

How Optimal Match Meets the Needs of Diverse Learners: A Psychologist's Role in the Process

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Optimal Match

An ongoing assessment of a child's strengths, interests, and learning needs, along with a flexible and dynamic range of options that match that.

Benefits:

1. Inclusive across all forms of diversity—race, age, ability level, gender, socio-economic status, geography
2. Strength-based and supportive
3. Applies to every kind of learning situation—homeschooling, public schools, charter schools, independent schools, online
4. Fluid, flexible, and dynamic, changing over time as learning needs and interests change
5. Fosters creativity, inquiry, engagement, and resourcefulness in children, teachers, and parents, and enlivens the classroom experience
6. Encourages children to acquire the supports they may need to thrive across domains

Optimal Match Increases Children's Investment in Their Own Learning

1. A psychologist can provide an initial strength-based assessment and make connections to flexibly responsive and suitable learning options. If ongoing counselling is required, that should include a focus on talent development and a growth mindset. If warranted, additional assessments can be conducted as the child's needs change.
2. When children's learning opportunities are aligned with their interests and abilities, they become invested in the learning process. Instead of being bored, frustrated, or detached (as too often happens when gifted learning needs aren't met), they become motivated and engaged.
3. Finding an optimal match means students co-create appropriate challenges, participating in the planning, fine-tuning, and follow-through. Learning options may include acceleration, guided independent study, problem-based learning, mentorships, leadership initiatives, flexible subject-specific grouping, enrichment, and more. As kids take ownership for their learning and personal growth their autonomy is supported.

To find out more about the Optimal Match approach and ways to meet children's gifted learning needs, read [***Being Smart about Gifted Learning: Empowering Parents and Kids Through Challenge and Change***](#) by Dona Matthews and Joanne Foster.

