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Collaboration as Language Development: An Approach to the NGSS for ELL Gifted Students

Karen Anderson

As I walked into a second grade classroom, the students were actively involved in an engineering challenge related to bridges. They were working in small groups to test three different types of bridges using wooden blocks, large notecards, and washers as weights. How many washers can each bridge hold? As I circled through the groups, I asked various students to describe what they were doing. Some students were able to describe the exact task, including using the language of the discipline: “We are testing an arch bridge, a beam bridge, and a double beam bridge to compare how many weights can go on each.” Other students explained the same task without describing the types of bridges, and one girl said to me simply, “We are collaborating.” I love this! This English Language Learner (ELL) is not only participating in a hands on, content and language rich experience, but she also understands one of the fundamental purposes of the Engineering Design Process (EDP): collaboration. The question is, was this an English Language Development (ELD) lesson? In what ways can we parallel the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and the ELD standards? In what ways are we differentiating for the Gifted ELL in this type of lesson?

The key word here is collaboration. The ELD Standards (California Department of Education, adopted 2012) ask the students to “interact in meaningful ways” at three different levels: collaborative, interpretive, and productive. In the lesson described above, the students were “exchanging information and ideas with others through oral collaborative discussions,” “offering and supporting opinions and negotiating with others in communicative exchanges,” and “listening actively to spoken English in an academic context.” These standards cannot be practiced in isolation; the students must be given meaningful opportunities to collaborate in specific, authentic, academic contexts with the language of the discipline integrated into the experience and with connected opportunities to reflect orally on the process.

The other important element in this collaboration is the heterogeneous grouping while working in content areas. The ELL described above was participating actively with peers at different levels of language proficiency, which allows for language-rich discussions. This interaction with intellectually stimulating content and discourse can also help us in identification of Gifted ELL students. The teacher scaffolds included diagrams on the board with the bridges labeled as well as a chart of the EDP so that students could clearly understand the purpose behind the activity: “We are testing different types of bridges so that we can decide which elements of design we will want to incorporate into our own bridges.” Also, “We are testing how different designs work to balance the gravitational force of the weights, providing an equal and opposite force.” And, ultimately, “We are proving that structures have parts that are interrelated and serve a function.”
The disciplinary core idea from the engineering standards (NGSS) present in this learning experience is, “because there is always more than one possible solution to a problem, it is useful to compare and test designs” (ETS1.C), and the crosscutting concept is related to structure and function: “the shape and stability of structures of natural and designed objects are related to their function” (ETS 1-2). What better way to differentiate for our gifted ELLs than to provide engineering challenges that connect to and prove a larger universal theme in an inquiry-based, language-rich environment? Through a series of learning experiences and the EDP, the students will be able to prove with evidence that structures have parts that are interrelated and serve a function. As a result of the thorough exploration that results from the EDP, this concept can then be applied across the disciplines with a concrete example to reference.

The EDP parallels the 5E Model for lesson planning, and we can layer the ELD standards into each step, thus justifying the necessity for these kinds of experiences in our ELL classrooms. The steps demonstrate the progress from the collaborative standards to the interpretive standards to the productive standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5E Model Lesson</th>
<th>Engineering Design Process</th>
<th>ELD Part 1: Interacting in meaningful ways</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engage</td>
<td>Ask: What makes a bridge work?</td>
<td>2.A.1 – asking questions, adding relevant information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore</td>
<td>Imagine/Plan: Looking at different piers and bridge types, testing how much weight they hold. Testing different materials for properties conducive to holding weight.</td>
<td>2.A.3 – offering opinions, negotiating conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Plan/Create: Develop a design that includes labels for a bridge with certain criteria, build the bridge.</td>
<td>2.A.1 Exchanging information and ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elaborate</td>
<td>Improve: Groups test each other’s designs against criteria.</td>
<td>2.B.5 Listening actively to answer questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>Improve/Ask: Redesign if it didn’t work to fulfill all criteria. Redesign to hold more weight if it did work.</td>
<td>2.C.11 Support opinions with evidence. The ____ part of the bridge did not work</td>
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</table>
In school districts around California, teachers are being asked to demonstrate that they are providing both integrated and designated ELD lessons for students. The above lesson is integrated; all students, regardless of language designation, are participating in the lesson, and it is differentiated to meet the needs of EL students. One can imagine the variety of English Language Arts lessons that might be done to further deepen this experience, whether they be conducted before, during, or after the lesson. The challenge is to make our designated ELD lessons connect as well. Designated ELD lessons are those minutes that are required by Federal law to meet the needs of ELLs on a daily basis. In order to best set attainable goals for each student, these lessons are usually meant to be done in small groups and clustered by ELD level.

A day-to-day writing journal can serve as a jumping off point for designated ELD lessons (especially from Part II of the standards, “Learning About How English Works”). These lessons might include using verbs and verbs tenses appropriately to describe what happened (2.II.B.3), modifying writing to add details (2.II.B.5), or connecting ideas by combining clauses (2.II.B.6). As a result, the context for these designated ELD grammar lessons is meaningful because the writing that they are beginning with describes a hands on experience in which they were actively engaged.

