



Sustainability of Schoolwide Enrichment Model Programs

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***“The best way to predict
the future is to create it.”
Peter Drucker***

One of the things that we have been studying is the sustainability of programs using the Schoolwide Enrichment Model. Numerous school districts from around the country and overseas have responded to our questionnaire about the factors that contribute to long term implementation of the model. The following items represent the most frequently mentioned sources of influential factors for maintaining sustainability:

Support at all levels (Administrative, Teachers, Board of Education, Parents)

Effective program leader or coordinator

An SEM or enrichment team that plays an important role in planning and decision-making

Ongoing professional development for special program teachers

Ongoing professional development for classroom teachers and administrators

General satisfaction with the program among students

Enrichment Clusters for all students

Type I and Type II General Enrichment Experiences for all students

Opportunities for Type III Enrichment

Curriculum Compacting for high achieving students

Use of Renzulli Learning

Publicity and showcasing of student projects and accomplishments.

What follows is a description of one of the longest running SEM programs that has produced remarkable results over more than a decade of operation. Principals and program leaders in other districts have developed a checklist to use in various SEM schools and it is included at the end of this article.

Wade Glathar, Lead Director

Ascent Academies of Utah

Ascent Academies was founded on the mission of utilizing SEM as a core educational approach for all students in all grades. The school's start-up team wrote and submitted an application to our state's office of education in order to be chartered as an SEM public charter school. Our application included all components of SEM, as well as the vision of having a network of schools (multiple campuses) for collaboration and support.

At Ascent Academies, we start the year off by having our students fill out a profiler questionnaire. This helps identify their preferred learning and expression styles and well as help identify their talents, strengths and interests. Each campus reserves 90 minutes a week for SEM Clusters, which cross grade levels and last 6–10 weeks for each session. We also incorporate Type I, Type II and Type III activities in each classroom through SEM Infusion, SEM Expression Boards, SEM Showcase Nights (for parents), and Curriculum Compacting.

Upon opening our doors, we have embarked in committed SEM professional development for our staff, sending groups of 15–20 educators and administrators to Confratute each summer. We have also hosted Dr. Renzulli, Ms. Waicunas and other SEM "gurus" on our campuses for multi-day in-depth SEM training. In addition, we offer SEM professional development at our August Back to school training as well as specific PD throughout the school year on topics like SEM Infusion, Interest Centers, Clusters, and Expression Boards.

Just as we want to acknowledge the strengths and talents in our students, we also strive to do the same with our teachers and staff. Oftentimes providing leadership opportunities through cross campus collaboration and asking our teachers to lead specific PD based on their talents. Our West Jordan campus started modeling their Friday PDs after the SEM Cluster model. At the beginning of the year, staff are surveyed as to what professional development topics they are interested in. Then they are put into PD Cluster groups with other staff with similar interests. From there, they meet weekly to brainstorm, ask questions, and ultimately decide what they want to learn/explore together.

We offer various ways for our parents and families to support and participate in SEM. They can volunteer as Cluster and Enrichment guest speakers, help with enrichment activities like after school clubs and field trips, help donate resources like books and materials, and collaborate with teachers to help identify students' talents, interests, and learning styles. We also invite families to come and celebrate Clusters with an SEM Showcase.

We have had great success in students regaining and keeping their love for learning and their excitement for coming to school. Students love creating their glyphs, being exposed to many different Type I experiences, and having options for assignments

through Expression Boards. While SEM Clusters are very popular among our students, it has been difficult at times for teachers to make the paradigm shift from having Clusters be another “lesson” they prepare or having it be a “club” which lacks deep learning and student-driven skills acquisition.

This coming school year we will be celebrating 10 years of excellence in education. In those 10 years, we have grown from two campuses to five. We believe now, more than ever, in the importance of identifying students' talents and strengths. Ascent Academies aims to move beyond the one size fits all approach by providing differentiated opportunities for students to explore their interests, learning styles, and expression styles.

The Schoolwide Enrichment Leader's Checklist

- ___ **Conducts regularly scheduled meetings of the Schoolwide Enrichment Team**
- ___ **Has a list of the names of all students for whom Curriculum Compacting is being provided and periodically reviews Compactors with the teachers**
- ___ **Has a collection of Type III Management Plans from projects completed by students in Enrichment Clusters or other special program opportunities**
- ___ **Sets up a regularly scheduled weekly time for Enrichment Clusters**
- ___ **Visits Enrichment Clusters and arranges for follow-up meetings with the teachers**
- ___ **Maintains a list of outside persons who have been invited to provide Type I or Type II Enrichment in the school**
- ___ **Maintains a list of outside persons who have served as Type III Mentors to individuals or small groups**
- ___ **Maintains a list of state contests and competitions (e.g., National History Day, Invention Convention, Future Problem Solving, Math League, etc.) and provides information to teachers about dates, locations, and entrance and registration requirements**
- ___ **Asks teachers for quarterly summaries listing Types I, II, or III Enrichment activities that have been infused into the regular curriculum**
- ___ **Sends announcements about student, teacher, or program accomplishments to the local press**

- ___ **Arranges for an end-of-year Type III Fair or Showcase for students, parents, district officials, board members, and the local press**

- ___ **Has visual displays and graphic organizers (e.g., Three Ring Conception of Giftedness, Triad Model) throughout the building so that students and teachers understand “the language of the model” and the meaning and purpose of key features**

- ___ **Arranges to showcase student work throughout the building, in the central office, and other public and commercial buildings throughout the community**

- ___ **Has an attractive brochure that can be shared with parents, visitors, and others who ask about the program**

- ___ **"Artifacts" exist in the buildings that validate the school is an SEM school or on the way to becoming one! ["Artifacts" can show up as memos to staff related to SEM, articles about SEM regularly distributed and discussed, bulletin boards displaying Type 1, 2 and 3 experiences, etc.].**

Programs won't last unless we are constantly working on advocacy, communication, and dissemination of the many great things that are happening in your program. Spend a little time at your meetings thinking about promoting some of the activities listed above. The payoff will be well worth it and being your own best public relations champion is the best way to insure sustainability.

*“There are no passengers on
spaceship earth. We are all crew.”
Marshall McLuhan*