

Curriculum Compacting

What it is: Curriculum compacting is a useful tool for modifying the core curriculum. The procedure is relatively simple. Prior to instruction, determine what students already know and can do using pre-assessment. For those who've already mastered most of the material, replace and extend the core curriculum using more challenging learning opportunities.

Curriculum compacting can also be effective for those students that may not have already mastered the majority of content and skills, but may learn material quickly. They can benefit from instruction, but will require fewer repetitions for mastery. Abbreviate the core assignments using a strategy like Five Hardest, then provide alternate challenging activities.

Benefits:

- Appropriately challenges students
- Eliminates repetition of mastered content and skills
- Increases student motivation
- Differentiates pace
- Provides the opportunity to explore core content in depth
- Develops self-directed learners
- Engages learners using an area of their interest

Situations where it's useful:

- When students have already mastered a significant portion of the core curriculum
- When students learn content and skills quickly (need few repetitions for mastery)

Examples:

- Renzulli's (1978) Curriculum Compactor
- Extension Menu (Winebrenner, 2001)
- Study Guide Method (Winebrenner, 2001)
- Most Difficult First/FiveHardest/Ten Hardest

Pointers:

- It is essential to determine if students already know a significant amount of the material *before* instruction ever begins using some method of pre-assessment
- Develop a system for documenting what students have mastered and what instruction and extension activities they will participate in
- Develop a contract for independent work for the student, the parent, and the teacher to sign that includes rules for working independently and criteria for completing the activities
- Connect the alternate learning opportunities to the core curriculum
- Check-in daily with students that are compacting
- Agree with students using compacting on how they will be graded

References/Resources

- Boswell, C. and Carlile, V.D. (2010). *RTI for the gifted student*. Hawthorne, NJ: Educational Impressions.
- Reis, S.M. & Renzulli, J.S. (2005). *Curriculum compacting: An easy start to differentiating for high-potential students*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Renzulli, J. (1978). *The compactor*. Mansfield Center, CT: Creative Learning Press.
- Winebrenner, S. (2001). *Teaching gifted kids in the regular classroom: Strategies and techniques every teacher can use to meet the academic needs of the gifted and talented (revised, expanded, updated)*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.