

Focus on Teachers' Strengths in Gifted Education

(by O.S.)

The following was on a U. Iowa gifted teachers message board: "How do you service high ability students using each teacher's strengths so you don't duplicate work for the teachers? We are provided collaboration time during the school day, but it still seems we aren't working smartly."

Working with gifted children can be very difficult at times, especially if the emphasis is on study units and the accumulation of information. The students go through the information very quickly and then teachers scramble to find more. If that is the mandate, it is im-

portant for the teachers to meet and try one or more of the following:

1. Personal Strengths Analysis & Expertise Profiles. At meetings determine the personal strengths and expertise of each teacher e.g. drama, antiques, sports, opera, auto repair, etc. Anything goes. Build a chart for all to see. Determine a study unit that teachers would work on and what each would contribute within it e.g. writing a play, doing a study of related antiques, etc. The work that the students do would be based on the expertise of the teacher. **Discussion:** Each teacher would be within a comfort zone and know exactly what the

others are doing. If there are specific related skills, overlap would not be a factor as the point of view is very different from each teacher.

2. Developing Expertise in Skills Areas.

In this case, teachers would deal strictly with major skills areas and different teachers would become experts in different ones. In my book "Accent on Essential Life Skills" there are seven skills areas that can be learned by different teachers. There are obviously more, but the ones developed are: self-awareness, creativity, researching, higher-level thinking, leadership, spirituality, communication.

Each teacher becomes an expert in one of the areas, develops it, and then teaches those skills to students. Overlaps might now be within the knowledge/facts but students would be empowered with skills to learn from a highly personal viewpoint even if working on the same unit.

Discussion: The teaching becomes highly focused and students learn more about what they want to learn in a subject..

Amazing Websites

Profiles of All the Beijing Olympics Athletes
<http://olympicdb.com/athletes-A.html>

Chinese Pyramids (the Egyptian ones are not the only ones!)
<http://www.earthquest.co.uk/china/china.html>

Tough Guy Competitions (most grueling test. Held in England)
<http://www.2camels.com/photos/tough-guy-competition.php>

Beer Can Regatta (all boats are made of beer cans)
<http://www.beercanregatta.org.au/history.html>

Build Your Own Electric Unicycle (full instructions)
<http://tlb.org/eunicycle.html>

Redesigning the Wheelchair (innovative designs)
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/5063672.stm>

Experimental Musical Instruments (Wow!!!)
<http://www.windworld.com/>

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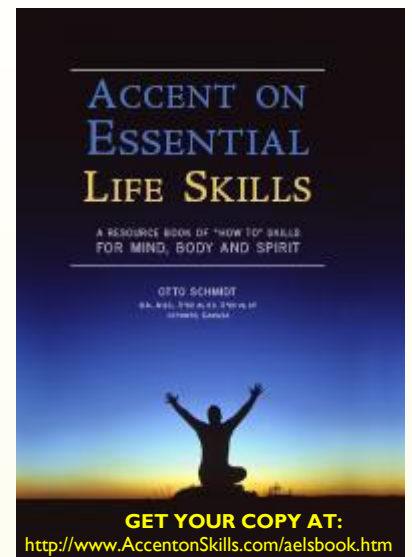
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News and Views

Let's Celebrate!

July 1 – Canada Day

July 1-8 – National Fishing Week

First Sat – International Day of

Cooperatives

July 11 - World Population Day

July 18 – full moon, World Youth Day

A Contract with Mother Nature

(from “Going for the Green: a Manufacturer’s Guide to Lean & Green)

Mother Nature is the owner of the company and the provider of the energy to power your life. Have you ever looked at the contract you signed when you were given the privilege of being on this earth? Here are the terms and how to honour them:

1. Cause-Effect. Everything you do will affect something else. Always! Behave in such a way that your individual behaviour causes the least amount of impact and/or damage.
2. Access to the one and only source of energy - the Sun - will be provided. Don't block or destroy that access.
3. There is a distribution of energy network—photosynthesizers. They work directly for the sun and only the sun. Don't damage or circumvent the contract they have established.
4. Products and services are all custom designed for various users. There are specific distributors for each. Make sure all customers get what they need and want. (biodiversity)
5. Production is based on one supplier. That supplier dictates that energy cannot be created or destroyed but only changed into a different form. Nothing can be thrown away because there is no “away”. To change things, use energy, time and effort extremely wisely because there is no transformation that is 100%.

