



6 Reasons to Become a 21st Century Enriched Learning School

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(December 2008) An enriched learning school is a small school that builds its curriculum, instruction, and other learning elements on the learning theories of cognitive psychologist, Reuven Feuerstein. Charter schools and special needs centers are well positioned to integrate the practices of the Feuerstein Method into the instructional day. As a consequence, students' learning, enriched by Feuerstein's practices, results in powerful positives including significant gains in academic performance on tests, and more efficient ways of thinking that they carry with them and apply in all aspects of their academic and non-academic lives.

Enriched learning builds students' minds by making them more efficient problem solvers and more effective learners. When Feuerstein's methods are used with project-based learning, students not only learn-by-doing, but also from doing. Teachers prepared to use these methods increase their own effectiveness as they prepare students to apply 'learning to learn' practice on a daily basis.

A Performance Check for Students

Students' daily learning behavior is an apt predictor of their success in daily work and in the long term. The typical learning behaviors that teachers should expect to see at certain ages provide benchmarks on the students' essential learning needs. When the benchmarks show that students lack the pre-requisites for learning core curriculum content and skills in such areas as math, science, and literacy, teachers using the Feuerstein Method have a ready to use rubric for helping students become more efficient learners who are better able to succeed with the content.

Six Reasons to Enrich Student Learning

The major reasons for enriching students' learning align with the predictable results generated from the instructional approach of an enriched learning school. There are six strong and positive changes that result from an enriched learning school. When taken together, these six reasons add up to more effective teaching, leading to more effective learning. The more effective learning translates to increased academic and cognitive results for all students from the lowest performers to the most gifted achievers.

1. Just as increased wind and rain transform a Category 1 or 2 hurricane into a destructive Category 3, 4, or 5 storm, the enriched learning approach will transform a charter school that is seeing minimal gains in student achievement, or that has raised its students' test scores 2 or 3 points, into a school in which students add 5 or more points on annual standardized tests of reading and/or mathematics.
2. Teachers immediately notice changes in the way students behave. They observe increased student excitement about learning, decreased impulsivity, increased precision, and positive changes in additional and measurable cognitive functions related to their daily academic work.
3. As students' cognitive functions emerge, teachers can easily document how the students' increased learning efficiencies have a positive impact on the quality of their students' schoolwork. Before their eyes, teachers notice that students are building habits of thinking that carry outside of the classroom onto the playground. Parents comment on the improvements they see in their children's willingness to do homework or help around the house. In a similar manner, as older students strengthen their cognitive functions, teachers and parents note how the students' learning habits are changing for the good.
4. By the end of the year, test scores show the first gains in achievement results. With each year, the scores continue to increase and student classroom performance continues to improve.
5. Teachers have an effective tool to work with the basic cognitive needs of students with special

needs or others who have come to school not yet ready to learn. By adding Feuerstein's Learning Propensity Assessments to the tools available for tracking improved performance, schools reduce teacher anxiety caused by Federal mandates.

6. The Feuerstein Method, which is the touchstone for success in an enriched learning school, enables the school to develop a cohesive, coordinated improvement plan that moves the school to becoming a true learning community. This plan provides a consistent instructional approach that impacts the quality of teaching. Higher quality teaching results in increased student gains.

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IRI (International Renewal Institute) is the leading provider of Feuerstein-based Critical Thinking, Reading, and Mathematics Professional Learning and Student Programs for 21st century classroom and clinical use.