When we provide learning experiences that connect to larger themes, we not only provide acceleration for our gifted learners, we provide context for all learners. Our ELL students need this context in order to make meaning connected to the world around them, to the grade level content, and to the language that we are asking them to use in order to “interact in meaningful ways.” In parallel to the learning experience reported above, a series of lessons that further supports the big idea can be presented, including one lesson at the beginning of the unit that explicitly demonstrates the critical thinking skills necessary in the process of proving with evidence. As long as researched-based ELD strategies are being used throughout the integrated lessons, our EL students can and will access the ideas being presented.

For example, a teacher might choose to begin this particular unit using a deductive reasoning lesson (below), and then follow up with an inquiry investigation using a picture of a different type of bridge, relating it explicitly to the direct instruction lesson on place value. Once the idea has been introduced and practiced, every learning experience that we create in the classroom serves to provide deeper proof and connection. Our ELD students can conceptualize the content with more depth and complexity if they are provided the language and context for the content.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Syntax</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>ELD</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivate</td>
<td>Play “balloon bounce” silly game (Kagan 111).</td>
<td>1.A.1 Exchanging information and ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher: you will build a structure with your group by joining hands. The job of the group (function) is to keep the balloon up in the air.</td>
<td>EL strategy: physical engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Present the big idea</td>
<td>Structures have parts that are interrelated and serve a function.</td>
<td>EL strategy: charting, breaking down language, partner share.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teacher presents chart, accesses prior knowledge about words, gives examples. Students partner share to relate idea to game.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice with the big idea</td>
<td>Analyze a bicycle (real or image).</td>
<td>Students work in partners to discuss questions with their own picture, using a marker to show connections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the parts of the structure?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does one part relate to another?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What does each part do (function)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why does each part need another part to work?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply the big idea to new content</td>
<td>Read informational text related to suspension bridges. Identify the parts of the text and how they help us to see the larger structure. What function do the captions serve? The illustrations? The bold words?</td>
<td>2.II.A.1 Understanding text structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate the idea across the disciplines</td>
<td>Add information from text to class chart that demonstrates each type of bridge (NGSS). Students use EDP to build a mini structure with Legos. They describe how the parts are interrelated and what function they each serve to a small group.</td>
<td>2.I.C.9 Plan and deliver brief oral presentations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both the NGSS and the ELD standards ask students to make connections to larger themes, to engage in hands-on experiences, and to collaborate with peers in order to solve problems. The Engineering Design Process allows students these opportunities in a meaningful context, whether it be carried out in relation to science or another content area. By connecting the crosscutting concepts in the NGSS to
universal themes, we can concretely make interdisciplinary connections for all learners. As educators of the Gifted, we are not only responsible for providing educational experiences for those who have already been identified; we are also responsible for providing educational experiences in which students, regardless of language designation, are given opportunities to demonstrate their uniquely convergent or divergent ways of thinking, which might lead us to identification. Interdisciplinary, differentiated units of study help us to achieve this goal.
References


Crime Scene Investigation for the Classroom

Jana Burch, Dave McGann, and Kevin Simms

Everybody may love Raymond, but it would seem that a majority of folks also love Sherlock Holmes, JAG, NCIS, and myriad of other crime focused shows currently in the television lineup. What is the draw and how can educators harness the excitement and interest surrounding this genre of entertainment? Cue the Flying Monkeys...

Kevin Simms, Dave McGann, and Jana Burch are Flying Monkeys Consulting and attribute their formation to a bit of a fluke...a crime at the University of Connecticut, a couple of master’s degrees and a guru of gifted education. The initial idea of teaching crime scene investigation came about six years ago when McGann, a police force veteran specializing in blood evidence, was encouraged by Joseph Renzulli to present the basics of crime scene investigation to teachers at Confratute, the University of Connecticut’s summer institute for teachers,. Renzulli had worked with McGann when a crime had taken place on campus. Renzulli saw the potential to engage students with the math, science and critical thinking skills used by law enforcement officers to solve crimes. McGann joined forces with Kevin Simms, a math specialist, and Jana Burch, a curriculum development specialist, (both of whom earned their master’s degrees at UConn and were friends of McGann and Renzulli) to create a program that would bring the high interest of his field to the classroom in a meaningful and beneficial way. CSI: Crime Scene Investigation for the Classroom was born.

McGann admits that he was skeptical at first. “I am a cop, not an educator. Jana and Kevin came in and made what I do appropriate for the classroom and valuable for both the teachers and students.” Crime scene investigation brings opportunities for the students to apply knowledge learned in class in an exciting and hands-on fashion. The excitement for the class is growing as the number of teachers enrolling in the CSI class is increasing each year.

CSI: Crime Scene Investigation for the Classroom provides teachers with the skills and knowledge they will need to implement forensic science activities in their classrooms. The presenters each bring their expertise to the table. McGann provides the police perspective on how investigators use CSI skills to solve crimes. Simms aids teachers with the math and science background, while Burch helps connect things back to the regular curriculum.

In today’s high stake environment, teachers may be reluctant to introduce something new in their classrooms without some support. According to Burch, “Teachers need to feel that the crime scene activities are going to be successful in their classrooms and they need to be confident that CSI supports the learning objectives. This makes it so much easier to justify devoting instruction time to the CSI materials.”

Simms and Burch are careful to provide instruction on the ‘how to’s’. Says Burch, “There is nothing worse than a lesson that falls flat because the teacher doesn’t know how to do something or has never done it before. The format of our teacher training is content (police
background, the history, math, and science behind what we are doing), process (how the professionals do it and how teachers can recreate it in their classrooms) and product (actual pieces of evidence investigators would collect or look at).” Educators leave the training confident that they can recreate the activities in their classrooms and how the students will benefit from participating.

