

APRIL 2024

NDAGC QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Sprouting Success: Empowering Gifted Learners This Spring



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The Merits of Mentorship

by Beth Ustanko, NDAGC President

When considering enrichment opportunities for young learners, the value of mentorship is often overlooked. This past year, my family learned first-hand how beneficial a mentor can be. My daughter is a musician; she currently plays violin and sings at the collegiate level. Some of my best high school memories were made while singing, but as my daughter developed her talent, I quickly realized her level of skill was beyond my understanding. During her senior year of high school, my daughter began training with a private vocal coach. While our purpose for seeking out this training was for her to hone her vocal technique, we were also introduced to the wonderful world of mentorship and its many benefits.



As Dianna Witton and Del Siegle (2015) state, “A mentor is an expert in a field who may assist a child with his or her understanding in an area of common interest. Mentorships are not traditional student-teacher relationships, but equal partnerships forged in guided learning. A mentor and student interact on a one-to-one basis to develop a plan to integrate skills and knowledge to meet the needs, abilities, and desires of the student” (p. 1).

This definition perfectly fits the relationship of my daughter and her vocal coach; their interests and abilities in music were a perfect compliment to each other. In fact, on many occasions my daughter’s lessons would go beyond the allotted time. This was due to the fact that they had become so engaged in conversation about shared musical interests that they had lost track of the time. My husband and I soon began to value her mentor not only for the technical guidance she provided, but for the positive social and emotional impact she had on my daughter’s life.

In fact, while many mentors are sought out for their expertise, research has additionally demonstrated significant benefits for a student’s well being. Mentors can provide support for obstacles and understanding by relating to similar experiences (Wirthlin, 2024). As Sandra Berger (1990) describes, “One of the most valuable experiences a gifted student can have is exposure to a mentor who is willing to share personal values, a particular interest, time, talents, and skills. When the experience is properly structured and the mentor is a good match for the student, the relationship can provide both the mentor and student with encouragement, inspiration, new insights, and other personal rewards” (p.2).

The task of finding a mentor may feel daunting, however, it may be just as easy as asking for advice from a friend. This was our experience when finding our daughter’s vocal coach. It is important to remember that, “Mentors can come in many forms. A professional, professor, teacher or university student might be able to offer a mentorship in a variety of ways. For example, they can work with a student on an original research question or project, they may provide guided readings, share volunteer or research opportunities, or merely help answer questions that gifted students have about their interests” (Davidson Institute for Talent Development, 2006, p. 1). If you are inspired to explore mentorship opportunities further, the Davidson Institute has a comprehensive guidebook available online: [Davidson Institute: Mentoring Guidebook](#).

My family remains thankful for our experience with mentorship. As Sandra Berger (1990) notes, “A true mentor relationship does not formally end” (p. 4). Our family has found this to be true. As my daughter has transitioned to college, she is still in contact with and supported by her mentor. It is a relationship that has become very important to my daughter, and has helped her form a healthy self-concept about herself as a musician and person. I believe relationships such as these have merit for inspiring our young learners, and thus make the experience of mentorship unique and important.

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IN THE NEWS!

February GIFTed Gathering at NDSU

NDAGC hosted its second Fargo Area GIFTed Gathering in February. It was an extraordinary event that families could attend together. While parents learned about the social and emotional needs of gifted individuals, the young scholars in attendance explored hands-on STEM activities. NDAGC is thankful for its partnership with NDSU’s College of Engineering, including professors Danling Wang and Angela Gross!





Alicia Schroeder-Schock Defending Dissertation

We are thrilled to announce the accomplishment of NDAGC Secretary, Alicia Schroeder-Schock. On March 11, Alicia successfully defended her dissertation titled *Coaching First-Grade Teachers on Differentiated Instructional Practices for Learners with Mathematical Promise: An Action Research Study*. Her defense, facilitated by her chair Dr. Tracy Cross, also included her committee members Dr. Jennifer Riedl Cross and Dr. Ashley Carpenter, along with the Director Emerita of the Center for Gifted Studies and Talent Development, Dr. Cheryl Adams. Additionally, Alicia was joined by her family and fellow doctoral students from William & Mary.

