

RENZULLI CENTER NEWS

Special Category

What We Learned About Good Teaching From Online Cooking and Baking Courses: How the Pandemic Can Influence High End Learning in the Post COVID Years

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During the pandemic our family, always interested in anything and everything related to cooking and baking, learned about the availability of online courses from places we had previously attended person classes. After registering for various courses, we were sent all the necessary background information necessary to prepare us for our one or two hours online. In addition to the obvious (recipes, ingredients, and tools), we also received information on the history of the recipe, the name(s) and emails of famous chef restaurateurs that created the dish, occasionally a short video (usually with English subtitles) of a conversation and demonstration by a well-known chef, and a list of hints from the chef that was teaching the course.

We were always *excited to learn* when “cooking night” arrived and felt prepared as our online chef looked at our set up and gave us a “thumbs up” when he or she scanned the layout of our ingredients (we usually hid the bottle of wine from our computer camera). What is most important about these activities was that we were well prepared for the time and learning that took place when we were actually in the (albeit virtual) face-to-face situation with our instructor. Admittedly, we were in a self-selected subject rather than a prescribed curricular topic; however, we believe that a good deal of this “flipped classroom” strategy can be used to promote more enjoyable and engaging learning. And because schools using the Enrichment Cluster component of the SEM (Renzulli et al., 2013), which enable student choice in cluster selection, we have found that the online implementation of clusters has worked extremely well.

This approach reminds me of an earlier but frequently used teaching strategy called the Flipped Classroom (Abeysekera & Dawson, 2014; Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Briefly, this process recommends students prepare at home beforehand with material assigned by teachers for more advanced and interactive learning by reading background material about a particular topic, including videos, PowerPoint's, and any other material that is necessary to begin more advanced work on the topic. After completing the preparation work, students arrive in class ready to start analyzing text, engaging in discussions and debates, solving problems, dividing into small groups, and/or planning their own investigating projects. This approach is a much more engaging and enjoyable approach to virtual learning than what one student called "worksheets on line."

In a certain sense, the virtual learning that the pandemic brought to the education establishment forced us to reconsider the "sit and git" pedagogy that has been around since the time of the industrial revolution. During the pandemic, most teachers learned new skills that enabled them to teach despite not being able to see their students on a face-to-face basis, and most students now have online learning capabilities of varying levels. And with technology improving at an exponential rate, new opportunities for personalizing learning and making student engagement and enjoyable are getting easier for teachers to use these new skills. Enjoyment, Engagement, and Enthusiasm for Learning have always been the major goals of our Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM; Renzulli & Reis, 2014) and this was never more relevant to us than when our family group took the online cooking and baking courses mentioned above. These changes in learning situations have important implications for gifted and talented students because using them may give them a better brand of creative and investigative learning opportunities in both in their classrooms and enrichment programs, as they also spend the majority of their time in regular classrooms.

How can the virtual cooking school experiences give us some hints about what we can do in the post-pandemic years to improve learning and teaching? First and foremost, teachers now have a new set of technology skills that will make their jobs easier. Second, rather than sitting for endless hours listening to teacher lectures and taking notes, students can receive guidance and resources for receiving preparation information beforehand so that class time can be devoted to much more interactive activities, not only for mastering required material, but also creative work. This work might be investigating a topic in which they have a heightened interest within any prescribed curricular topic. My own baking lets me play around with a couple of my own recipes because I can give myself the license to do so, and accordingly, we can promote more creativity and innovation by giving our students the opportunities, resources, and encouragement to do the same. And perhaps the most important lesson of all for our honorable profession, especially when teachers, who always seem to be at the bottom of the food chain when it comes to curriculum and instruction decisions, can experiment, discuss among themselves, and play around with using this approach to make their classrooms more enjoyable and interesting places.

The advantages of online cooking and baking courses using what we learned by necessity because of the pandemic are good reasons to apply this flipped classroom model in the post-pandemic years. We have talked about "self-directed learning" for years but relatively little has been done to change teacher-directed instruction. True student empowerment means that students can take more ownership of their education. One of the most effective forms of motivation is empowerment—schooling that puts students at the center of their learning.

