GRISWOLD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Superintendent's Update – Week of December March 18, 2013

The community of the Griswold Public Schools educates for excellence by empowering students to become compassionate, confident, creative, and resourceful members of society. - **Griswold 2022**

Nurture your mind with great thoughts; to believe in the heroic makes heroes.

- Benjamin Disraeli

Calendar

Tuesday, March 19 – Board of Education Budget presented to the Board of Finance at Town Hall, 7:00 PM.

- **Wednesday, March 20 – First day of Spring!**
- **Wednesday, March 20 – Middle School Jazz Ensemble Concert in the GMS Cafeteria, 6:30 PM.**
- **Wednesday, March 20 – Building Committee Meeting in the GES Library Center, 7:00 PM.**
- **Friday, March 22 – Deadline to nominate the Griswold Public Schools Instructional Assistant of the Year.**
- **Friday, March 22 – GHS March Madness Dance in the GHS Gym, 7:00 PM.**
- **Monday, March 25 – Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.** ** ***Prior to the meeting the Board will meet at 5:30 PM for a tour of the new GHS Workout Facility in the Back Gym of GHS.*** During the meeting the Board will recognize the GPS Volunteer of the Year – Mary Beth Malin.
- **Tuesday, March 26 – Middle School Musical "Magic to Do" in the GMS Auditorium, 6:30 PM.**
- **Wednesday, March 27 – Instructional Assistants Appreciation Day.** In addition to taking the time to recognize all of our instructional assistants, we will announce the GPS Instructional Assistant of the Year.
- **Wednesday, March 27 – GES PTO Movie Night in the GES Cafeteria, 5:30 PM.**
- **Wednesday, March 27 – GHS Honor Society Induction at GHS, 6:00 PM.**
- **Thursday, March 28 – Professional Development, No School.**
- **Friday, March 29 – Edline grade posting by all teachers in Grades 5-12.**
- **Friday, March 29 – Good Friday, No School.**

Tuesday, April 2 – Public Hearing on the Town and School Budget in the GMS Cafeteria, 7:00 PM. Please attend and make your voice heard on the 2013-14 Budget.

- **Tuesday, April 2 – GHS Trip Preview Concert in the GHS Auditorium, 7:00 PM.**
- **Wednesday, April 3 – "Coffee and Chat" / Superintendent's Advisory Council in the Superintendent's Office at GMS, 7:30 AM or 8:45 AM.**
- **Wednesday, April 3– Building Committee Meeting in the GES Library Media Center, 7:00 PM.**
- **Wednesday, April 3 – GHS Parents Advisory Committee in the GHS Library, 7:00 PM.**
- **Thursday, April 4 – Policy Subcommittee Meeting in the Superintendent's Office, 8:00 AM.**
- **Thursday, April 4 – GMS PTO Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.**
- **Friday, April 5 – Children First Griswold Meeting at GHS (Room 3103), 9:30 AM.**
- **Monday, April 8 – Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.**
- **Tuesday, April 9 – GES PTO Meeting in the GES Library, 6:30 PM.**

- **Wednesday, April 10 – Grade 5 Concert in the GMS Auditorium, 7:00 PM.**
- **Friday, April 12 – Edline grade posting by all teachers in Grades 5-12.**
- **Friday, April 12 – Deadline to nominate the Griswold Public Schools Teacher of the Year.**
- **Monday-Friday, April 15-19 – Spring Vacation Week.** No School.

Hold these dates!

Monday, April 22	**Special Meeting of Board of Finance to Finalize Budget**	Town Hall, 7:00 PM
Monday, May 6	**Annual Town Meeting**	GMS Cafeteria, 7:00 PM

Two tasks for everyone in the district…

We're looking for nominations!
Help us honor one of our deserving
Instructional Assistants
for recognition as the
2013-2014 Griswold Public Schools Instructional Assistant of the Year
The Griswold Instructional Assistant of the Year will then be eligible for recognition as the
2013-14 State of Connecticut Instructional Assistant of the Year

Nomination forms are on the district website.
Nominations are due to Robin Drobiak by Friday, March 22.