After successfully training teachers on the finer points of crime scene investigation, Simms saw a need to expand the group’s offerings and created the consulting firm with a funny name because, above all else, learning should be fun.

“Even though we provide the support teachers need to do this in their classrooms, the desire for organizations to offer CSI for students at summer camps has been overwhelming. We enjoy doing these camps because we get to work with the students directly and try new activities. It is invaluable to be able to say, “This is what students will do when given this task”. We are always learning and developing, because of the demands of these students,” says Simms. “There is always a high interest in the crime scene program whether it is offered at a STEM focused camp, a summer enrichment camp or a teacher conference. Everybody loves CSI!”
Encouraging Artistic Expression
Aesthetics, Performance, or Both

Ann Smith

My earliest memory of experiencing the arts is with my grandmother. I was three or four years old, and when I sat next to her on her piano bench, I would be taken to another place. “How do you get it to sound like that?” I’d ask her time and again. “You hear it,” was her reply. “But how do you know which keys to play? How do your fingers know where to go?”

My grandmother, if born in a different place, or if chance had brought her there, could have kept musical company with the likes of those in the halls of Juilliard.

Some classified her as a musical prodigy. She had perfect pitch, and although she couldn’t read music and never received formal training, she played by ear. I can still visualize her at her piano. I can remember watching her play the organ, accordion, ukulele and even attempt the guitar. I never witnessed her playing her banjo but, in her younger days, that was her instrument of choice when she played in a local band. She would tell you that those were the best days of her life; the days she played with her bandmates.

What did this mean for her as a small town girl in rural Iowa, the progeny of generations of farmers? In 1923 at 11 years of age, on icy country roads returning from a celebration, her family’s Model T got into an accident; her mother and baby brother died from their injuries. Because there were siblings to tend to and a farm and household to help manage, her formal education ended with her 8th grade graduation. Was she intellectually curious and driven? You bet. Through humility and hard work, she and my grandfather were pillars and leaders in their community.

My grandmother was masterful in her application of music. With each piece she played, I saw how music transported her to another place and time. I saw how it soothed her. I understand those experiences, because music has the same effect on me. While I have always dreamed of playing the piano, the multiplicative factors that must come into play to make that a reality, such as time, luck and environment, did not align for me. Yet, I definitely inherited my grandmother’s love for and appreciation of music.

Arts education is dismissed as unnecessary in many schools today. Sometimes I wonder how our definition of success in the educational system has become so narrow. The system currently seems to appreciate only a certain type of individual; an individual who achieves verbally or mathematically. And, with that, an individual who doesn’t achieve too much more than what is expected in that grade level. Many of our children respond to that dangling carrot and produce at rates that seem remarkable on paper, but at what cost? What would our world look like if all of our children excelled in only those two core areas, at the expense of other domains?
How will life play out for our children when they only learned to achieve in response to external rewards, and not to develop their own natural, intrinsic passions and interests?

When people think of artistic talent, they typically think of individuals who perform at high levels; the rich and famous artists. Many parents decide this type of exposure, for performance results, is worth investing time and money to develop the budding performing artist in their children. We also see, as with many activities forced upon children with the best intentions, this approach can backfire. We are so conditioned by the notion that if we invest our time and money into an activity for our children, they better practice consistently and work hard and produce, or we will cease to allow them participation in that activity.

What about exposure to the arts for the sheer joy and pleasure of what the arts can bring? Would we be willing to invest the same amount into our children’s experiences knowing there will be no objective, measurable outcome? Is the subjective experience and enhancement of beauty enough for us? What if our goal could be the aesthetics of art; the relationship between the arts and the person experiencing the arts, as much as the goal of supporting the development of children who demonstrate artistic talents?

Most lessons for children prioritize drill and mastery before enjoyment. We lose many children’s interest with this approach. Could we expose children to rich artistic experiences for them to interact with in a way that is for nothing more than pure pleasure and enjoyment? Could we allow the child to process what the experience means for him, and trust the child to facilitate the next steps in his growth? When an emotional connection is made, the child’s natural curiosity and engagement will drive the process.

What other cognitive and non-cognitive factors might this approach develop in the growing child? Intrinsic motivation, emotional intelligence, social and cultural interaction, empathy, compassion, persistence and task commitment all come to mind. These are all currently areas of prime concern within our educational institutions and parenting practices, and the arts could serve as a catalyst to teaching these skills.

When considering three domains of the arts: music, tactile arts, and theater, these areas involve different physical and perceptual abilities. Teachers and parents can assist students in developing the cognitive skills needed to enhance their growth in these areas. The mind is constantly developing, abilities are not static, and students can be taught specific skills. Some children may have natural gifts for the arts, but we must also emphasize to students who want to learn that the mind is also receptive to change from deliberate practice. And, if a child exhibits a natural talent, it does not mean that he doesn’t require instruction and practice, just as with any other domain.

Children go through stages of development in all domains, and research supports that early childhood is a time for exposure and playful interaction with all types of artistic media; children
should explore as many different forms of art and music as possible. This will help lead children to an understanding of performance possibilities and a chance to explore their expressive abilities.