Alicia will graduate from William & Mary's Executive Ed.D. program on May 17, earning a degree in Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership with an emphasis in gifted administration. Congratulations Dr. Schroeder-Schock for this exceptional achievement!

Stacy Anderson Cass/Clay YWCA Women of the Year Nomination

NDAGC member and Fargo Public Schools gifted education teacher, Stacy Anderson, has been nominated in the education category for the 2024 Cass Clay YWCA Women of the Year Award. Stacy's passion for service learning inspires her students to use their skills to engage in projects that help their community. Her students speak highly of the social and emotional lessons they learn alongside stretching their critical thinking skills. The Cass Clay Women of the Year award ceremony is April 22, 2024. We thank Stacy for her service to gifted children and families and celebrate her accomplishments!



Do you know someone within the gifted education community whose dedication, passion, or achievements deserve recognition? We want to hear from you! Contact us at ndagc.gifted@gmail.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

April Webinar

NDAGC Webinar Series:

A Brave Approach: Allowing Learners to Choose Their Destiny with Choice Boards

Monday, April 15, 2024 @ 7:00 PM CST



Are you searching for some inspiration as you look to wrap up your school year? Join Dr. Schroeder-Schock and Dr. Adams as they share their NAGC presentation on choice boards that promote higher level thinking! Discover the art and science behind effective differentiation and gain invaluable insights into the “what” and “why” behind this powerful tool. Through a systematic approach, learn how to develop and integrate advanced-level choice boards into your teaching environment. Elevate your instructional strategies and empower your learners to chart their educational journeys!

NDAGC webinars are free for members and \$10 for non-members.
Register at: <https://tinyurl.com/NDAGCChoiceBoards>



Presenters:

Alicia Schroeder-Schock, Ed.D. is a K-5 gifted and talented teacher in West Fargo Public Schools and the secretary and newsletter editor for NDAGC. She received her Ed.D. in Educational Policy, Planning and Leadership with an emphasis in gifted administration from William & Mary and her master’s degree in educational psychology with an emphasis in giftedness, creativity, and talent development from the University of Connecticut. Alicia was a teacher consultant for some 3rd edition curriculum work by William & Mary’s Center for Gifted Education. She presents at the state and national level with an emphasis on instructional practices and lesson design for high ability learners.



Cheryl Adams, Ph.D. received her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology with an emphasis in gifted education from the University of Virginia and is the Director Emerita of the Center of Gifted Studies and Talent Development at Ball State University. She currently teaches on-line courses in gifted education and is the Series Editor of the NAGC Select publications. Cheryl has presented widely at local, state, national, and international conferences. She is a former member of the Board of Directors of NAGC and is past Chair of the NAGC Professional Standards Committee. Cheryl has received the NAGC Early Leader Award, the Outstanding Administrative Service Award from Ball State, the Distinguished Service Award from NAGC, and the NAGC President’s Award. She is a Past President of the Indiana Association for the Gifted and of The Association of the Gifted and has served on the Board of Directors of the Florida Association for the Gifted. She has many publications, including 12 co-authored books and 25 book chapters. She was also the co-author, Project Director, and PI of three Jacob K. Javits grants. Previously she was a math and science teacher for 15 years. She has two children and five grandchildren and has retired to Florida.

Visit <https://ndagc.org/event-5680075> or scan the QR code above to register!

APRIL 2024

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Gifted Education Essentials



Gifted Education Essentials EDUC 2000

Instructor: Beth Ustanko
Price for the course: \$80

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

"My student already knows the material in this lesson, what do I do?"
"How do I help my high ability learners reach their full potential?"
"What are the best practices for teaching gifted learners?"

These questions are common for educators when considering the needs gifted and talented students in their classrooms. Whether attendees are educators in a general education setting, gifted and talented education specialists, or administrators this professional development course is designed to help answer these and other essential questions. The webinars which are a key component of this course offer a foundation for understanding the educational, psychological, and advocacy needs of these students.