We're looking for nominations!
Help us honor one of our deserving
Teachers
for recognition as the
2013-2014 Griswold Public Schools Teacher of the Year
The Griswold Teacher of the Year will then be eligible for recognition as the
2013-14 State of Connecticut Teacher of the Year

Nomination forms are on the district website.
Nominations are due to Robin Drobiak by Friday, April 12.

Notes

Griswold Board of Education Meeting Highlights (3/11/13)

- The Board members were honored in recognition of Connecticut Boards of Education Month.
- The Board reviewed materials produced by the GHS print shop designed to market Griswold High School to prospective tuition students and GMS students.
- The Board approved a request for the Class of 2013 to have an overnight trip to Hershey Park, Pennsylvania.
- The Board approved a request for the Conn Trek week long walk – "Kids Changing America." Students from GES and students from the Regional Multicultural Magnet School in New London will participate in June.

- Tuition rates for sending towns and the children of staff were discussed and set for 2013-14.
- The Board approved Policy 3517.1 – a policy requiring all staff and all visiting adults to wear ID badges during school hours.
- The Board approved the 2013-14 Budget to be presented to the town. The 2013-14 Budget in the amount of $25,148,850 represents a $482,003 increase (1.95%) over the 2012-13 Budget approved at $24,666,847. The Budget will be presented to the Board of Finance on Tuesday, March 19 at the Town Hall at 7:00 PM and at the Public Hearing on Tuesday, April 2 in the GMS Cafeteria at 7:00 PM.
- The district's updated Blood Borne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan was presented to the Board.
- The Board accepted *Griswold 2022,* the district's vision for education in the next 10 years. *Griswold 2022* includes the new district mission, core values and beliefs about learning, and student outcomes to be measured in every classroom, pre K -12.
- Madeline Illinger, Pupil Services Director, presented a report on students who are in out-of-district placements.

Charlotte Danielson describes good teaching under the Common Core…

In a recent interview, Charlotte Danielson discussed her Frameworks and the Common Core. Below are her comments on effective teaching in the era of the Common Core.

When I walk into a classroom, of course I care about what the teacher is doing, but in some ways I care even more about what the students are doing. What's the nature of the task? Are students being invited, or even required, to think? Naturally, that has implications for what the teacher is doing and what the teacher has already done. That is, has the teacher designed learning experiences for kids that engage them in thinking or formulating and testing hypothesizes or challenging one another respectfully or developing an understanding of a concept? You really only know what a teacher is doing when you look at what the students are doing. I also listen carefully to how teachers question students—if they ask kids to explain their thinking, for instance. That's very different from just saying that's the right or wrong answer. It's a very different mindset about wanting to understand the students' thinking and their degree and level of understanding.

Interested in the whole interview? Click here.

Bring this to your advisory group discussion for the good of our students…

If you have an opportunity to speak to students for 10 minutes this week, review the following article with them. It's worth a quick discussion. If you don't have time for a discussion, at least read the article and re-direct student thinking whenever you see a "thought hole" in action.

Best quote from the article: "the subconscious mind can absorb **20 million bits of information** through the five senses in a mere second. By intelligent design, data is filtered down so that the conscious mind focuses on **only 7 to 40 bits.** This is a mental shortcut."

It's these shortcuts that cause our students problems. Their reality comes from a "tiny sliver" of information. Help them see how their inaccurate perception can lead to problems if they don't look beyond the shortcuts.

Filling in Thought Holes: An Invaluable Social & Emotional Learning Lesson

by Renee Jain *Eductopia.org*

"I didn't get invited to Craig's party . . . I'm such a loser."

"I missed the bus . . . nothing ever goes my way."

"My math teacher wants to see me . . . I must be in trouble."