As mentioned in Psychological Foundations of the Arts: Understanding and Encouraging Artistic Expression in the Early Grades, artists tend to be more aesthetic, creative, curious, imaginative, sensitive, original and open to experiences. And, artists are also usually less conventional, rigid, and socialized, meaning they are more likely to challenge convention. While these traits may sometimes be interpreted as negative, they can also be positive, adaptive traits for individuals, especially those who perform and create professionally. As parents, we all know that a non-conforming, strong-willed child can be exhausting and difficult to parent, but these same qualities can be an asset to our children as they navigate the tricky terrains of adolescence, peer pressure, and finding their way into adulthood.

Current research cannot decisively state whether these traits are already present in individuals who likely become artists, or if being an artist promotes these personality traits.

Leadership in arts education is needed more than ever in our communities. In Leadership in Art Action: Taking Action in Schools and Communities, Kerry Freedman mentions that the arts contribute to our children’s cultural knowledge, social and personal identities, visual literacy and the creative economy. By forming alliances with administrators, educators, parents and community members, we can advocate for the arts in order to nurture a shared vision for growth in our schools and to cultivate new ideas and practices.

Human beings have integrated the arts into their cultures and societies for thousands of years. By providing exposure to the arts we can capture the budding artist, encourage personal expression and creative performance, and expose children to the arts simply for the joy of enriching their lives.

Ann Smith serves as Parent Chair on the executive board of directors for California Association for the Gifted, and she previously served two terms as Parent Representative for the Bay Area Region. Ann is Executive Director of Gifted Support Center in San Mateo, CA, which offers assessments, consultations, support groups and resources for parents of gifted children.
References


Implementing Mindfulness in the Classroom

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Be the change you wish to see in the world. Gandhi

Gandhi’s words remind us that as teachers working with children and youth, we are agents of change. But the question is, what kind of change do we want to make in education, particularly for gifted students who are too often disengaged with wandering attention, and often performing well below their potential? Mindfulness can provide insight to enable teachers and administrators to envision and create a whole new model or approach to education. Mindfulness is not a new idea since William James in his book *Principles of Psychology* (1950) said, "The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character and will." (p. 424). This is mindfulness, and, as James continued, "an education which should improve this faculty would be the education par excellence."

In today’s field of education, there is an emphasis on the exploration of professional dispositions that are required to teach well, and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2008) refers to these dispositions as *habits of mind*, and define them as "behaving intelligently when confronted with problems, the answers to which are not immediately known" (Costa & Kallick, n. d., para.2). Practicing mindful awareness can help teachers cultivate habits of mind such as resilience in response to challenge, nonjudgmental awareness and reflection on their experiences, flexible problem-solving, emotional regulation, and caring, empathetic, and compassionate responding to themselves, to others, and to their students (Roeser, Skinner, Beers, & Jennings, 2012).

**What is mindfulness?**

Daniel Siegel, M.D. (2014) defines mindfulness as a way of being aware of what is happening within us and around us with a clear focus of attention on moment-to-moment experiences that enable us to be fully present for life. He said cultivating mindfulness means developing the ability to sense life deeply and to observe our experiences. The linkage of these two streams of awareness—sensing and observing reveals how mindfulness can be considered an integrative practice, and integration is the heart of health. Siegel said studies on the use of mindfulness show that professionals, such as teachers and physicians, who received mindfulness training
have enhanced empathy and a reduction of burnout. There are two kinds of mindfulness, that of intrapersonal mindfulness and interpersonal mindfulness.

**Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Mindfulness**

Intrapersonal mindfulness is the present moment, nonjudgmental awareness of internal processes, including your thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations. Interpersonal mindfulness is how you relate to others. Interpersonal mindfulness includes listening and giving full attention to others, present-centered awareness of emotions experienced by you and others during interactions, openness to, acceptance of, and receptivity to others' thoughts and feelings, self-regulation and compassion for yourself and others (Jennings, 2015).

**Sense of connectedness**

Mindfulness awareness involves a sense of connectedness, a recognition that we are essentially the same as human beings, and that we need to care for one another to survive and flourish. In today's classrooms with the growing cultural diversity in students, this recognition is sorely needed to promote a deep sense of respect and compassion for others. To engage interpersonal mindfulness, we begin with listening, deep listening.

**Deep listening**

Deep listening involves giving your full attention and maintaining a present-centered awareness of your emotions, thoughts and feelings. Interpersonal mindfulness can help teachers recognize how their behavior affects their students. Gifted students often are put off by teachers and others who continue to engage in rearranging papers on their desk, checking their emails etc. while they are trying to explain something that is important to them. Being mindful while teaching can also help teachers manage their classrooms more proactively, as they notice when students are about to go off task, or become disruptive or in the case of gifted students become anxious, and disengaged. Over the years, I have come to the conclusion that teaching is an emotional practice whether it is an undergraduate or graduate college class of students or a kindergarten class. Positive emotions such as curiosity, interest, humor and joy can help to build a strong platform for student motivation to learn and to develop what is currently being called an effective *learning community*. On the other hand, negative emotions such as fear, distrust, sadness and anger turn off the learning process.
Wholesome way of learning and living

Mindfulness promotes a wholesome way of learning and living (Jennings, 2015). As teachers and their students become more deeply aware of their patterns of behavior, thoughts and emotions through engaging in reflection, they both can take responsibility for building positive interactions and to better understand and care how they interact and affect one another. Most gifted students are already quite introspective and conscious of teacher-student interactions which can lead to angst and anxiety when they feel neither understood or valued. Applying mindfulness to their daily teaching, teachers can learn to give themselves space by accepting their students for who they are and recognizing the inherent value and meaning in their motives and actions, rather than trying to force fit students into a mold formed by institutional expectations. Teachers can be incredible role models for their students and for their parents, and this role adds to teachers’ ability to become agents of change.

