

# Curriculum Compacting

## ***What is Curriculum Compacting?***

**Curriculum compacting**, developed by Joseph Renzulli and Linda Smith in 1978, is a differentiation instructional strategy that is specifically found effective to make appropriate curricular modifications for gifted and high ability students in the regular classroom to address their needs for more challenging learning experiences.

This strategy enables teachers to provide a more challenging and productive use of student's time by pre-assessing the students' mastery of the learning objectives and hence determining which parts of the grade-level curriculum could be streamlined and replaced by appropriate and challenging alternatives (e.g. acceleration or enrichment).

## ***Why use curriculum compacting?***

In general, gifted or high-ability students learn more rapidly and in greater depth than their age peers and they may often master or know much of the grade level material and find the lessons not challenging enough. In order to meet the needs of this target group, teachers may consider using the strategy of curriculum compacting to streamline the curriculum to a pace that corresponds with the students' ability and proficiency so as to provide them with a more appropriate learning environment.

## ***How Does Curriculum Compacting Work?***

The procedure involves three phases (Reis & Gelbar, 2011, p.15):

- (1) “defining the goals and outcomes of a particular unit or block of instruction;
- (2) determining and documenting the students have already mastered most or all of a specified set of learning outcomes; and
- (3) providing replacement strategies for material already mastered through the use of instructional options that enable a more challenging and productive use of the student's time.”

## 8 Essential Steps (Reis, Burns, & Renzulli, 1991; Reis & Gelbar, 2011)

1. Select relevant learning objectives in a given subject / grade level;
2. Find an appropriate way to pre-assess competencies related to the chosen objectives before instruction begins;
3. Identify students who should take the pre-assessment as they may have mastered or have the potential to master the objectives at a faster than normal pace;
4. Pre-assess those identified students to determine mastery levels before beginning instruction on one or more of the objectives;
5. Streamline practice, drill, or instructional time for students who have shown mastery of the objectives;
6. Provide instructional options for those who have not yet mastered all the selected objectives, but generally can learn faster than their classmates;
7. Offer and recommend alternatives for those eligible students;
8. Keep records of the compacting process and instructional options available to those students

### How can curriculum compacting help the gifted learners in your class?

#### Using the Compactor to Facilitate Curriculum Compacting (Reis & Gelbar, 2011)

| <b>Strategy</b>  |
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| <p><b>A 3-stage process:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) <b>Pre-assess</b> what a student <b>knows</b> about material to be studied &amp; what the student still <b>needs to master</b></li><li>2) <b>Plan for learning what is not known</b> and excuse student from what is known</li><li>3) <b>Plan for freed-up time</b> to be spent in <b>enriched</b> or <b>accelerated</b> study</li></ol> |

Appendix

## The Compactor\*

(Renzulli, Reis & Burns, 1991)

| <b>Curriculum Areas to be Considered for Compacting</b>  | <b>Procedures for Compacting Basic Material</b>   | <b>Alternative Activities [Acceleration and / or Enrichment]</b>   |
|--|---|--|
| <p><i>What material needs to be covered?</i></p> <p><i>What evidence shows a need for compacting?</i></p> <p><i>[Steps 1 to 4]</i></p> | <p><i>Exactly what material is to be excluded?</i></p> <p><i>How will you demonstrate mastery?</i></p> <p><i>[Steps 5 to 6]</i></p> | <p><i>What enrichment and / or acceleration activities will be included in regular classroom?</i></p> <p><i>[Step 7]</i></p> |
| ←  | <p><i>[Step 8]</i></p>  | →  |

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*\*This form is adapted from:*

Renzulli, J.S., Reis, S.M., & Burns, D.E. (1991). *Curriculum compacting: The complete guide to modifying the regular curriculum for high ability students*. Mansfield Center, CT: Creative Learning Press, Inc.

### Other References

Renzulli, J.S., & Smith, L.H. (1978). *The compactor*. Mansfield Centre, CT: Creative Learning Press.

Reis, S. M., & Gelbar, N. (2011). Curriculum compacting: An easy start to differentiating instruction and curriculum for high potential and academically talented students. *INSPIRE-The Gifted Education Magazine for Educators*, 5, 13-19.