This 1-credit course will be in an online-asynchronous format and runs from 06/01/2024 - 08/31/2024

For more information or to sign up for the course, use the link below:
<https://apps2.ndsu.edu/dce-course-list/classdetails/ClassObj::35>

LINK EXPIRES JUNE 30th, 2024 at 5:00 PM CST

THIS COURSE IS FOR NDAGC MEMBERS ONLY

NAGC Webinars for Parents and Educators

To see the full list of available webinars and to register, visit

<https://nagc.org/page/webinars>



UConn Confratute 46

Summer learning opportunity for teachers!
Visit <https://confratute.uconn.edu/> to learn more and to register.



Parent Corner: How to Challenge and Enrich Gifted Children at Home

by *Connie Olson and Anna Androver*

Gifted children need extra challenge, a statement often made but summarized well in the article, [The wonderful but weighty challenges of parenting a gifted child](#). We have heard this many times as the parents of gifted children. While parts of us thoroughly agree, another part struggles to come to terms with this concept. There is a difference between challenging a child and having a child do more simply to keep them busy. This is an important difference when considering enrichment activities for your gifted child to engage in. This article explores two parenting perspectives regarding at-home enrichment for gifted children.



Connie's Perspective: I have found self-directed activities to be the most engaging. My child reads books or does projects of interest to him for hours on end. When I suggest a book or project, he will find every reason not to do it. I believe self-directed activities allow him to find his own challenge. My philosophy is that just because our kids are gifted does not mean that they don't also want to be regular kids who explore the world on their terms. I hesitate to overschedule my kids with structured learning activities and prefer activities that take advantage of things they already enjoy doing. They play outside, read what they want, sing, dance, and play with their toys. Occasionally I connect their learning back to an area they are gifted in. (e.g. What is the math involved in this activity?). If you have a similar parenting philosophy, I suggest the following enrichment opportunities for your child:

- Have your child pick a game for family game night.
- Create something from your recycling.
- Give your child a pack of seeds and some dirt so they can experience a garden of their own. They can even (ick!) examine worms and cook something with their harvest!



Anna's Perspective: I have high expectations for my children, but I try to temper that by giving them the freedom to be kids after certain things are met. First, I expect them to do chores. They choose which chores to do on weekdays and I choose on weekends. My eldest (7) also plans and cooks one meal a week for the family with a little help. They also work on a skill they are not confident in (right now it's writing). Additionally, they are enrolled in swimming and Tae Kwon Do. We only do two extra-curriculars a week to give them down time and leave openings for play dates. If they want to try something new, we drop one of the others. Finally, I encourage them to do the things they like. We have a multitude of craft supplies at home: paint, glue, paper, yarn, crochet hooks, latch hooks, etc. Their grandmother will do crafts around them, so they tend to want to try them. I also have more books than there are stars in the sky, so I will often stumble upon my children reading. I even need to tell them to stop and go to bed or come eat. Can you believe it? My hope is they will become competent adults who know how to cook and clean and pursue their desires, but also know when it's a good idea to just relax for a while.

When you talk with parents of gifted children, each has a different philosophy on enrichment activities at home and ways they provide additional challenges for their children. No philosophy can be deemed "the right way" or "the best way" because there are many variables to consider. To find the right mix of enrichment activities we suggest you look at what works best for your child and family dynamics. You can find a plethora of activities online, with local universities that offer kid camps, and with some businesses who cater to parents seeking enrichment activities. If you are not a member of NDAGC, consider becoming a member and getting involved with our GIFTed Gatherings. They are a great place for you and your child to get to know other families! Many enrichment activities can also be found in the parent section of our NDAGC website with your membership login!