Rather than simply training and I use training rather than teaching children and youth to memorize and then repeat/regurgitate facts on standardized tests, mindfulness practices promote several valuable cognitive skills, including perspective-taking, creative thinking and innovative problem-solving. With our global world changing so rapidly, teachers need to guide their students to think outside the box and to find new ways to approach the myriad of intractable problems that exist today and in the future. Mindfulness awareness can be described as a kind of meta-awareness and Jennings (2015) describes this awareness as noticing everything in your consciousness, like an observer watching a movie, and adopting an attitude of acceptance of everything that is happening. She suggests imagining yourself sitting peacefully beside a beautiful river and focusing your attention on the waves of the water. You may notice boats going by, and people on the deck, but consciously pull your attention back and focus on the waves. Practicing mindfulness is like this, you bring your wandering thoughts back to the present moment.

Leaders in Mindfulness

Two people who have made phenomenal contributions in working with mindfulness practices and meditation over the last 40 years are a Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh and an American medical doctor Jon Kabat-Zinn from the University of Massachusetts Medical Center (UMASS). Thich Nhat Hanh has written five books in the Mindfulness Essential Series, How to Sit which provides clear simple directions and meaningful inspiration for anyone wanting to explore mindfulness meditation. The second book How to Relax addresses the daily stress that we all experience that makes us less productive and less happy. In this book Thich Nhat Hanh shares techniques for bringing your life back into balance. The third book How to Walk reminds
us that we touch the Earth with awareness, and we can stop *sleepwalking* and arrive fully in the present moment. The fourth book *How to Love* brings clarity, compassion and humor to the essential question of how to love. The fifth book *How to Eat* tells how the process of eating can be a joyful and sustainable activity in all aspects of eating, including preparing the food, and even cleaning up. Thich Nhat Hanh shares how as a young novice, he and one other novice had to wash the dishes for over 100 monks without running water, soap etc., and yet they made it an enjoyable activity.

**Walking Meditation**

Thich Nhat Hanh said as you walk, you can marvel over the fact that your body is able to walk, and enjoy each step. You focus on your breath and as your feet touch the Earth, be aware of the sky and the wonder of your environment. With each step there is the possibility of mindfulness, concentration and insight. Walk slowly and mindfully at your own pace. Focus on your breathing and as you walk, you are unifying your mind and body. He says bringing all of your attention down to your feet is as if you are kissing the Earth with your feet. Walking can help you be calm, and if you try this with your students, they too can take on a sense of calmness. With focused attention on one's breath and walking, you stop your thinking, blaming, and judging that takes you away from the present moment. Thich Nhat Hanh said life is only available in the present moment. In walking, you can become free of your past, your future, and your worries and fears. When you walk, you don't think, and you don't talk, even if you are walking with another person. (Hanh, 2015, p.35)

Breathing and being aware of your breath is a powerful mindfulness practice and Thich Nhat Hanh suggests the following poem or *gatha* as you walk or relax:

- Breathing in, I calm my body,
- Breathing out, I smile,
- Dwelling in the present moment,
- I know this is a wonderful moment (Hanh, 2015, p.67)
Mindfulness –Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Clinic

When Jon Kabat-Zinn, one of the foremost leaders in mindfulness started the MBSR Clinic at the Massachusetts Medical Center in 1979, the word mindfulness was nowhere in the medical lexicon. Today there are nearly 1,000 certified MBSR instructors teaching mindfulness techniques including meditation, and they are in nearly every state in the United States and in more than 30 countries. Early on Kabat-Zinn worked with treatment resistant patients of other doctors, and after 8 weeks of mindfulness training, the treatment resistant patients showed remarkable transformation. The MSBR patients had symptom reduction in blood pressure, psoriasis, and fibromyalgia, and the patients with chronic pain disorders reported a greater sense of well-being (Kabat-Zinn, 1982, 1986, 1998). As a result, considerable interest was sparked in the clinical use of mindfulness and today MBSR is used widely to reduce psychological morbidity associated with chronic illnesses and to treat emotional and behavioral disorders (Kabat-Zinn, 1998).

Randomized controlled trials and studies show impressive reductions in psychological morbidity, reduced stress and enhanced emotional well-being in non-clinical samples (Williams, Kolar, Roger & Pearson, 2001). Also, recent research has demonstrated that MBSR promotes significant changes in brain structure associated with improvements in learning and memory processes, emotion regulation, self-referential processing, and perspective-taking, all of which are skills critical to effective teaching and learning (Hozel, Carmody, Vangel, Congleton, Yerramsetti, Gard, & Lazar, 2011).

Margaret Cullen, a therapist and MBSR instructor developed an eight week, 11 session program focusing on stress management and using relaxation techniques called SMART. Several activities promote mindfulness with the aim of promoting self-compassion and forgiveness. Mindfulness activities in SMART include the body scan, focused meditation on the breath and loving kindness practices. Studies indicate that participants in SMART improved in mindfulness, focused attention and working memory, as well as self-compassion and they reported reduced occupational stress (Sisk & Kane, 2016).

