

Making Learning REAL for Gifted Students

One of the biggest concerns about all institutional education should be the application of learning to the REAL lives of students. Much of what is taught is knowledge/ facts, theory, explanations, and information. Exercises and practice situations are, at times, relatively out of the context of real life.

If learning is to make a serious impact, shouldn't students be shown how it makes a difference in an immediate REAL way - especially for older children? Younger children will go through many exercises simply because of sincere interest, for the fun of it or because it gives them something to fill time. But, along the line they realize that things are

not what they seem. Older children need to know that what they learn and produce will have an immediate impact, not in some in some fuzzy distant future.

Reading, writing, math are the absolute basics and therefore need to be applied directly to life. Other subjects need more attention with regard to connections to REAL life. Question the value of all the handouts, activity sheets, fill-in the blanks, matching exercises. Do students really think new thoughts or do they just regurgitate?

One way we can gauge the true value of what is taught and learned is by the amount of student work that goes into the garbage. If what is taught and learned is truly

meaningful, relevant and valuable, shouldn't there be next to no garbage?

If learning is truly REAL: *Textbooks are eagerly kept as references (as in the adult world). *Notes and written work are stored for future use in other settings. *Creative efforts become part of a valuable portfolio used in future REAL situations. *Most daily efforts are important enough to be used repeatedly. *Time flies because the learning is so engrossing. Think of time as something valuable enough that it shouldn't be wasted or thrown in the garbage.

Imagine factories producing valuable products. They maximize output and minimize waste. Why can't that attitude be applied to education too? Students need to be involved in REAL life to make a difference today instead of just practicing for the future.

There should be a love of learning about everything in life. We are here once and we should not miss out on many things. Time is precious and should not be wasted on learning and tasks that have little personal value or relevance in daily life.

Making learning REAL is possible. Have fun doing it!

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Amazing Websites

Pelota Tata (flaming soccer ball game. Don't try this!!)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTVOJW_lu_E

My Hero (inspirational, very positive)

<http://www.myhero.com/myhero/>

Bose-Einstein Condensate (findings in the super cool - literally!)

<http://www.fortunecity.com/emachines/e11/86/bose.html>

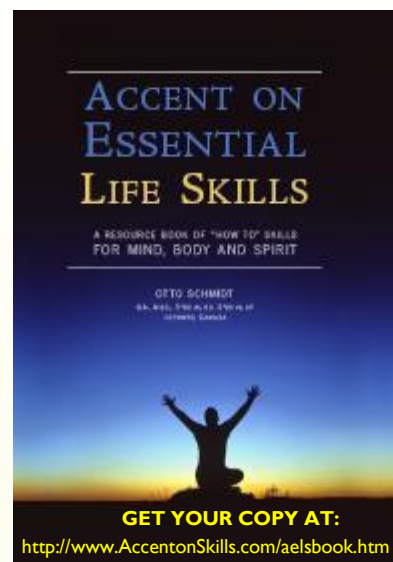
Digital Water Pavilion (Wow!! AMAZING!!)

<http://ca.youtube.com/watch?v=mtMzbeMA58I>

Slamball (football, basketball, volleyball merge)

<http://espvisuals.blogspot.com/2008/03/slamball.html>

Hearing Colors <http://espvisuals.blogspot.com/2008/02/color-blind-artist-learns-to-paint-by.html>



News and Views

Let's Celebrate!

Mar 8 – International Women's Day
Mar 8 – Daylight Savings Begins (1 hr. forward)
Mar 9—Commonwealth Day
Mar 10 - full moon tonight
Mar 15-21 - March School Break (where observed)
Mar 17 – St. Patrick's Day
Mar 18 - Awkward Moments Day
Mar 20 - first day of Spring!
Mar 21 – UN Day to Eliminate Racism
Mar 21 – World Poetry Day
Mar 21 - Int'l Day for the Elimination of Racism
Mar 22 – World Day for Water, Int'l Goof-Off Day
Mar 23 – World Meteorological Day
Mar 24 – World Tuberculosis Day
Mar 25 – Nat'l Community Shredding Day i.e. sensitive documents
March 31 – National "She's Funny That Way" Day – ways women make us laugh
Also National Nutrition Month, National Kidney Month, Red Cross Month, and Women's History Month
Second week of March—National Cleaning Week
Act Happy Week (3rd week)
The last week of March is Bubble Week – competing teams try to set world records by fitting people into a soap bubble (www.bubbleblowers.com),

Experiential Advertising (by O.S.)