These are the thoughts of a high school student named Jeremy. You wouldn't know it from his thoughts, but Jeremy is actually pretty popular and gets decent grades. Unfortunately, in the face of adversity, Jeremy makes a common error; he falls into "thought holes." Thought holes, or cognitive distortions, are skewed perceptions of reality. They are negative interpretations of a situation based on poor assumptions. For Jeremy, thought holes cause intense emotional distress.

Although all kids blow things out of proportion or jump to conclusions at times, distorting reality is not innocuous. Studies show that thought holes can provoke self-defeating ideas (i.e., "I'm a loser") that trigger self-defeating emotions (i.e., pain, anxiety, malaise) that, in turn, cause self-defeating actions (i.e., acting out, skipping school). Left unchecked, inaccurate thoughts can also lead to more severe conditions, such as depression.

Fortunately, with a brief social and emotional learning lesson, we can teach students how to fill in their thought holes and view the world in a more accurate light. The lesson begins with an understanding of what causes distortions of reality.

We Create Our Own (Often Distorted) Reality

One person walks down a busy street and notices graffiti on the wall, dirt on the pavement and a couple fighting. Another person walks down the same street and notices a refreshing breeze, an ice cream cart and a smile from a stranger. We each absorb select scenes in our environment through which we interpret a situation. In essence, we create our own reality by that to which we give attention.

Why don't we just interpret situations based on all of the information? It's not possible; there are simply too many stimuli to process. In fact, the subconscious mind can absorb 20 million bits of information through the five senses in a mere second. By intelligent design, data is filtered down so that the conscious mind focuses on only 7 to 40 bits. This is a mental shortcut.

Shortcuts keep us sane by preventing sensory overload. Shortcuts help us judge situations quickly. Shortcuts also, however, leave us vulnerable to errors in perception. Because we perceive reality based on a tiny sliver of information, if that information is unbalanced (e.g., ignores the positive and focuses on the negative), we are left with a skewed perception of reality, or a thought hole.

Eight Common Thought Holes

Not only are we susceptible to errors in thinking, but we also tend to make the same errors over and over again. The next part of the lesson outlines these common thought holes; this familiarity makes it easier for students to identify and avoid distortions in the future.

Seminal work by psychologist Aaron Beck, often referred to as the father of cognitive therapy, and his former student, David Burns, uncovered several common thought holes as seen below.

Jumping to conclusions: judging a situation based on assumptions as opposed to definitive facts

Mental filtering: paying attention to the negative details in a situation while ignoring the positive

Magnifying: magnifying negative aspects in a situation

Minimizing: minimizing positive aspects in a situation

Personalizing: assuming the blame for problems even when you are not primarily responsible

Externalizing: pushing the blame for problems onto others even when you are primarily responsible

Overgeneralizing: concluding that one bad incident will lead to a repeated pattern of defeat

Emotional reasoning: assuming your negative emotions translate into reality, or confusing feelings with facts

Filling in Thought Holes with the 3Cs

Once students understand why one falls into thought holes and that several common ones exist, they are ready to start filling them in! When faced with adversity, students can evaluate thoughts using the 3Cs:

Check for common thought holes

Collect evidence to paint an accurate picture

Challenge the original thoughts

Let's run through the 3Cs using Jeremy as an example. Jeremy was recently asked by his math teacher to chat after class. He immediately thought, "I must be in trouble," and began to feel distressed. Using the 3Cs, Jeremy should first *check* to see if he had fallen into one of the common thought holes. Based on the list above, it seems he jumped to a conclusion.

Jeremy's next step is to *collect* as much data or evidence as possible to create a more accurate picture of the situation. His evidence may look something like the following statements: "I've always received good grades in math class." "Teachers sometimes ask you to chat after class when something is wrong." "I've never been in trouble before." "The math teacher has always been kind to me." "The math teacher didn't seem upset when he asked me to chat."

