

Zone of Proximal Development

(by O.S.)

Assessment methods for giftedness need to consider locating gifted children in their "zone of proximal development". Where are they in their intellectual and emotional development levels?

The intellectual "zone" within which they work may be well above or even below grade level. ZPD is the basis for differentiating programs.

Why is it important?

- Gifted students are often placed in classes without consideration of intellectual needs. That can mean they are stuck with adult selected age-appropriate grade level work.

- Much of formal education is designed for a middle-level norm. It is difficult but absolutely necessary to provide individualized education at appropriate individual levels. Gifted children, especially, must be taken off the assembly line and taught differently. A ZPD helps to do this.

A ZPD can make teachers uneasy because it can suggest that kids are smarter than they might want them to be. Students, if treated as "anomalies", might miss something in their education that will in some way cause them to lose out later in life. Education systems must realize that they give out only a pit-

tance of all that is important to learn. There is so much that isn't and can't be taught in the formal education time frame.

A ZPD can be defined via parent surveys, student surveys/interviews, test results, progress reports/exams.

Many times students need to just be asked whether they are working at a level that meets their needs.

When not working in a ZPD, results are predictable: highly bored kids, intellectual and social isolation, ostracism, misfits, turned off and tuned out kids, underachievement, mischief, criminal behaviour, loss of study and learning habits caused by being constantly confronted with work that is already known or too easy, (some gifted kids challenge each other to get the highest marks with the least amount of effort) frustration in an unchallenging and unpleasant environment, day to day sense of hopelessness, "I can't wait to get out", even suicide.

Determining their ZPD is a very important way of meeting the needs of gifted students. The objective is teaching and learning powered by the student, not the curriculum, teacher or school board.

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Amazing Websites

Space Memorabilia for Sale (history relived) <http://www.farthestreaches.com/>

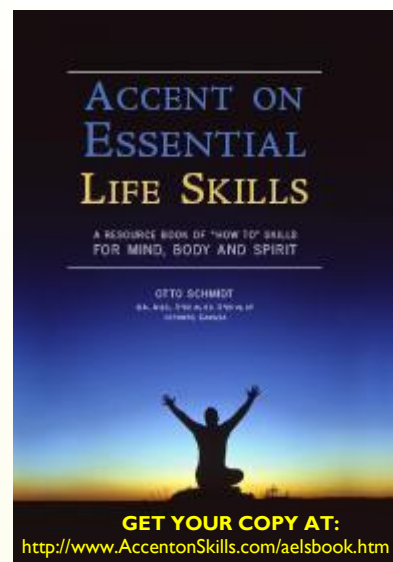
Improbable Research (makes you laugh & then think) <http://improbable.com/>

Top 15 Bizarre but True Stories <http://listverse.com/bizarre/top-15-bizarre-true-stories/>

Stumble Upon (this website wanders & searches out interesting websites) <http://www.stumbleupon.com/>

Pet a Rock (fun craft, painted stones. DIY free instructions!) <http://petarock.homestead.com/>

Millenium Simulation (Wow! Journey through simulated universe) <http://www.mpa-garching.mpg.de/galform/millennium/>



News and Views

Let's Celebrate!

Sept 1 – Labour Day, Canadian National Exhibition Closes
Sept 2 - Ramadan begins (Islam)
Sept 8 – International Literacy Day
Sept 7 – Grandparent's Day
Sept 10—National Boss/Employee Exchange Day (no swapping salaries!)
Sept 13 - Korean Thanksgiving
Sept 15 - full moon
Sept 15—Wife Appreciation Day
Sept 16 – International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone layer
Sept 21 – International Day of Peace
Sept 23 - Jewish Rosh Hoshanah
Sept 24 - National Punctuation Day
Sept 30 - Last day of Ramadan

Stock Market Chuckle

(from Sheppard Wine Works Gazette, Toronto, Canada)

If you had purchased \$1,000.00 of Nortel stock one year ago, it would now be worth \$49.00. With Enron, you would have nothing left of the original money.

If you had purchased \$1,000.00 of Delta Airlines stock, you would have \$49.00 left.

If you had purchased \$1,000.00 worth of beer/wine one year ago, drank all the beer/wine, then turned in the cans/bottles for the aluminum and glass recycling REFUND, you would have about \$215.00

Top 10 Basic Things that Poor People Often Can't Afford and Do Without

(from a survey of food bank users, Daily Bread Food Bank, Toronto, ON)

People who are very well off or those who have enough of what they need often don't think about what it really means to be poor. They take many small things for granted. The list below sheds more light on poverty and shows that which is beyond the often stereotypical views.

Not having two or more of these items would be considered poor:

1. Regular savings of at least \$20 per month for rainy days or retirement.
2. Fresh fruit and vegetables every day.
3. Meat, fish, or vegetarian alternative every other day.
4. Small amount of money to spend each week on yourself.
5. Replace worn out furniture.
6. Appropriate clothes for a job interview.
7. Being able to get around your community, either by having a car or in a larger center a monthly bus pass or equivalent.
8. Having at least two pairs of shoes, including one pair to wear outside in winter.
9. Able to buy modest presents for family/friends at least once a year.
10. Adults have at least two good meals a day.