Hip Hopera (based on an article by Alex Downey-Ging, Toronto Star)

The title comes from a fusion of Hip Hop and Opera. Yes, that's correct! These two different worlds were brought together recently in a bold experiment in Toronto, Canada.

The Canadian Opera Company brainstormed, composed and wrote the story of an interracial couple and their challenges and the resulting opera included scratching and heavy beats of Hip Hop.

The two seem very different but both deal with dramatic and real aspects of life, relationships and love. They both deal with the darker sides and difficulties of life. Characters are often very dynamic.

Besides Hip Hop, opera has been used before in other fusions e.g. rock operas. Also, most people don't realize that modern musicals are versions of operas.

The first concert was free and the audience attending was part of a unique experience in the world of music.

Samples of Hip Hopera: http://waxy.org/2004/09/kleptones_night/

The Importance of Silence (by O.S.)

Silence is one of those mysterious things with which many people are surprisingly uncomfortable. Silence is, however, vital in our lives for many reasons.

Some people, especially kids, have almost every waking moment filled with noise - TV, radio, iPods/MP3 players, cell phones, talking to others, video games, etc. When they fail to realize is that they are disconnecting from the natural world and almost entertaining themselves to death.

When one is silent, one hears the sounds of the wind, birds, general buzz and emotions of the city, others talking and laughing. One needs to listen to one's own voice and music, not always somebody else's. In silence, important questions that we all need to ask in life can be discussed - Who am I? What are my strengths and weaknesses? How am I loved and how do I return the love? What kind of person am I becoming? What are my values, principles, morals, ethics? How do I fit in and what is my mission in life? If these questions aren't addressed on a personal level, somebody else will gladly ask and answer them - advertisers, con artists, marketers, actors.

Without the silence in which to determine how one is alive, life can deteriorate to a series of emotional and sensorial jolts. Far too many people feel alive only through constant “nerve twanging”. Why are there so many extreme sports??? Compare old and new movies to see the differences.

In silence, there is personal re-energizing, balancing, calming. The mind focuses, the body relaxes, “I” becomes important for non-egotistical reasons.

Each day, take a few moments and be silent within yourself.

Silence: Key to Your Inner World

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/35160931.cms>

Computer Top Tip

Many people don't know or realize that their Internet provider may have a limit on the amount of free memory that can be used for downloading and uploading. Many have 2 Gigabytes or less for standard usage and most people think that is more than enough. Surprise! It may not be. If you are uploading/downloading pdf files and saving attachments regularly, it adds up to considerable memory. Check your monthly bills to see if you have gone over the limit and if extra charges have been applied. It was a surprise to us when discovering we had gone over at least 4-5 times during the year—\$3-\$12 extra fee. If you have kids downloading music, pictures and movies, it really adds up quickly. If you open UTube, MySpace video streaming, or watch movies/tv shows online, it's all memory use.

To reduce the chances of going over your limit: 1. Save emails with large attachments online and forward them to others. You won't have to upload them again and attach them to a new document. When sending them, do this:

1. Open your "Sent Mail" folder. Click on the email that shows the required attached file(s). Click "Forward to". Enter a new email address. Remove, edit or reuse the text that appears in the letter and/or insert your new text. Remove the "Fwd" that usually appears in the Subject line. Send. 2. First open attachments in html format to see if it is something you want. If yes, copy the text and paste it into a word processing program and then save it instead of downloading it. Let us know if you save money.

Being in the Moment

(partially from an article by Tanya Enberg, Lifestyle Magazine)

"Life isn't as serious as my mind makes it out to be."

"Life is too important to be taken seriously."

We are geared to being active. We need to be lively, joyous, excited, and passionate. But trying to grapple with the hectic pace of life can be destructive of body, mind and spirit.

One way to get things straight is to "live the moment." Easily said. How do you do it? Really!