With all the evidence at hand, Jeremy can now *challenge* his original thought. The best (and most entertaining) way to do this is for Jeremy to have a debate with himself. On one side is the Jeremy who believes he is in big trouble with his math teacher; on the other side is the Jeremy who believes that nothing is really wrong. On paper or mentally, Jeremy could use the evidence he collected to duke it out with himself! In the end, this type of disputation increases accurate thinking and improves emotional well being.

In this lesson, students learn that thoughts, even distorted ones, affect their emotional well being. They learn that accurate thinking is a tool to redress or avoid thought holes. Above all, they learn that one can choose which thoughts to focus on, and in this, there is power. As the pioneering psychologist and philosopher, William James, once said, "The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to **choose** one thought over another."

Thoughts

We've got to challenge our students!

I am sharing two articles this week that go hand in hand. It is clear that in a globally connected world there are skills that students need in order to be successful and competitive. One area that is a clear path towards success in the future is the ability to master a second language. The article below from the *New York Times* supports that notion but goes on to say that mastery of a second language actually makes children smarter. **Shame on us as a society for all but eliminating our students' opportunities for world language acquisition in the elementary grades.** It is clear that we must work as a district to expand our offerings in world language – at least in grades 5-12.

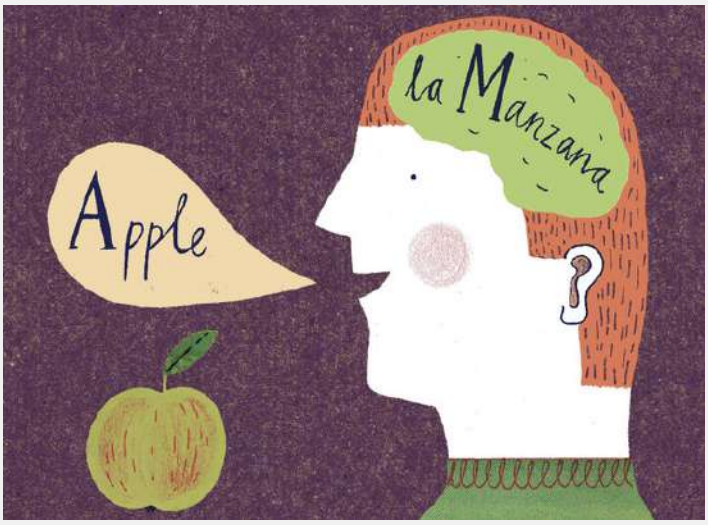
The second article admonishes us to beware our expectations of students. If our expectations are high, students can deliver what we expect. If our expectations are low, students deliver what we expect!

From Article #1:
Being bilingual, it turns out, makes you smarter.

From Article #2:
…the human brain is incredibly malleable and… individuals can nearly always outperform our expectations for them.

Why Bilinguals Are Smarter

New York Times By YUDHIJIT BHATTACHARJEE



SPEAKING two languages rather than just one has obvious practical benefits in an increasingly globalized world. But in recent years, scientists have begun to show that the advantages of bilingualism are even more fundamental than being able to converse with a wider range of people. Being bilingual, it turns out, makes you smarter. It can have a profound effect on your brain, improving cognitive skills not related to language and even shielding against dementia in old age.

This view of bilingualism is remarkably different from the understanding of bilingualism through much of the 20th century. Researchers, educators and policy makers long considered a second language to be an interference, cognitively speaking, that hindered a child's academic and intellectual development.

They were not wrong about the interference: there is ample evidence that in a bilingual's brain both language systems are active even when he is using only one language, thus creating situations in which one system obstructs the other. But this interference, researchers are finding out, isn't so much a handicap as a blessing in disguise. It forces the brain to resolve internal conflict, giving the mind a workout that strengthens its cognitive muscles.

Bilinguals, for instance, seem to be more adept than monolinguals at solving certain kinds of mental puzzles. In a 2004 study by the psychologists Ellen Bialystok and Michelle Martin-Rhee, bilingual and monolingual preschoolers were asked to sort blue circles and red squares presented on a computer screen into two digital bins — one marked with a blue square and the other marked with a red circle.