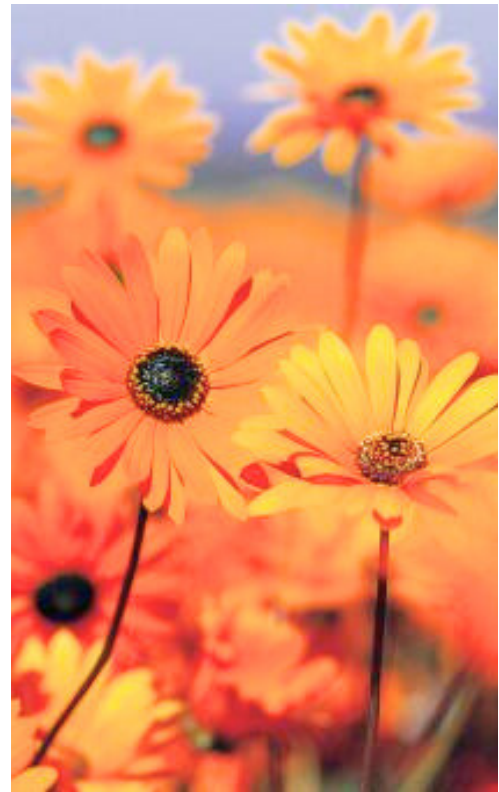
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Teacher Corner: Open Students' Thinking with Bloom's!

by Julie Jaeger

As educators and parents, whether in the classroom or at home, it is important to inspire students to think, and even more important to open their minds to thinking about their thinking. Opportunities to redirect and elevate thinking are ever present, and it is up to us to take advantage of those opportunities.

Bloom's Taxonomy provides a roadmap on how to elevate students' thinking and understanding through a progression of levels. The levels begin with the basic knowledge of a topic, then moves upward through understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and finally synthesizing new information to create a new idea, concept, or conclusion. While Bloom's levels are often seen as a part of the education world, it is equally important to infuse thinking and questioning into everyday situations, making thinking about our thinking a lifelong skill.



Knowledge is the basic academic or descriptive language of the topic. Easy recall of facts requires little thought but places the information in memory to retrieve for use later. How we “reuse, manipulate and connect” this information is where thinking begins.

Understanding broadens that basic information to allow students to communicate and elaborate on what they “know.” They may be able to describe it physically, its use, where it's found, etc.

Application provides students an opportunity to use and observe this new information in a basic format.

Analyzing inspires students to dig deeper into what they know and are able to do, comparing and contrasting to other items, situations, characteristics, etc., and categorizing based on those observations.

Evaluation assesses a value, makes a judgment, or provides a critique based on a set of criteria.

Creation and Synthesis considers what has been learned and how it can be taken to a new level or different use.

*“The formulation of a problem is often more essential than its solution...
To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle,
requires creative imagination and marks real advances.”* Albert Einstein

In the development of the Habits of Mind for Self-Directed Learning, Arthur Costa and Benna Kallick took Einstein’s words to heart when they used Bloom’s Taxonomy to develop their 3 Story Questioning Model to help students become skilled at asking good questions. Using a house to represent the elevation of thinking, the graphic provides students with cue words for each level.

The first floor represents the foundation of knowledge and understanding.

The second floor moves into application and analysis.

The third floor is where they use evaluation, synthesis, and creation, hopefully moving their thinking to the rooftop.

Bloom’s Taxonomy and the 3 Story Model levels of questioning were further combined and expanded as an educator resource which includes question starters, strategies and prompts for tasks at each level.

Bumping up levels of questioning can be intentionally planned and infused into a lesson or activity. It can also occur on the fly when working or playing with kids. A simple summer collection of rocks can provide the opportunity to elevate thinking. While this activity may seem silly at first, it takes a simple rock collection far beyond its normal end.

- Pick one rock from the collection. Observe it and share what you already know. Where might we find this type of rock? Why do you think it has this shape, color, texture, or pattern?
- Choose another rock and share the same.
- Compare and contrast the two rocks making further observations.
- Sort the collection of rocks into groups based on one similar characteristic: large and small, color, texture, etc. There are multiple ways to do this.
- Take one of those groups and “Venn Again”, separating that group of rocks into smaller groups based on a common characteristic. For example, you could separate a group of large rocks based on similar color, shape, or texture.
- Evaluate how these rocks may be used in real life. Would some have more value than others, and why?
- You could end this activity with a final product, tribute, or sales pitch. You could also display one of the rocks as the most valuable rock in your collection.

Opportunities to extend and elevate thinking are present every day in the classroom and at home. It's up to us to take time to listen to our kids and encourage them to ask good questions that help them dig deeper into their thinking. Let Bloom's help student's open and grow their thinking!

Additional Resources

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