

Meeting the Needs of Gifted Learners
How Optimal Match Lightens Teachers' Burdens
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Optimal Match

Discover a child's learning needs, and offer a flexible range of options that match the child's abilities and interests

Benefits:

1. Inclusive across all forms of diversity—race, age, ability level, gender, socio-economic status, geography
2. Strength-based
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

Optimal Match Increases Children's Investment in Their Own Learning

1. 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. The ramped-up enthusiasm is infectious, and teachers no longer have to work so hard to motivate students' learning.
2. Finding an optimal match means students help to 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, the demands on teachers are reduced.
3. Optimal Match involves networking and collaboration. While this requires an initial investment by teachers, it gets easier over time, as the connections build.

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.