In the first task, the children had to sort the shapes by color, placing blue circles in the bin marked with the blue square and red squares in the bin marked with the red circle. Both groups did this with comparable ease. Next, the children were asked to sort by shape, which was more challenging because it required placing the images in a bin marked with a conflicting color. The bilinguals were quicker at performing this task.

The collective evidence from a number of such studies suggests that the bilingual experience improves the brain's so-called executive function — a command system that directs the attention processes that we use for planning, solving problems and performing various other mentally demanding tasks. These processes include ignoring distractions to stay focused, switching attention willfully from one thing to another and holding information in mind — like remembering a sequence of directions while driving.

Why does the tussle between two simultaneously active language systems improve these aspects of cognition? Until recently, researchers thought the bilingual advantage stemmed primarily from an ability for *inhibition* that was honed by the exercise of suppressing one language system: this suppression, it was thought, would help train the bilingual mind to ignore distractions in other contexts. But that explanation increasingly appears to be inadequate, since studies have shown that bilinguals perform better than monolinguals even at tasks that do not require inhibition, like threading a line through an ascending series of numbers scattered randomly on a page.

The key difference between bilinguals and monolinguals may be more basic: a heightened ability to monitor the environment. “Bilinguals have to switch languages quite often — you may talk to your father in one language and to your mother in another language,” says Albert Costa, a researcher at the University of Pompeu Fabra in Spain. “It requires keeping track of changes around you in the same way that we monitor our surroundings when driving.” In a study comparing German-Italian bilinguals with Italian monolinguals on monitoring tasks, Mr. Costa and his colleagues found that the bilingual subjects not only performed better, but they also did so with less activity in parts of the brain involved in monitoring, indicating that they were more efficient at it.

The bilingual experience appears to influence the brain from infancy to old age (and there is reason to believe that it may also apply to those who learn a second language later in life).

In a 2009 study led by Agnes Kovacs of the International School for Advanced Studies in Trieste, Italy, 7-month-old babies exposed to two languages from birth were compared with peers raised with one language. In an initial set of trials, the infants were presented with an audio cue and then shown a puppet on one side of a screen. Both infant groups learned to look at that side of the screen in anticipation of the puppet. But in a later set of trials, when the puppet began appearing on the opposite side of the screen, the babies exposed to a bilingual environment quickly learned to switch their anticipatory gaze in the new direction while the other babies did not.

Bilingualism’s effects also extend into the twilight years. In a recent study of 44 elderly Spanish-English bilinguals, scientists led by the neuropsychologist Tamar Gollan of the University of California, San Diego, found that individuals with a higher degree of bilingualism — measured through a comparative evaluation of proficiency in each language — were more resistant than others to the onset of dementia and other symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease: the higher the degree of bilingualism, the later the age of onset.

Nobody ever doubted the power of language. But who would have imagined that the words we hear and the sentences we speak might be leaving such a deep imprint?

Teach Up for Excellence – *Educational Leadership* By CAROL ANN TOMLINSON/EDWIN LOU JAVIUS,

All students deserve equitable access to an engaging and rigorous curriculum.

Within the lifetime of a significant segment of the population, schools in the United States operated under the banner of "separate but equal" opportunity. In time, and at considerable cost, we came to grips with the reality that separate is seldom equal. But half a century later, and with integration a given, many of our students still have separate and drastically unequal learning experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Many of our schools are overwhelmingly attended by low-income and racially and linguistically diverse students, whereas nearby schools are largely attended by students from more affluent and privileged backgrounds (Kozol, 2005). Another kind of separateness exists *within* schools. It's frequently the case that students attend classes that correlate highly with learners' race and socioeconomic status, with less privileged students in lower learning groups or tracks and more privileged students in more advanced ones (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

The logic behind separating students by what educators perceive to be their ability is that it enables teachers to provide students with the kind of instruction they need. Teachers can remediate students who perform at a lower level of proficiency and accelerate those who perform at a higher level. All too often, however, students in lower-level classrooms receive a level of education that ensures they will remain at the tail end of the learning spectrum. High-end students may (or may not) experience rich and challenging learning opportunities, and students in the middle too often encounter uninspired learning experiences that may not be crippling but are seldom energizing. No group comes to know, understand, and value the others. Schools in which this arrangement is the norm often display an "us versus them" attitude that either defines the school environment or dwells just below the surface of daily exchanges.

