

## Partnerships and School-Wide Enrichment

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*Hinkletown Mennonite School  
Ephrata, Pennsylvania*

**H**inkletown Mennonite School's students in kindergarten through eighth grade participated in multi-grade-level enrichment clusters facilitated by parents or teachers. Students selected one of 18 topics to explore, and groups met weekly for nine 75-minute sessions in the school's third quarter.

Cluster topics included improvisation, stamp collecting, pool therapy, crazy science, sign language, puppet university, Christian music, carpentry, Pennsylvania local history, creating scrapbooks, photography, quilting, and Spanish. Groups consisted of six to 12 students who decided together how they wanted to study their topic and what end product they hoped to produce. While the facilitators helped the groups and directed the children toward resources, students made the decisions.

School staff developed the program to provide enrichment opportunities within the small school without creating an exclusive gifted program. Evaluations of past school-wide enrichment projects showed that all students, especially those who were struggling, benefited from the activities.

A teacher researched a successful school-wide enrichment model developed by Dr. Joseph Renzulli of the University of Connecticut. Four teachers and the principal formed a book study group to read Dr. Renzulli's book and decided to incorporate the model into the school's reaccreditation project.

The School-wide Enrichment Team, composed of parents and school staff, piloted the enrichment cluster program in May 2003. They designed a four-week program in which 44 first and second graders chose from five dif-

ferent activities. The project's success encouraged the Enrichment Team to implement the school-wide program the following winter.

The Enrichment Team recruited parents, teachers, and community members to serve as facilitators. Two education majors from Lancaster Bible College served as interns for the program. They prepared and implemented the enrichment cluster project under the direction of Hinkletown teachers. The Enrichment Team asked local businesses and retirement communities to participate in clusters and provide resources for the program.

Children benefited from the freedom they were given to choose their own activities and decide how they would complete them. Students with all learning styles engaged in activities that allowed them to learn using their individual strengths. Parents and community members who served as facilitators became more familiar with the school and its staff.

All participants overwhelmingly applauded the program. Parents were impressed with their students' progress. One parent noted that the children "can speak some Spanish now!" A community member who facilitated a group commented that students "were excited about learning and were delightful to work with." One child enthused, "I can't wait for enrichment cluster days. I love thinking about science projects to do." Hinkletown Mennonite School will continue to refine the enrichment clusters as part of a three-year plan.

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