Despite the difficulty and challenge, here are some methods that we all need to practice:

- When eating, just eat. Don't think about anything except the food.

- When walking up and down steps, notice every step, every movement, your breathing.

- Notice the sensory experience of washing your hands. Feel the textures and temperatures. Notice smells and feelings. Notice the movements of hands and arms.

- When you first get into your car, stop for a few moments and notice the peace of the space. Notice your breathing. Notice the silence around you.

- When with someone, isolate yourself and the person from everything else.

- Take a break from your Blackberry. Totally forget about it.

Exercises & A Guide

<http://zenhabits.net/2008/02/25-simple-guide-to-being-present-for-the-overworked-and-overwhelmed/>

Tidbits of Trivia

- the grandfather of Huey Lewis, pop singer, invented the red waxy sealer that is found on some different kinds of cheeses.

- research shows that animal mothers are more efficient, coordinated and attentive than non-mothers.

- Bugs Bunny and Mount

Rushmore are younger than US presidential candidate John McCain, 71.

- the shelf life of regular 7UP in a can is 6 months. In a plastic bottle: 13 weeks.

- only female mosquitoes drink blood. The protein is used to make eggs. The insects can mate in mid-air is less than 15 seconds.

- swarming of locusts is caused by cannibalism. They chase each other and bite others' abdomens. They chase prey and flee predators at the same time.

- Victoria as a baby name was ranked 29th.

- twice as many children under the age of 15 injure themselves falling out of bed than falling out of trees.

Interesting Reading

Forgotten Fads and Fabulous Flops: An Amazing Collection of Goofy Stuff That Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time by Paul Kirchner.

Yesterday's Tomorrow: Recovery Meditations For Hard Cases by Barry B. Longyear.

McMafia: A Journey through the Global Criminal Underworld by Misha Glenny.

The Woman Who Can't Forget: The Extraordinary Story of Living with the Most Remarkable Memory Known to Science by Jill Price.

What Happened: Inside the Bush White House and Washington's Culture of Deception by Scott McClellan.

A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose by Eckhart Tolle.

(The writer is an immigrant Egyptian-Canadian journalist who has written for Arab newspapers. We often share opinions from different points of view. I invited him to share his perspectives and wisdom with readers. —O.S.)

The other view by Ahmed Sheta, Toronto, Canada

Living in the shadows of the past, or a conflict of interest?

A family of ducks held up traffic while trying to cross a highway during the early morning rush hour. Cars slowed and even stopped while an officer tried to hurry the ducklings to the other side.

Baby: Mama, what do these people want? Mama: They want us to go away. Baby: Away? Where? Mama: We are delaying the traffic. They want us off the road. Baby: But where shall we go? Isn't this our road too? Mama: They care about their interests. Baby: Where did these people come from? Mama: From everywhere in the world. Baby: And they want us out of here? That's not fair. Mama: No, it's not fair, but what can I do?

A man shouted from his car, "Hey, get moving. Speed it up. You don't belong here."

"We have been living here since the beginning of time. We were born here," said mama.

"You are here now by mistake. Just go away and clear the road. You shouldn't be here."

"Our ancestors have been living here for thousands of years. This is our place. Where did you come from?"

"Where I came from is none of your business. I'm here now and that's all you need to know."

"You just told me you're here and yet I have to go away? Where should we go? We have always lived here, this is our home, our way of life, and this is where we want to stay."

The officer watched the situation and waited for the two to finish. He seemed to be amused for a while. Suddenly he changed his expression and threatened the mother duck, "Get moving and clear the road quickly. You are obstructing the flow of traffic and holding back these people. You are causing pollution of the environment and increasing the green house gases."

The mother duck responded in protest, "WE pollute the environment and increase the green house gases?"

The officer said, "These people waiting here, unlike you, have important things to do. They must go to work. In your easy life, you just eat, drink, make babies and mess up our parks. Now you're here bothering us. Get moving and clear the road or I'll tell them to drive on through and you will suffer the consequences."

"This is our home and we have rights too. Where did you guys come from to tell us what to do in our homeland?" the mother duck said while urging the ducklings to move quicker.