Difficult to Defend

Research finds that sorting, this 21st century version of school segregation, correlates strongly with student race and economic status and predicts and contributes to student outcomes, with students in higher-level classes typically experiencing better teachers, curriculum, and achievement levels than peers in lower-level classes (Carbonaro & Gamoran, 2003). Further, when lower-performing students experience curriculum and instruction focused on meaning and understanding, they increase their skills at least as much as their higher-achieving peers do (Educational Research Service, 1992).

These findings are even more problematic when combined with our current understanding that the human brain is incredibly malleable and that individuals can nearly always outperform our expectations for them. The sorting mechanisms often used in school are not only poor predictors of success in life, but also poor measures of what a young person can accomplish, given the right context (Dweck, 2007). Virtually all students would benefit from the kind of curriculum and instruction we have often reserved for advanced learners—that is, curriculum and instruction designed to engage students, with a focus on meaning making, problem solving, logical thinking, and transfer of learning (National Research Council, 1999).

In addition, the demographic reality is that low-income students of color and English language learners will soon become the majority of students in our schools (Center for Public Education, 2007; Gray & Fleischman, 2004). Given that low-level classes are largely made up of students from these groups and that students in such classes fare poorly in terms of academic achievement, the societal cost of continuing to support sorting students is likely to be high (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Finally, Americans tend to be justly proud of the democratic ideals that represent this nation. We nourish those ideals when we invest in systems that enable each individual to achieve his or her best (Gardner, 1961). In contrast, we undercut those ideals when the systems we create contribute to a widening gap between those who have privilege and those who do not (Fullan, 2001).

Too few students—including those who excel academically—regularly have education experiences that stimulate and stretch them. *Teaching up* is one key approach that teachers can use to regularly make such experiences available to all students, regardless of their backgrounds and starting points.

Seven Principles of Teaching Up

To create classrooms that give students equal access to excellence, educators at all levels need to focus on seven interrelated principles.

1. Accept that human differences are not only normal but also desirable. Each person has something of value to contribute to the group, and the group is diminished without that contribution. Teachers who teach up create a community of learners in which everyone works together to benefit both individuals and the group. These teachers know that the power of learning is magnified when the classroom functions effectively as a microcosm of a world in which we want to live. They craft culturally and economically inclusive classrooms that take into account the power of race, culture, and economic status in how students construct meaning; and they support students in making meaning in multiple ways (Gay, 2000).

2. Develop a growth mind-set. Providing equity of access to excellence through teaching up has its roots in a teacher's mind-set about the capacity of each learner to succeed (Dweck, 2007). It requires doggedly challenging the preconception that high ability dwells largely in more privileged students. The greatest barrier to learning is often not what the student knows, but what the teacher expects of the student (Good, 1987).

A teacher with a growth mind-set creates learning experiences that reinforce the principle that effort rather than background is the greatest determinant of success, a notion that can dramatically help students who experience

institutional and instructional racism. A growth mind-set also creates classrooms that persistently demonstrate to students and teachers alike that when a student works hard and intelligently, the result is consistent growth that enables people to accomplish their goals.

Teachers who teach up provide students with clear learning targets, guidelines, and feedback as well as a safe learning environment that supports them as they take their next steps in growth, no matter what their current level of performance is. Through words, actions, and caring, the teacher conveys to students "I know you have the capacity to do what's required for success; therefore, I expect much of you. Because I expect much, I'll support your success in every way I can. I'm here to be your partner in achievement."

