

## **How to Create and Use an Extension Menu**

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### **Definition of Extension Menu**

An extension menu is an array of independent learning activities presented in a 2x2, 2x3, or 3x3 format (boxes) to provide students with choices for extending or enriching the essential curriculum.

### **Purposes of Extension Menus**

- Enrich or extend the essential curriculum
- Challenge the abilities of highly able students
- Provide alternative activities that address the differing abilities, interests, or learning styles of students

### **Advantages of Extension Menus**

- Can be written for any curriculum area
- Provide rigorous and challenging learning activities for highly able students
- May be tiered to accommodate all levels of instruction in the classroom
- Can be used to target specific learning activities for an individual student or group of students
- Allow student choice as well as challenge
- Encourage the development of independent thinkers
- Allow the teacher to monitor students' choices and behaviors to learn more about their interests, abilities and learning styles
- Promote student use of higher level thinking skills
- Promote flexible grouping in the classroom
- Allow the teacher to be a facilitator

### **Varied Uses of Extension Menus**

- **Follow-up activity** after a lesson
- **Culminating activity** at the end of a unit or book study
- **Anchoring activity** (defined by Carol Ann Tomlinson as, “meaningful work done individually and silently”) especially when children first begin a class or when they finish assigned work

- **Learning center** for enrichment and/or extension of the curriculum, especially when a student is *compacted out of* curricular objectives previously mastered (Extension menu activities are to be completed in the classroom with all materials provided.)
- **Independent activity** for students who have *compacted out of* specific curricular objectives or who have completed their work (Tasks can be completed in class, media center, or other designated area.)

### **“Think Abouts” for Creating an Extension Menu**

- Essential curriculum standard(s) and indicator(s) upon which the extension menu will be based
- Criteria to be used in assessing and evaluating student work
- Rigorous tasks that extend the lesson/unit and can challenge students with 20 minutes or more of independent learning
- Appropriate levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy to be addressed
- Possible inclusion of Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences
- Appropriate number of learning activities (boxes) to include in the extension menu
  - Newly oriented students should be offered 2-4 boxes
  - Experienced students may be offered 6-9 boxes

### **Creating Extension Menus**

- Develop learning activities at the appropriate levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy. (Refer to the FCPS source, *Vocabulary for Developing Tiered Questions and Tiered Assignments*.)
  - Consider using different levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy for the various learning activities.
  - Begin each extension menu activity with a vocabulary word from Bloom’s Taxonomy.
  - Boldface each Bloom’s Taxonomy word to help students begin to internalize and comprehend the vocabulary words.
- Number or letter boxes so that activities can be assigned or recommended to students based on their abilities, interests or learning styles.
- Consider designating one box “Write your idea here” so that a child can use creativity to develop his/her own learning activity. Approve each self-designed learning activity before the student pursues it.
- Develop rubrics, as needed, for learning activities provided in the extension menu.
- Consider completing a *Teacher Resource Page* that lists the standard(s) and indicator(s) for each learning activity as well as organizational tips and resources needed.

### **Introducing Students to Extension Menus**

- Introduce each different type of learning activity during whole group instruction.
- Familiarize students with the vocabulary pertinent to the extension menu processes and products.
- Model the use of an extension menu before expecting students to complete one independently.
- Present an extension menu with 2-4 learning activities and increase to 6-9 learning activities in subsequent extension menus.
- Share expectations and criteria for evaluating student work.

### **Management Tips for Extension Menus**

- Letter or number the boxes for ease of reference.
- Consider coding the boxes to target ability groupings of students.
- Assign or recommend specific boxes to specific students or groups of students based on their abilities, interests, and/or learning styles.
- Consider different grouping options, based on the purpose of the extension menu:
  - Whole Group - All students complete the same required box and then each student completes one or more additional boxes of choice.
  - Small Group - Students are grouped so they can be assigned specific boxes based on their abilities, interests and/or learning styles.
  - Individual - Student chooses or is assigned the box(es) to complete based on his/her abilities, interests, and/or learning style.

### **Options for Assessing and Evaluating Student Work on Extension Menus**

- Rubrics should be developed for some of the learning activities as appropriate.
- Students who have *compacted out of* the curriculum may earn the equivalent value of regular classroom assignments by completing extension menu activities.
- Extra credit points may be awarded to students who successfully complete certain learning activities.

### **Bibliography**

Tomlinson, Carol Ann, *The Differentiated Classroom Responding to the Needs of all Learners*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1999.

Winebrenner, Susan. *Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing Inc., 1992.