This list should provoke thought and give added guidance for those who are actively trying to help the poor.

Editor's aside: A few years ago, I worked for a volunteer group set up by a collection of churches to help the poor by cooking hot meals for them and providing shelters each night. I remember how delighted I was to find a bagel shop that was willing to give us dozens of leftover bagels for free at the end of every business day. How little I knew. Bagels are not considered the best food for poor people. They usually have bad teeth and bagels are too hard for them to chew. Soft foods only.



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Computer Top Tip

Making Folder and Document Retrieval Easier

Folders and documents can be more easily found if there are some extra clues when viewing them in their lists inside file folders. Here is a simple set up: Go to "Start" and then "Control Panel" and then open "Folder Options".

Go to "View". Under "Files and Folders" go down the list about 10 items. Take the check mark out of the box for "hide extensions for known file types". All MS documents in Word, Excel, Publisher, PowerPoint will now show and also be saved with their respective .doc, .xls, .pub, .ppt, etc. endings e.g. JoanRecipes.doc or Newsletter.pub This makes searching easier because the extension helps direct you to the right document e.g. picking out your PowerPoint presentation (.ppt) in a long list of .doc's is easier than finding the specific title.

It is also valuable to have "Windows Explorer" on the desktop as it is the central collection and organizing centre for all documents and files. In Explorer, move files or documents: highlight, click & drag documents to new or existing folders, single click and rename documents if desired.

Here's how to have Explorer available at all times:

Clear all programs and make sure that some the desktop shows. Do the following: Go to "Start", go to "All Programs", go to "Accessories", look for "Windows Explorer" in the list (not Internet Explorer). Do not click on the title! Hover the cursor over the words to highlight them. First press and keep holding down the "Ctrl" button and then press and hold down the left mouse button. Drag the ghost image to the Desktop and release the mouse button and then the "Ctrl" button. Explorer is now fully accessible all the time as a shortcut. Control and sort all your files and documents, no matter the type.

- marijuana is the most lucrative crop in the USA. Worth \$36 billion, it is more than corn and wheat combined.

- sign language interpreting is a high-risk job and causes more work-related stress and injury to extreme-

Tidbits of Trivia

ties than assembly-line work.

- in 2007, Mexicans paid out about 8% of family income to bribes.

- the world's oldest known tree is a scrawny, 9,550 year old Spruce in Sweden.

- studies show that if a

London stock market trader has a high testosterone level in the morning, he is more likely to make money.

- white people are 90% of the U.K.'s population.

- in the 10th-16th C, it was not uncommon to arrest animals, try them and punish them.

Exciting "New" Games

Every now and then we hear of something new in the world of games.

Kabaddi - This chiefly Indian game is a combination of wrestling, tag and rugby. The object of the game is to raid enemy territory, eliminate the opposing players and then make one's way back to a safe zone.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOE7dKz6nY0>

<http://www.kabaddi-kabaddi.com/>

Chinlone - This game is a combination of sport and dance. It is a team sport with no opposing team. It is non-competitive but a very demanding ball game. The focus is not on winning or losing, but on how beautifully one plays the game. It looks a bit like hackysack with soccer skills attached but far more creative, intricate and graceful. Stunningly beautiful!! Enjoy this!

<http://www.chinlone.com/reel.html>

Chessboxing - 4 min. of chess followed by 3 min. of boxing.
http://site.wcbo.org/content/index_en.html

Interesting Reading

Six Degrees by Mark Lynas. About global-warming.

A Life Decoded by J. Craig Venter. Decoding the human genome.

Coral: A Pessimism in Paradise by Steve Jones. Death of coral around the world.

The Sun Kings by Stuart Clark. Understanding the sun and its effect on the Earth.

Why Beauty is Truth by Ian Stewart. The history of the emergence of this remarkable area of study.

Gut Feelings: The Intelligence of the Unconscious by Gerd Gigerenzer.

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Otto Schmidt, 416-226-2332, Toronto, CA

Car Crashes: a Different Perspective

(from an article by Peter J. Woolley, Washington Post)

There is a staggering number of people that die in car crashes. Despite the numbers, it tends to get a minimum of attention by public officials and seems to be relatively accepted by the general public. About 44,000 people die on American roads each year.

Let's put the statistics into perspective:

- in any 5-yr period, traffic deaths in the USA exceed the number of people killed in the South Asian tsunami of 2004.
- At a casualty rate of 800 soldiers a year, the USA would have to be in Iraq for more than 50 years to equal the number of auto deaths in one year back home.
- Your chances of dying in a car crash are 1 in 84. The chances of winning the Mega Millions lottery is 1 in 175 million.
- If 8x10 photos were laid side by side of all those who died in car crashes in a year, the line would be 8 kilometers long.
- A yearbook of all the photos (12 per page) would have 3, 500 pages. If the yearbook had 400 pages, more than 100 photos would have to be put on each page.
- Automobile deaths are the leading killer of children, teenagers and all people between ages 3-33.

Why are there no commemorative stamps, protest marches, large support organizations? Automobile makers have spent considerable money in designing safe cars.

