

What is Enrichment?

Quality education works by a simple principal: *contrast*. If there is no difference between what you already know and what is offered, there is no contrast and there is no new learning.

Enrichment is key. Enrichment is a positive biological response to a contrasting environment. An enriching environment is where measurable, synergistic, and global changes have occurred within the brain. Enrichment creates cortical imprinting needed to release the acetylcholine (the common neurotransmitter known to help memory formation) necessary to form memory to save the new learning.

We need meaningful context for an activity to get purposeful changes in the brain, and studies show that more relevant, meaningful learning is better. Enrichment is synergistic - enrichment can only be created, not offered. There are many forms of enrichment from physical classroom environment to teacher enthusiasm to meaningful and relevant academic content, and every student can benefit from it.

Enrichment is individual student work done in class or at home. Recorded as “Enrichment” in the grade book, students will often call it “homework”, or if it is an assignment to be accomplished at home, I may call it “homethrills”.

Characteristically, homework has been used to provide practice of new learning, especially vocabulary terms. Typical homework assignments of the past involved contrived situations that often did not relate to the world outside of school.

Science homework is different. Science homework is either an extension of the classroom or an enrichment of the learning experience. To be consistent with the investigative approach to teaching and to promote science as a process for understanding the natural world, homework involves investigative opportunities outside the classroom and in the context of the home, community, and the students’ lives.