What's getting attention in advertising? It's called experiential advertising. Instead of a static billboard, flyer, commercial, or poster, advertisers get you directly involved with a product through sampling, good looking girls doing pitches, parties, virtual experiences with products as the focus. You handle and use products instead of just looking at them. E.g. Fido had a DJ party and guests had to use a Fido phone in the lobby to call the elevator to come to ground level and take them up. <http://www.lbbinc.com/lbbgallery2.html>

10 Worst Places on Earth (from an article by Olivia Ward, Toronto Star, Toronto, Ontario, Canada)

Pollution: Urumqi, China

This city is downstream from sulphurous agricultural soil dust and industrial pollution.

Corruption: Somalia

So violent that millions have fled the bribery, extortion for basic necessities.

Dictatorship: North Korea

This country is considered the most isolated and repressed. Entire generations of a family can be punished if one member commits a crime. There is much jailing and torture.

Personal Security: Iraq

Iraq has easy access to weapons, high murder rate, weak government, political instability and low respect for human rights.

Homicide Rate: El Salvador

It has the world's highest murder rate for young people ages 15-24.

Inflation: Zimbabwe

The rate is over 1 million percent in the past year. People bring sacks of printed paper money to buy a loaf of bread. People with jobs choose lunch or a bus ride to work.

Gender Gap: Yemen

Has the greatest inequality between the sexes with regard to health care, living standards, job opportunity and lifespan.

Life Expectancy: Swaziland

Has extreme poverty and the world's highest HIV infection rate. Life expectancy is 32.

Literacy: Mali

It was once a centre of Islamic scholarship and a major university. Those that can read and write are only 32% of the population.

Freedom of Speech: Eritrea

The government banned all privately owned media in 2001. Journalists are tortured, disappear and are killed. The country is run like a large open prison.



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Computer Top Tip

Zooming and Moving Using the Mouse Wheel

It often happens that you want a closer look at a part of a document, drawing or object. Instead of using the small window on the task bar with the size registered in percentages or zooming via "View", hold down the "Ctl" key and then turn the wheel on your mouse. This works in any document in MS Word, Publisher, Excel, etc. It even works on any Internet Explorer window while on the internet. Zoom in and out at any time. Try it right now.

Let go of the Ctl key. The wheel is now valuable because turning it saves the time going to the vertical scroll bars on the side. Combine these two ideas to get the exact distance and placement of what is in front of you.

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- titanium golf clubs can reach a sound level of 130 decibels when hitting a ball. This can actually damage hearing.
- some new ideas for flavours of chips: Chili & Chocolate, Fish & Chips, Cajun Squirrel.
- cats use less energy when walking normally than when they slink.

Tidbits of Trivia

- dog food should not be fed to cats. It lacks taurine which is an amino acid and dogs make their own. Cats can't. Heart disease can develop.
- couples tend to split up in January more than in any other month.
- if Facebook (150 million users) were a country, it would

- be the 8th most populated in the world, ahead of Japan, Russia, and Nigeria.
- the band AC/DC expects to have 5 large ashtrays, a quart of whole milk, all-natural potato chips and 3 oxygen tanks plus masks in dressing rooms.
- an anagram for "Britney Spears" is Presbyterians.

Catching Criminals (from TV show: Forensic Factors: Nature's Clues)

After watching this show, don't bother committing a crime. You will get caught.

- * your amino acids left on paper can reveal your finger prints.
- * teeth impressions can be matched and often DNA is found around the wound.
- * lasers can help photograph fingerprints on almost any difficult surface even gloves.
- * vaporized crazy glue reacts to fingerprints and coats the ridges in plastic.
- * ear prints (left on doors by those listening in) are now being used to identify criminals.
- * there are experts in reading tool marks for evidence.
- * foot print experts are getting better at matching any walking and pressure clues.

Interesting Reading

The Shack by William P. Young. An accidental, run-away best-seller rejected by 26 publishers. It is about a man confronting his demons and evaluating his religious beliefs during a weekend in a shack.

2008 Crime Writers of Canada Award Winners

Garcia's Heart by Liam Durcan - best first novel.

Trumpets Sound no More by Jon Redfern - best novel.

One Child at a Time: the global fight to rescue children from online predators by Julian Sher - best non-fiction.