The most important advantage of this approach is that it gives teachers and students the opportunity to make what we do in our classrooms more interesting, interactive, and creates a fertile ground for the development of higher-level thinking skills and creativity. And the teachers with whom I have talked about how their virtual enrichment clusters are working have also explained that it makes

teaching more fun. The pandemic opened the door to a new and effective way of promoting a better brand of learning, one based on engagement and interest, instead of a more traditional type of learning. Let's keep the doorway to advanced learning more open, less repetitive, and more enjoyable rather than returning to the "sit and git" model of learning.

References

- Abeysekera, L., & Dawson, P. (2014). Motivation and cognitive load in the flipped classroom: Definition, rationale and a call for research. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 34(1), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2014.934336>
- Bergmann, J., & Sams, A. (2012). *Flip your classroom: Reach every student in every class every day*. Internal Society for Technology in Education.
- Renzulli, J. S., Gentry, M., & Reis, S. M. (2013). *Enrichment clusters: A practical plan for real-world student driven learning* (2nd ed.). Prufrock Press.
- Renzulli, J. S., & Reis, S. M. (2014). *The Schoolwide Enrichment Model: A how-to guide for educational excellence* (3rd ed.). Prufrock Press.

Confratute Announcements

Confratute is the longest running summer institute on enrichment-based, differentiated teaching that has been held annually at the University of Connecticut for over 40 years! We hope you are able to join us virtually for another memorable year.

[Confratute registration](#) is now open.

Upcoming Events

Upcoming Free Webinar: Infusion Activities

How to Develop Infusion Activities that Enhance Learning

Presenters: Nicole Waicunas and Joseph Renzulli
June 12, 2021

The Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) uses an infusion-based approach to make prescribed curricular content more interesting and engaging. The SEM strikes a balance between traditional approaches to learning and approaches that promote thinking skills, hands-on learning, and creative productivity on the parts of all students. In this session, we focus on how to minimize boredom and "school turn-offs" and to improve achievement and creative productivity by infusing what we call The Three Es (Enjoyment, Engagement, and Enthusiasm for Learning) into the culture and atmosphere of a school.

For more information and to register visit: [Events from the Center | Renzulli Center for Creativity, Gifted Education, and Talent Development](#)



Apply Now for Fall Online Graduate Certificate

A 12-credit online graduate certificate program for educators.

The Neag School of Education is ranked as one of the top public graduate schools of education in the Northeast and on the East Coast by *U.S. News & World Report*. Ranked among the nation's top 20 in elementary education and special education, and #32 among the 280 private and public education schools. The Renzulli Center for Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent Development has been a national and international leader for more than 40 years. [Read more...](#)



Free Online Summer Enrichment for 2e Students

Free Online Summer Enrichment Program for Twice Exceptional High School Students

A free online summer program for high school students is available this summer as part of a federal Javits grant awarded to UConn two years ago. Project 2e-ASD is a groundbreaking initiative that seeks to identify and develop academic and non-academic strategies for high school and college students who have talents and are on the autism spectrum. In 2020, the CDC reported that one in fifty-four children are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). However, little research exists on this population and Project 2e-ASD is addressing this research gap and providing evidence-based learning strategies for gifted students with ASD to reach their high school, college, and adult transition goals.

Students who are twice-exceptional-ASD (2e-ASD) are a little-studied and often-overlooked population. These students possess exceptional talents, yet struggle in many school settings. This summer's online program will enable students to take a college course through Pre-College Summer with the support from Project 2e-ASD. The program will identify and test successful strategies for 2e-ASD students in a post-secondary education setting. These strategies will then be shared widely with students, teachers, and parents to help them in their transition to college, in the college classroom, and beyond.

Our exciting program will be offered in conjunction with the University of Connecticut's Pre-College Summer (PCS) program for high school students. The program is part of a grant designed by Sally Reis, Joseph Madaus, and Nicholas Gelbar, researchers at our center who are studying this group of students.

The goal of this summer program will be to support high school students as they begin to transition into post-high school years and prepare for college. This 2e/ASD program will provide opportunities for high school students to experience a rigorous and rewarding educational experience through UConn's Pre-college summer classes (see this year's offerings at <https://precollege-summer.uconn.edu/academic-areas/>—sessions 2A and 2B) taught by University of Connecticut professors.

This free program gives opportunities for students to explore their interests and learn more about themselves and their talents. Pertinent information is below:

When: July 5–July 23—five days each week for approximately 6 hours daily

Where: Online

What: Students will take one UConn class in an area of interest and participate in enrichment, talent development and learning opportunities, college planning, peer mentoring, and social opportunities, all online

How: Students and parents will complete an online application to the program, and submit documentation of identification as ASD and academic talents.

