



Academies of Inquiry and Talent Development

One application of Renzulli's Schoolwide Enrichment Model are the Academies of Inquiry and Talent Development (AITD) within middle schools. AITD refers to a specific type of real-world learning experience within schools that allows students and teachers to explore an interest in a core area of their choice. AITD allows students to develop close, meaningful, multi-year relationship with middle school teachers.

A crucial component of AITD are the 3 types of enrichment facets. Type I enrichments expose students to a wide variety of experiences, professions, etc. Type II enrichment are planned lessons that focus on the development of thinking and feeling processes. Type III enrichments combine interests from Type I and skills gained from Type II, allowing students to engage in individual and small-group investigations of real-world problems.

The objectives of the AITD are based around two fundamental concepts underlying all AITD learning activities. These two concepts are authentic learning and real-life problems. Authentic learning consists of investigative activities and the development of creative products. Students assume roles as investigators, writers, artists, or other types of practicing professionals.

Academies of Inquiry and Talent Development use the Total Talent Portfolio to assess incoming middle school students for their major strengths and interest areas. This assessment process compiles information about previous successful to exemplary performance in academic subjects, extracurricular pursuits, and collected works that reflect high levels of interest and creativity.

Real-life problems have four components. First problems must involve emotional or internal commitment. Second, they must not have existing or unique solutions for those addressing the problem. The third characteristic is best described in terms of why people pursue these problems. The main reason is that they want to have a tangible effect on people. Lastly, real-life problems are directed towards a specific audience.

Middle school teachers are a crucial component of the AITD. Teachers also complete an adult interest assessment and use the results to explore an AITD that they would be interested in participating. Teachers can choose AITD in areas they teach or explore AITD in areas outside of their teaching assignment. Thus, teachers can form close bonds and mentor students with whom they spend time with all through their middle school years.

Resources:

1. [Renzulli, J. S. \(2000\). Part I: One way to organize exploratory curriculum: Academies of Inquiry and Talent Development. *Middle School Journal*, 32\(2\), 5–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/00940771.2000.11495261](https://doi.org/10.1080/00940771.2000.11495261)
2. [Renzulli, J. S., & Renzulli, S. R. \(2010\). The Schoolwide Enrichment Model: A Focus on Student Strengths and Interests. *Gifted Education International*, 26\(2–3\), 140–157.](https://doi.org/10.1080/00940771.2010.511111)