaction with the material in a discipline. The Multiple Menu Model takes the teacher and student to the very heart of a discipline to examine its location in the domain of information and to understand the methodology employed by those who produce knowledge in the field. Accordingly, this model enables learners to become firsthand inquirers and creators of information, a far more intensive, productive engagement in the school setting than what students experience as consumers of information.

This article summarized the major points underlying the Multiple Menu Model. A book-length version of the model Renzulli, Leppien, ,& Hays, 2000) was prepared as a guidebook for curriculum developers and offers detailed directions for using the various menus and a series of templates for curriculum development.

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