Pulitzer Prize Winners of 2008

Eden's Outcasts: the story of Louisa May Alcott and her father by John Matteson. (Biography)

The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao by Junot Díaz. (Fiction)

The Other View by Ahmed Sheta, Toronto, Canada
Strikes, Subsidies, and Taxes

Although most of us support the principle of the right to strike and peacefully resolve issues between wage earners and employers, there is another side of the coin. Often the strike victims are not only employers but the public at large. In transit strikes, it is commuters, in education it is the students, in medicine it is the patients. Victims are always losers. A recent university workers strike is a clear example. I am a free lancer and always on the losing side in any strike - no chance whatsoever of winning. Greater regulation of strikes could reduce damage to people like me. We should strive to find better ways to resolve issues other than by stopping work, production or services.

Subsidizing auto makers despite their failures to produce what people would freely choose to buy is questionable. Government subsidies are taxpayers money earned by all people regardless of level of income. Is this how the "free market" we believe in is supposed to work?

I find it very difficult to subsidize people who earn much more than I do and guarantee them security of employment, benefits and pensions when I have no guarantee of employment, benefits or pension. How much would people agree to or object to this policy of subsidy if given the chance? What about support for other small companies and small business owners?

I believe that rights must be universal i.e. for all. If we win, we should win together. If governments supported all big and small businesses and guaranteed rights to employment, benefits and pension for all citizens, the world economic situation might be different from what it is today.

The last issue is city property tax hikes. A city government might say their increase will be 4%, watchdogs say it will be more like 10%. The City says more money is needed for police, social assistance and transit.

Property tax is a universal tax, meaning it applies to all property owners without regard to income level or whether the owner is working, a pensioner, or unemployed. The fact that he/she owns a property makes him a hostage. He has to pay or else!!...you know the rest.

Any company or reasonable person knows that expenses cannot exceed obligations except temporarily or in emergency. The answer to any tax shortfall should not be to increase property taxes but to improve efficiency and cut expenses.

I come from Egypt. It exhibits elements of the third as well as the first and second worlds. One finds a strange combination of Nobel Prize winners and illiterate people, extravagant richness and slums. But Egypt affords to make education "a right, like water and air". Why don't we?

Managing Stress & Curing Your Own Problem

(by O.S.)

We all end up in highly stressful situations. There is good and bad stress, however. Having taught relaxation techniques formally for many years, there are a few helpful hints I can offer.

Good Stress: a desire and eagerness to do well. It is anticipation, interest, excitement all operating at the same time. It's a nervousness but good feeling and the aim is success. The speech, the conference, the special day must go just right. There is forethought and attention to details with a positive, fluid attitude and energy. It invigorates and leaves an exhaustion of joy and happiness at being able to do something and do it right and to the benefit of others. Don't be afraid of this kind of stress. It will tire you out but leave you wanting to do more.

Bad Stress: that which causes an almost holistic destruction. There are physical, emotional, intellectual changes that narrow thinking, constrict decision making and leave a victim mentality. Tensing of muscles, a sense of doom and gloom, going into shock, feeling sick and possibly throwing up are some of the symptoms. A desire to run or withdraw are symptoms. A feeling of toxicity pervades.

Dr. Richard Rahe, of Switzerland provides an interesting list of causes and cures of stress. He studied the topic for many years. Here are his findings:

Most Common Causes:

- Genetics
- Life development
- Demographics
- Recent + or - life Changes
- Changes within 2 years
- Physical health
- Psychological health
- Health - within 2 years
- Involvement with Technology
- Lack of emotional control
- Overdoing things - martyrdom

Most Effective Cures:

- No substance abuse (caffeine/nicotine incl)
- Diet and exercise
- Pace and Control
- Problem solving
- "Silver Lining" philosophy
- Facing facts, not blaming
- Work and family—social support
- Friends, society
- Nature
- Satisfaction with work/family
- Optimism
- Inspiration/humour

Self help does work and people can bounce back.

<http://www.drrahe.com/>

Reflections of a Teenage Mind

by Megann Ford-Licskai, London, Ontario, Canada

Solitary Confinement: Life in Isolation

The internet is my life. It's my connection to popular culture, my friends, course information, and whatever else I might feel like running through a search engine. And, right now, I am pretty shaky. My head aches. I'm having uncontrolled bursts of really deep emotions. The reason? We've just moved, and I have been without my "friend" for a week. Cable TV has been off too.

In order to preserve my sanity, I've decided to do some therapeutic writing about my life without screens. Day 1: Rode my horse, Rosie, for an extra long time. Had to groom her for an extra long time. Went to bed early...very, very tired.

Day 2: Slept over at Natalie's (friend) house. Eagerly ingested life on her computer to satisfy my cravings.