So, where are there programs using mindfulness in classrooms and how successful are they?

Evidence-Based Mindfulness Programs for Children and Youth

In 2005, the Garrison Institute published a report that listed only a few mindfulness-based programs for children and youth, and the report cited little or no research available that studied their effectiveness. Since then there has been a growing number of mindfulness programs
developed including promising research on their practices. One successful mindfulness program is Learning to BREATHE.

**Learning to BREATHE**

This mindfulness based program for adolescents and pre-adolescents primarily aims at developing emotional awareness and improving emotional regulation, stress reduction and attentional focus in students. Patricia Broderick (2013) developed the program and she reports that many schools in both Canada and the United States have adopted the program called (L2B). Each lesson takes approximately 45 minutes to complete, and the program can be offered once per week or offered in alternate ways depending on the school schedule. L2B has six themes based on the acronym BREATHE:

- **B**: Body: Emphasizing building body awareness
- **R**: Reflections: Building understanding and working with one's thoughts
- **E**: Emotions: Building understanding of one's emotions and working with feelings
- **A**: Attention: Integrating awareness of thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations
- **T**: Tenderness: Reducing harmful self-judgment and learning to take it as it is.
- **H**: Habits for a healthy mind: Integrating mindful awareness into daily life.
- **E**: Empowerment: Gaining the *Inner Edge* which is an outcome of the other six themes.

L2B is interactive and students work in groups with discussions designed to demonstrate the lesson's theme, and activities for class practice and home practice options are included. Some of L2B activities include body scanning, mindfulness of thoughts and emotions, mindful movement and loving-kindness practice.

A number of pilot studies found that L2B promotes feelings of calmness, relaxation, and self-acceptance. The program also improves emotion regulation, emotional awareness, emotional clarity, and emotional regulation (Broderick & Metz, 2009). A recent study was conducted with high school students in a quasi-experimental design with one group of students receiving L2B and another group of students who did not. Compared to the comparison group, L2B students
reported lower levels of stress, negative affect, and psychosomatic complaints. The students also reported increased levels of efficacy and emotional regulation (Metz, Frank, Reibel, Cantrell, Sanders, & Broderick, 2013).

**MindUp**

MindUp was first introduced in British Columbia in early 2000 when actress Goldie Hawn and her family were living in Vancouver. MindUp is sponsored by the Hawn Foundation and available for elementary students from Scholastic. The programs has four units: *How Our Brains Work, Sharpening Your Senses, It's All About Animals,* and *Taking Action Mindfully.* MindUp includes daily mindful listening practices called *Brain Breaks* and mindfulness activities that focus on honing the senses and movements. MindUp teaches children how to generate positive emotional states including happiness, caring and compassion and provides opportunities for perspective taking. MindUp also focuses on ways students can take mindful action into the world. This aspect of the program is particularly applicable to gifted students who want to make a difference, and be involved in service projects. The program includes suggestions for integrating activities into the general curriculum and there is an extensive list of books available that provides examples of the four unit themes. And most important for administrators, the program is aligned with state standards, including Common Core.

MindUp is included in the curriculum of most of the elementary schools in the southern mainland of British Columbia, Canada, and recently the program was adopted by the entire city of Newark, New Jersey. Studies on the effectiveness of the program in British Columbia have found that students who participated in the program were more optimistic and self-confident, and their teachers reported that they demonstrated more social competence in comparison to students who were not involved in the program. Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor (2010) reported that Vancouver added a mindfulness-based stress reduction program for professional development for teachers.

**Conclusion**

One easy way to get involved in incorporating mindfulness in your life and in your classroom for gifted children and youth is to connect with others who are trying to do the same thing. Websites and resources in the references of this article will help get you started and there are free audio recordings of guided mindfulness practices that you can download. You can make a differences at the school level by asking that your school’s professional development include
the topic of mindfulness in the classroom. It will be important for you to approach your work in mindfulness with an open-hearted, present-moment, nonjudgmental awareness. Mindfulness activities and programs can truly transform your classroom, school and district. In our troubled times, mindfulness offers a strategy for transformation and change. Just the simple act of concentrating on your breath when you are stressed, breathing in 1-2-3 and breathing out 1-2-3 can calm you and give you time to reflect on the situation. I find it is a great way to go to sleep after a challenging day, and I wish you well in your journey in exploring mindfulness.
References


Reflection on Leadership

Kathleen Kennedy

“All students will realize their unlimited potential.” Alvord Unified Schools District Promise

“We will develop a learning environment that challenges all students to achieve excellence.” AUSD Strategic Plan, Board Adopted May 15, 2014

“If we believe in fostering a climate in which individual differences are valued and accepted, we must include the gifted learner.” Author Unknown

Gifted and Talented Education took a back seat in the state of California about nine years ago when the State changed GATE funding from a categorical allotment to general budget expenditure. This brought the wheels of operation to a halt in many districts, including Alvord. Enrichment programs were stopped, teacher leadership was no longer compensated and staff development for the cognitive needs of students no longer took place. Additionally, in Alvord, there was a sharp decline in teachers seeking their Gate certification and an increase in those seeking CLAD certification. With the accountability movement, Professional Development turned to instructional techniques for reading and math intervention. Our neighboring school districts continued to provide funding for gifted instruction, and their programs remained visible to the community. As a result, Alvord parents began requesting transfers at an increased rate to surrounding districts.