Another man saw the situation was getting tense. Sympathizing with the ducks, he said, "Okay, ducks. Just get moving and clear the way. It would be better for everybody."

The mother duck got upset. "What is happening here?"



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Everybody is telling us what to do. Where did you come from?"

"I don't really know where I came from. They brought my great-great grandfather to work here and he couldn't leave. This is not my ancestral home. Like you, we don't know any other home. This is my home now," replied the man.

Another observer, seeing things were getting out of hand, interfered and told the ducks, "OK, guys. Get to the other side and clear the road. We need to drive to work and the officer needs to do more important things."

Why do we fight? Stop and think for a while. Are we fighting over land ownership? We have to learn to live together in harmony and peace in one place. This earth is home for all of us and there is enough of everything for all of us to live well and prosper. We have to think of each other and work together for a better future. Get the message?

We welcome creative contributions to this newsletter. Send us your articles or ideas, jokes, wise words, fun activities, letters, trivia.

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Back issues link is on the home page

When are You Really Dead?

(from an article by Patricia Hluchy, Toronto Star)

A young man popped a motorcycle wheelie and crashed into the pavement head first. He wasn't wearing a helmet. He lay in a trauma ward, seemingly beyond hope.

The hospital had given up on him and had notified the authorities and were preparing to harvest organs. Thirty-six hours after the accident, he was declared brain dead.

Family and friends went to say goodbye. A cousin decided to check vital signs by running a pocket knife along his foot and applied pressure under a fingernail. There was a response, surprisingly. Everything screeched to a halt and the young man was revived.

After 48 hours, the young man returned home, attended rehab and was almost back to normal. Was he dead? If not, what was he?

Over time the determiners of death have changed many times: breathing stops, heart stops, brain death. More recently, a brain-flow study was introduced to note blood flow through the brain. (By the way, brain death is not the most common way death is diagnosed.) In a medical journal, there is reference to "a notion of irreversibly lost personhood." This puts all the methods used to determine death in a very uncertain position. There is a real fear of premature organ harvesting or needless loss of a loved one.

Death is more mysterious than we usually think. Life support systems, miracles, near-death experiences, healing by prayer, random chance and pure luck are all players in the game at times along with the determiners above.

Our "modern" definition of death is still being examined and modified. Keep an open mind!

A Child's Concept of Death

http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/uvahealth/peds_terminallyill/concept.cfm

Three Stages of Developing a Concept of Death

<http://social.jrank.org/pages/186/Death-Development-Concept-Death.html>

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2nd Column

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Jokes of the Month

A chief advisor is giving the president his daily briefing. He concludes by saying: "Yesterday, 3 Brazilian soldiers were killed." "OH NO!" the President exclaims. "That's terrible!" His staff sits stunned at this display of emotion, nervously watching as the President sits, head in hands. Finally, the President looks up and asks, "How many is a brazillion?"

A doctor and a lawyer were talking at a party. Their conversation was constantly interrupted by people describing their ailments and asking the doctor for free medical advice. After an hour of this, the exasperated doctor asked the lawyer, "What do you do to stop people from asking you for legal advice when you're out of the office?"

"I give it to them," replied the lawyer, "and then I send them a bill." The doctor was shocked, but agreed to give it a try. The next day, still feeling slightly guilty, the doctor retrieved his mail. In the packet, he found a bill from the lawyer.

What Will They Invent Next?

Artificial Opals Will Revolutionize Television Screens

Unlike LCD screens, there is no bright backlight required nor is a series of tinted filters to produce the colours. Artificial opals are inherently coloured and power would only be required when the image is changed. Imagine the uses! - anti-counterfeiting, high-resolution digital paper, instant-change billboards.

<http://www.magazine.utoronto.ca/00autumn/heavyweights.asp>

Wise Words of Wisdom

The wisest mind has something yet to learn. – George Santayana

The only way of discovering the limits of the possible is to venture a little way past them into the impossible.

Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

It is not yet clear that intelligence has any long term survival value.
—Stephen Hawking

The ability to delude yourself may be an important survival tool.
—Jane Wagner

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