Preface

PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

About 10 years have passed since publication of the second edition of this review of teaching–learning models appropriate for the education of gifted students. Our purpose has not varied, but many changes have occurred in the field of general education, and particularly in the field of education for gifted students. New program models have been developed specifically for gifted students, more research has been done, and new materials have been published. In many areas, special programs are in jeopardy or have been eliminated. Greater emphasis has been placed on the development of programs to serve diverse populations, and the "mainstreaming" of all children into heterogeneous classrooms is practiced widely. The value of including some of the thinking process models in the education of all students has been recognized as well. Some of the models reviewed are recommended to all teachers who want to create a more effective learning environment in their classrooms. This book provides a comprehensive review of teaching–learning models that can be used in the development and implementation of a curriculum for gifted students. In providing this review, we hope to supply enough information to teachers, prospective teachers, program coordinators, and curriculum development specialists to enable them to (a) assess critically the match of the assumptions underlying a model with their own philosophies; (b) evaluate the validity of a model for their intended purposes; (c) apply the model appropriately in any situation; and, most important, (d) implement the model with gifted students. Because of its focus on implementation, the book provides many examples of the use of different models with gifted students of all ages.

This book also serves as a companion volume to *Curriculum Development and Teaching Strategies for Gifted Learners* (Maker, 1982a; Maker & Nielson, 1996). That volume includes modifications of the regular

curriculum content, processes, products, and learning environment to make them more appropriate for gifted students. It also provides suggestions for curriculum development, along with examples of appropriate curricula. To implement such a curriculum, however, teachers need more specific teaching strategies, more examples, and more in-depth discussions of the variety of approaches available for teaching gifted students. In effect, this current book provides a variety of alternatives for implementing the general principles described in *Curriculum Development and Teaching Strategies for Gifted Learners*. No single model or way of teaching gifted learners can provide the comprehensive curriculum needed by the students. Therefore, the focus of this book is to help the reader understand a variety of approaches. Comprehension of these approaches assists teachers in designing curricula, taking into consideration the following important factors: (a) the philosophies of the teacher, school, and community that underlie the program goals; (b) the underlying assumptions of the theoretical and practical approaches and how these assumptions mesh with the philosophies of everyone concerned; (c) the varied characteristics and interests of the children; (d) parental concerns; (e) the teaching styles, strengths, and preferences of the teachers; and (f) the physical setting of the school. The product—a functional curriculum for gifted students—may have an emphasis on the use of one main model, one model as a framework with supplementary models, or the integration of several models into a framework constructed by those who develop curricula.

The models we describe were chosen for several reasons. First, each model must have demonstrated or potential success with gifted children. Each principle described in *Curriculum Development and Teaching Strategies for Gifted Learners* (Maker, 1982a; Maker & Nielson, 1996) was considered in this selection process. Second, these models were selected because of their widespread use in programs for the gifted or the integration of most of the modifications recommended in our companion volume into their structure. A third and final reason was variety and ease of combining each model with complementary models. No one model can encompass all the content, process, product, and learning environment changes necessary to develop a comprehensive curriculum; no one model will be attractive to all teachers; and no one model will fit every situation. For these and related reasons, the models chosen can be combined in a variety of ways to enhance their effectiveness and increase the chances that teachers will find a combination to fit their preferred styles of teaching and their students' preferred styles of learning.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The first chapter provides an introduction to teaching–learning models and their role in programs for gifted students. The main body of the book consists of separate chapters about each model. Due to the variations of some models, not every chapter includes the same sections; however, the chapters follow a fairly consistent outline containing a discussion of the model, examples of learning activities that fit within the structure of the model, a brief history of how the model was developed, pertinent research, and a listing of additional resources. The approximate outline for most chapters is as follows:

A. Overview of the Model

B. Assumptions Underlying the Model

    1. About Learning

    2. About Teaching

    3. About Characteristics and Teaching of the Gifted

    4. Other

C. Elements/Parts

D. Modifications of the Basic Curriculum

    1. Content

    2. Process

    3. Product

    4. Learning Environment

    5. Examples of Teaching Activities/Strategies

E. Modifying the Approach

F. Development

    1. How

    2. By Whom

G. Research on Effectiveness

    1. With Nongifted

    2. With Gifted

      H. Judgments

          1. Advantages

          2. Disadvantages

   I. Conclusion

   J. Resources

          1. Background Information

          2. Instructional Materials and Ideas

The final chapter is a discussion of how a comprehensive curriculum can be developed by combining and integrating more than one of the models described. The chapter includes information on assessing and selecting models, curriculum development, and an example of an integrated approach.