GATE programs began changing in the State of California in the year 2000 with the amendment of the California Education Code requiring that programs be planned and organized as differentiated learning experiences within the regular school day. Alvord and many districts began omitting after school enrichment activities, homogeneously grouped classes, exploratory field trips, pull-out instruction programs and parent advisory meetings. In Alvord elementary schools, we have one school holding an after school enrichment program, and one school providing pull-out during the school day. All elementary schools are expected to cluster their identified GATE students in groups of 4-8 to simplify the differentiation process for the teacher, to provide like-peers for the gifted student, and to provide strong learning models for the typical student. A modified GATE program structure has been in place, but teachers were untrained in providing the required differentiation. This resulted in many stake-holders believing and expressing to the community that we “don’t have a GATE program.”

Recently, Alvord parents have been rallying for a return of programs for the identified gifted learner. They have responded to community surveys, held meetings with our superintendent and met with school board members seeking understanding and asking for program development. Through the LCFF process, funding for GATE has returned as a line
item to the budget. The voice of our community and the clear programmatic connections indicate that now is the time to make some changes. Beginning in January 2016, 40 Alvord teachers, coaches, instructional specialists and the GATE Coordinator were involved in a series of professional development.

The focus of the professional development was on modifying core content and differentiated curriculum to meet the needs of inner-city, urban gifted learners.” It is from this lens that our training was developed. Of key importance is the connection to ALL learners. By providing GATE instructional techniques for all students, teachers provide meaningful and successful opportunities for developing thinking skills and the depth and complexity required by the Common Core Standards. By studying the content and pedagogy designed for gifted learners, we enhance our programs, and begin to see the affiliation rather than the isolation of these instructional practices.

We have sparked a renewed interest and dialogue with our colleagues by identifying common instructional goals. When we study GATE pedagogy, we enhance the learning of all learners. Thinking skills are developed when we implement the practices that naturally lead to a “spill over” between programs. Rigorous Curriculum Design, as adopted by the Alvord school district, requires the development of strategies and concepts such as: “big idea,” “essential questions,” “depth of knowledge” and “academic language.” Gate pedagogy emphasizes these same concepts with the labels: “universal idea,” “unanswered questions,” “depth and complexity” and “language of the discipline.” The alignment between GATE standards and Common Core standards is clear, and Alvord School District is moving towards a pedagogy that develops depth and complexity for all students.

Kathleen Kennedy
Alvord Unified School District
Coordinator of Instructional Support Services,
Gifted and Talented Instruction
Teaching Intellectualism

Jessica Manzone and Sandra Kaplan
University of Southern California

The “development of intelligence” is often deemed to be the essential goal related to the identification and services provided to gifted students. The value of intellectualism often is perceived to be an outcome of the development and practice of one’s intellect. Of importance is the question: *Does being intelligent mean that one automatically also is an intellectual?* Of importance is the relationship between the concepts of intelligence and intellectualism and the means by which intellectualism is nurtured in conjunction with intelligence.

The concept of intellectualism is the ability to recognize and utilize one’s intelligence; it is the ability to practice and appreciate one’s intellect (abilities, intelligence). The concern confronting educators is the need to facilitate the gifted students’ interest in, satisfaction for, and seeking of opportunities to use intelligence with the understanding of its ramifications leading to “becoming an intellectual.” Intellectualism can be manifested in many and varied ways: intellectual curiosity, intellectual leadership, intellectual energy, etc. A major effort underscoring the development of students’ intelligence is to simultaneously develop their perspectives on the purpose of appreciating and becoming an intellectual. To this end, the following lesson is attached so that educators can initiate the lesson: Intellectualism. Note that the lesson and the materials used to present the lesson follow. The lesson has been taught to students, third to eighth grade.

The lesson has been written in an inquiry-based model of teaching called a Group Investigation. This model uses student-generated questions as the basis for analyzing the content areas and themes connected to the standards. The Group Investigation model provides an opportunity for all students to participate, to make connections to prior knowledge and experiences, and to stimulate their natural curiosity and interests. The lesson on Intellectualism can be taught in connection with ANY grade level or subject area content standards. The framework and key components of the lesson have been provided. It is necessary to align with lesson with specific grade-level standards and age-appropriate content. The framework for the lesson is outlined in black font. Teacher notes have been provided in red and represent one interpretation of how the lesson can be enacted with students. There is not “one-way” to teach this lesson – the syntax or sequence of the lesson is fixed, but there is a great deal of flexibility within each step of the lesson.

Please teach the lesson to your students. Take pictures of any charts created. Please feel free to email us your thoughts, reflections, and work samples. We are interested to see all of the many ways that you are developing intellectual thinkers in your classroom.
Lesson Title:
Intellectualism

Objective: Students will be able to define and apply the concept of an “intellectual” to fiction and non-fiction excerpts of biographies and autobiographies. They will share their findings in a debate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntax</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present the Puzzlement</td>
<td>• Present the four different scenarios to the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o <em>Scenario #1:</em> The student was perplexed over the problem. She decided to research the problem to develop a solution to the problem.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o <em>Scenario #2:</em> The student was thinking about the problem and said that he would spend time thinking about the solution even though he wanted to practice chess.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o <em>Scenario #3:</em> The student examined the problem and thought about how to prove with evidence his ideas about solving the problem.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o <em>Scenario #4:</em> The student wanted to solve the problem with the information she learned about her favorite topic of study – insects.</td>
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</table>

Teacher Notes – The puzzlement can be presented in one of three ways: (a) present students with all four scenarios, (b) present students with a few of the scenarios, or (c) combine the scenarios into one large student description.