Why: To understand strengths and interests and increase readiness to attend college

More information is available about our research at our website: <https://giftedasd.project.uconn.edu>

Please contact our project staff if you are interested in this summer program—we are getting close to filling up so please contact Quinn Austermann as soon as possible: quinn.austermann@uconn.edu

Awards, Publications, and Presentations

UConn Grad Pens Book for Distance Learners

Follow Me to Distance Learning is a book created in response to the challenges that students are facing while learning in the pandemic.

The book is focused on the social and emotional learning of children going through distance learning and remote learning models of teaching. It discusses empathy, equity, and the need to address the needs of all learners.

The main character struggles with understanding the changes of the learning environment; however, with teacher support and engagement, the students find a way to learn and have fun. This book is for every student and teacher experiencing distance learning. It also supports the transition back into the classroom. At the end of the book there are higher order thinking questions and a differentiated sequencing activity.

For more information you can look at this YouTube link. <https://youtu.be/n9jcRsJ8NGc>

Books are available on Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

Webinar Recordings Now Available in Spanish

We are pleased to offer closed captioning in Spanish for four of our popular webinar recordings: *Developing and Implementing Enrichment Clusters: A Great Way to Start SEM* (Joseph Renzulli and Sally Reis), *Creativity: The Basics, The Benefits, and Tips* (James Kaufman), *Differentiating without the Fluffy Stuff* (Catherine Little), and *9 Tips to Increase Student Motivation* (Del Siegle). Enjoy these and our other webinar recordings at <https://gifted.uconn.edu/videos/>

Three Ring Conception of Giftedness— Article Update

Following is a link to the most recent update of the Three Ring Conception of Giftedness, originally published in *Phi Delta Kappan* in 1978.

<https://gifted.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/961/2021/06/Three-Ring-Conception-2021.pdf>

Alumni News

UConn Student Awarded Fulbright Grant

Jessica Stargardter, a native from Windsor, CT, is one of six University of Connecticut students to be awarded a grant through the Fulbright U.S. Student Program for the 2021-22 academic year. Read more from this [Journal Inquirer](#) newspaper article.

Denise de Souza Fleith to Head World Council

Dr. Denise de Souza Fleith, who received her doctoral degree from the University of Connecticut in gifted and talented education in 1999, has been elected President of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children. She is a full professor at the Institute of Psychology, University of Brasilia, Brazil. Denise is the author of numerous books and articles on creativity, giftedness, and psychological assessment.

Three Summers Grad Honored

Jennifer Troester, 2003 graduate of the Three Summer's Program, was awarded the NCTE Hall of Fame—NELAC English Teachers Hall of Fame Award - 2021. Jennifer has been a highly innovative, caring teacher—constantly connecting her students to the community, the state, and the world, especially through enrichment and technology.

While centered in her local place in north central Nebraska, Jennifer's teaching has been far-reaching indeed. Perhaps the most striking example of her writing teaching has been her Online Writing Exchange every fall since 2008. Through this program, she has created and sponsored a digital platform for sharing writing between her O'Neill 8th Graders and preservice secondary English educators taking University of Nebraska Lincoln's Composition Theory and Practice course. Jennifer and Dr. Rachael Shah published an article about the program in 2019. The Online Writing Exchange, in short, exemplifies what Jennifer Troester does so very well: it surrounds her students with other adults, centers them in writing, and creates opportunities to explore connections between O'Neill and the rest of the state.

Jennifer has additionally been active in several other educational organizations. She was a column writer for the National Association for the Gifted, a position she held for eight years, and the Chair for

NAGC's Computer and Technology Division. She served a term on the Sherwood Foundation's Rural Community Partners, has received grants from the Malaika Foundation, and has written for Nebraska Life magazine. As these activities indicate, she's been an ongoing advocate for writing, for rural places, enrichment, and for students.

Her excellent professional contributions to the teacher education literature and her leadership in professional organizations have helped many teachers infuse highly engaging enrichment teaching activities and strategies into the traditional ways in which English has been taught.

Fun and Useful Resources: From Us to You

Type III's In Action

Joe has come across some marvelous examples of Type IIIs done by students learning in a highly diverse school district. Check them out at this website:

<https://showcase.renzullilearning.com/?key=2bbd6e61-aaba-4dcd-8f5c-5a13bb7f4bef>



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