CHALLENGE TO READERS

(Voice your opinions. Send them to us.)

What is the problem?

Not enough driver training?

Problems with the roads?

Something about cars?

Are human attitudes the problem?

Possible solutions?

Whose responsibility is it?

(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

Back from Cancun

A first-time visit to Cancun, Mexico showed a clean modern city, created by, lives and thrives on international tourism. Ocean front huge luxury hotels and resorts. Beautiful beaches - though mostly rocky. However, in this time of the year it is hot and humid. This doesn't prevent anybody from enjoying an abundance of activities, boating, parasail, snorkeling, swimming or just relaxing. Easy cheap and safe transportation by clean buses in clean streets where well dressed drivers/conductors usually forget to give you back part or all your cash balance.

The city's mainstay is international hotel chains. All the big and small names attract tourists from all over the world especially Americans, Canadians and Europeans and few Spaniards. Physically distinct Natives usually work in low paying jobs in these hotels. Women sell beautiful knitting products on the beach.

People who have lived in the third world during the fifties and sixties of the last century were taught that the only interest of private investments is to collect profits. Foreign investment takes the profits out of the country as soon as they are generated, drain the wealth of the host country and exploit its people.

Does this apply also to the age of globalization (some people call it Americanization)? Now, you can move your money from one country to the other over the internet. You can own, buy, and sell shares/stocks of foreign companies while sitting at home. Capital has the freedom of movement almost all over the entire world. You don't need to be American or Japanese to own shares of General Motors or Ford or Sony or Nokia. Capital or money has no nationality and no loyalty.

The example of Cancun, though with a lot of limitations- gave me something to think about. Although as a tourist, I didn't go deep below the surface, yet it raised a multitude of questions about the possibility to develop a country without the help of international investment capital and expertise. The international chain hotels did all the planning, execution, promotion, and brought in well-off tourists from all corners of the world and pampered them in modern facilities. They actually provided jobs, wages and expertise to the otherwise unemployed locals. They may have exploited the people, environment and the local lax labour and environmental laws. But what is the other practical alternative solution? Third world countries may have to live with that till they develop the experience necessary to be equal partners or to work on their own. The question of how the deals between the local authorities and the international chains were structured and how much trickles down to local citizens and to the Mexican treasury remains unanswered. But profits will remain the main motive and incentive behind most successful



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development endeavours whether done by national or international capital.

International tourism is actually a carefully crafted, directed, planned and manipulated industry. It is part of the political landscape of the whole world economy and is dominated by international interests. Without joining the global trends, opening doors to international interests, removing barriers of trade and allowing capital movement there would be no such tourism, economic development or transfer of expertise. The other alternative practical solution is to try to tame the international capital and get the best possible conditions out of Goliath

This leads to debate the possibility or the difficulty of development without soliciting the international capital interests and abiding by the laws of wealthy investors. How to mitigate the ill effects of foreign investments and maximize the benefits to the locals and protect the environment? How to guarantee a reasonable level of wages and enable the locals to upgrade their skills, achieve and maintain a reasonable standard of living? How to do this in today's world?

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Jokes of the Month

A father was at the beach with his children. His four-year-old son ran up to him, grabbed his hand, and led him to the shore. A seagull lay dead in the sand. "Daddy, what happened to him?" the son asked. "He died and went to Heaven," the dad replied. The boy thought a moment and then said, "Did God throw him back down?"

Miss Jones gave her second-grade students a lesson in science. She explained about magnets and showed how they would pick up nails and other bits of iron. Now it was question time, and she asked, "My name begins with the letter 'M' and I pick up things. What am I?" Little Johnny in the front row proudly said, "You're a mother!"

One day a lawyer was riding in his limousine when he saw a guy eating grass. He stopped the car, got out and asked him, "Why are you eating grass". The man replied, "I'm so poor, I can't afford a thing to eat." The lawyer said, "Poor guy, come back to my house." The guy said, "But I have a wife and three kids." The lawyer told him to bring them along. When all were in the car, the poor man said, "Thanks for taking us back to your house, it is so kind of you." The lawyer said, "You're going to love it there, the grass is a foot tall."

What Will They Invent Next?

Unicycle Meets Segway

With a system of gyroscopes and electronic sensors, it feels like you are riding on a motorcycle. This, however, is a unicycle, the Bombardier Embio Computerized Unicycle for Two. It is environmentally friendly and runs on hydrogen fuel cells and an electric motor. If speed is below 12.5mph, two small wheels deploy and stabilize the unit. Turning is done by leaning.

<http://www.gearbits.com/archives/000336.html>

Wise Words of Wisdom

Very commonly known phrase says, "It's not what you know; it's who you know. "The modified and more appropriate phrase would be: "It isn't who you know, but who knows you and knows what you know."

"Silly is our natural state, and we only work and organize to get to silly. Nothing is so painful that it can't be laughed at eventually. We've done all our work now: let's go have some fun." - Mike Meyers' Dad

You can't change the past, but you can ruin the present by worrying over the future.

For every minute you are angry with someone, you lose 60 seconds of happiness that you can never get back.

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