A combined scenario – “A student really wanted to learn about her favorite topic of study — the environment and the issue of trash in the ocean. The student examined the problem and thought about how to best learn about her topic. The student decided to research the problem to develop a solution. The student spent lots of time thinking and researching the problem even though all of her friends were outside playing soccer.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solicit Questions</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ask the students in the class what questions they have about thinking and learning from the four scenarios that relate to the concept of being a student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Write the questions on a chart.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Our Questions

| Teacher Notes – Create a chart or a place to document students’ questions about thinking and learning based on the scenario. Chart all questions as the students ask them. It is essential that the questions are compiled and saved, as they will be used throughout the lesson as students work to answer them. |

### Research

- Instruct students to work in groups to respond to the total set or individual questions within the set.
- Provide excerpts from biographies and/or autobiographies as research materials to answer the questions the students generated about thinking and learning from the scenarios presented to them.

Teacher Notes – Introduce students to the characteristics of an Intellectual

An intellectual is a person who thinks in a logical way.
An intellectual is involved in serious study and thought.
An intellectual enjoys thinking about problems and their solutions.
An intellectual reflects on their learning.
An intellectual thinks about problems in new and creative ways.
An intellectual asks questions to learn more about something.
An intellectual makes connections to things they already know.
An intellectual practices to become better.
An intellectual has a great deal of motivation and task commitment.
An intellectual takes academic risks and thinks for himself or herself.

Break students into small research groups. Assign each research group an excerpt from a biography. Select biographies that are either related to content currently under study or select biographies of individuals that students would find interesting and engaging. Provide each group with the following chart to document the relationship between the person and the dispositions of an intellectual.

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I am researching: ________________
Is this person an intellectual? ________________

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Evidence</th>
<th>A Little Evidence</th>
<th>A Great Deal of Evidence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thinks in a logical manner.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in serious study and</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thought.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys thinking about problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>and their solutions.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflects on their learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thinks about problems in new</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>and creative ways.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Asks questions to learn more</td>
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<tr>
<td>about something.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Makes connections to things</td>
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<td>they already know.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has lots of motivation and task</td>
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<td>commitment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Takes academic risks and thinks</td>
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<tr>
<td>for themself.</td>
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</table>

Teachers Notes – The share and summarize section of the lesson is a time for the small groups to discuss and analyze what they have learned during the research section of the lesson. It is important to provide students with a means of documenting the data they collected so that secondary data analysis can be conducted to look for patterns and trends. The following image represents the chart created by the students to document the relationship between several
important figures and the dispositions of an intellectual thinker. Different colored Post-it notes distinguished the various figures studied by each small group.

Create a large chart.
Provide each group (person) with a different color Post-it.
Have then place the Post-it with their evidence on the large class chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>No Evidence</th>
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<td>Takes academic risks and thinks for themself.</td>
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</table>

Jessica Marzone, California Association for the Gifted, 2016

- Use the responses posed by the students to develop summary statements.
  - We think that...
  - We think because...
- Use the summary statements as evidence to identify the characteristics of students that are related to the scenarios and the responses from various groups.
- Ask students to determine the meaning of the following statement:
  - “Students that share specific characteristics of thinking and learning could be named INTELLECTUALS.”

Teacher Notes – Bring the discussion to a close by providing students with an opportunity to think about the big idea and summarize what it means to them. Each student was provided with a cut-out of a light bulb on which to write their summary statement. Students then taped their summary statement to the class chart.
| Recycle | o  Ask students what other questions they have about the nature and the traits/characteristics of an intellectual. |

Teacher Notes – An additional activity to the end of the lesson could be the setting of a personal, action-oriented goal. Students were provided an opportunity to answer the following question in their journals: *What is a goal for yourself related to one of the characteristics of intellectuals?* The idea behind the journal entry is for students to select one or more dispositions of intellectual thinkers that they would like to develop or strengthen within themselves.
Book Review

Elaine S. Wiener

Top Secret Files: Gangsters and Bootleggers
Stephanie Bearce
Prufrock Press Inc.
Paperback, $8.95, 115 pp.

Top Secret Files: The Wild West
Stephanie Bearce
Prufrock Press Inc.
Paperback, $8.95, 117 pp.

Because so many Top Secret Files books by Stephanie Bearce have been reviewed in the CAG Communicator, these two books will be briefly mentioned. However, please always consider reading any Top Secret Files books that we mention. They are so wonderful and so clever and so intriguing. As in all of the Top Secret Files books, there are clever little pictures and cartoon-like appeal not just to the 12 to 14 years olds for which these books are written, but easily as appealing to adults.

There are pictures and codes and information that run down the pages. There is information that NONE OF US KNOWS about the Wild West or about Gangsters.

These books may have been written for our pre-teens and teens but are equally as fascinating to adults. I won’t ever allow an adult friend to borrow Top Secret Files books for their children unless they promise to read them first. And they, indeed, do!!!

Elaine S. Wiener
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