Day 3: Stayed at the barn for 5 and a half hours. Poor tired Rosie. Then did homework I neglected while mourning the loss of my internet. Walked the dog and got stuck in a 3 foot high snow bank. Desperation led me to hang out with my Aunt in a Walmart, especially the electronics section

Day 4: Got my horse to jump over a 3 ft barrier. Ate comfort food to relieve the pain of not having my computer. Laughed hysterically when my riding coach pointed that, maybe I shouldn't have eaten an entire box of Conversation hearts. Note, side effects of consuming lots of pure sugar include hysterical laughter and shaky hands.

Day 5: Talked to Arielle (friend) who filled me in on all of the TV I'd missed. And on the elections in Israel. And on the latest gossip. I listened attentively to anything that had to do with TV or the internet. Gave Rosie (horse) the day off, but had to get caught up on homework I'd neglected while I was gorging myself on Conversation hearts.

Day 6: Attended my school play's costume parade. I was one of about 5 people in the audience. How humiliating. Began advertising for the show (if anybody wants to see Sweeney Todd between March 3rd and 7th...). Visited with friends again to get a short internet fix, and did Rosie's (horse) chiropractic exercises.

Day 7: Made Michael (friend) a birthday card (thought I would do it in Tagalog no less). Spent quite a bit of real time talking to the family for a novel experience. Rode Rosie for an even longer time. Studied for some tests I had neglected to study for. Did two run throughs of Sweeney. Cut myself shaving - oops...

Upon reflection, it would appear in the time that I've been without my internet, I have a) spent quality time with friends; b) spent quality time with the family; c) exercised self and horse regularly; d) gotten an extra hour of sleep each night and am now up to the average; e) participated in extra-curricular school activities; and f) diligently completed homework as it was assigned.

Oh, man, what is my world coming to? I'm losing my teenage image! I may end up "NORMAL" if this continues. I had better get my internet back really soon!



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(Sally Lyon has generously made "Gift Rap" Newsletter available to members of OGTOC. We welcome potentially 1000 new readers and look forward to our readers soon joining our new forum on their site.)

An invitation to join OGTOC

<http://giftedonlineconferences.ning.com/?xgi=caROhJu>



Welcome to Our Gifted Online Conferences -A place to join together to meet, share, learn, and discuss issues pertaining to giftedness and talent of all individuals regardless of race, age, gender, economic status, and/or twice/thrice exceptionalities.



If your children did not come with instructions, then OGTOC will be a resource you will find very beneficial. In the past the OGTOC group was only active on an email list serve during conferences. Now OGTOC is 24/7 with many groups to join so you can talk with others with that interest 24/7. OGTOC now has expanded to hold conferences, book clubs, workshops, fireside chats, etc

Next conference in April with Drs. Fernette and Brock Eide – Giftedness and Disabilities.

More details will be posted on <http://giftedonlineconferences.ning.com/>

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Jokes of the Month

A young businessman had just started his own business. He'd rented a beautiful office and had it brilliantly decorated. Sitting there, he saw a man come into the outer office. Wishing to appear busy, the young businessman picked up the phone and started to pretend he was working a big deal. He was shouting huge figures and made giant commitments. Finally, he hung up and asked the visitor, "Can I help you?" The man said, "Sure. I'm here to install the phone!"

A carpenter was giving evidence about an accident he had witnessed. The lawyer for the defendant was trying to discredit him and asked him how far away he was from the accident. The carpenter replied, "Twenty-seven feet, six and one-half inches." "What? How come you are so sure of that distance?" asked the lawyer. "Well, I knew sooner or later some idiot would ask me. So I measured it!" replied the carpenter.

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What Will They Invent Next?

Retail Do-It-Yourself DNA Test Kit

Test yourself for over 90 traits and conditions: diseases, genetic predispositions, intelligence, health risks, etc. The cost is about \$400 for the kit. This was voted as the best invention of 2008. One of the co-inventors is the wife of Sergey Brin, famous founder of Google.

http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1852747_1854493,00.html

**We welcome creative
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link is on the home page

Wise Words of Wisdom

Winning doesn't always mean being first. Winning means you're doing better than you've ever done before." Donnie Blair

Life is like playing a violin solo in public and learning the instrument as one goes on. - Samuel Butler

There is only one thing more painful than learning by experience: that is not learning from experience. - Archibald MacLeish

Work like you don't need money. Love like you've never been hurt. Dance like nobody's watching.

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