3. Work to understand students' cultures, interests, needs, and perspectives. People are shaped by their backgrounds, and respecting students means respecting their backgrounds—including their race and culture. Teaching any student well means striving to understand how that student approaches learning and creating an environment that is respectful of and responsive to what each student brings to the classroom.

Many of us know the Golden Rule: Treat others as you would want to be treated. In classrooms that work for a wide spectrum of people, the Platinum Rule works better: Treat others as *they* want to be treated. This principle relates not only to teacher and student interactions, but also to teacher choices about curriculum and instruction.

For teachers who teach up, understanding students' learning profiles is the driving force behind instructional planning and delivery. A learning profile refers to how individuals learn most efficiently and effectively. How we learn is shaped by a variety of factors, including culture, gender, environmental preferences, and personal strengths or weaknesses. Teachers can talk with their students about preferred approaches to learning, offer varied routes to accomplishing required goals, and observe which options students select and how those options support learning (or don't). Teachers who teach up select instructional strategies and approaches in response to what they know of their students' interests and learning preferences, rather than beginning with a strategy and hoping it works. Teaching up is not about hope. It's about purposeful instructional planning that aims at ensuring high-level success for each student.

4. Create a base of rigorous learning opportunities. Teachers who teach up help students form a conceptual understanding of the disciplines, connect what they learn to their own lives, address significant problems using essential knowledge and skills, collaborate with peers, examine varied perspectives, and create authentic products for meaningful audiences. These teachers develop classrooms that are literacy-rich and that incorporate a wide range of resources that attend to student interests and support student learning.

Teachers who teach up also ensure that students develop the skills of independence, self-direction, collaboration, and production that are necessary for success. They commend excellence as a way of life and demonstrate to learners the satisfaction that comes from accepting a challenge and investing one's best effort in achieving it. They know that when tasks help students make sense of important ideas, are highly relevant to students' life experiences, and are designed at a moderate level of challenge, students are willing to do the hard work that is the hallmark of excellence. These teachers scaffold each student as he or she takes the next step toward excellence.

For example, a high school teacher began a study of *Romeo and Juliet* by having students think of instances in books, movies, TV shows, or their own lives when people's perceptions of others made it difficult to have certain friends, be in love with a particular person, or feel supported in their marriage. In this culturally diverse class, every student offered examples. They were fascinated with how often this theme played out across cultures, and they eagerly talked about what the examples had in common. As the teacher continued to guide them in relating the play to their own examples, the students remained highly engaged with a classic that might otherwise have seemed remote to them. When students make cultural and linguistic connections with content, they display more sophisticated thinking about essential learning goals (Gibbons, 2002).

5. Understand that students come to the classroom with varied points of entry into a curriculum and move through it at different rates. For intellectual risk-taking to occur, classrooms need to feel safe to students from a full range of cultural, racial, and economic backgrounds. Teachers who teach up understand that some students may feel racially and culturally isolated in their classes. Therefore, they find multiple ways for students to display their insights for the group. These teachers understand that every student needs "peacock" moments of success so classmates accept them as intellectual contributors.

For instance, a teacher might observe a student in a small-group setting who is questioning his peers about the solution to a math problem they are pursuing because it does not seem correct to him. A teacher who overhears the exchange might simply say to the group, "It seems important to me that Anthony raised the question he posed to you. His thinking brought to your attention the need to think further about your solution. The ability to ask a challenging question at the right time is a good talent to have." Elizabeth Cohen (1994) calls that *attribution of status*.

Teaching up means monitoring student growth so that when students fall behind, misunderstand, or move beyond expectations, teachers are primed to take appropriate instructional action. They guide all students in working with the "melody line" of the curriculum—the essential knowledge, understanding, and skills—while ensuring ample opportunity for individuals and small groups to work with "accompaniments"—that is, scaffolding for students who need additional work with prerequisites and extending depth for students who need to move ahead. For example, some students might need additional work with academic vocabulary, the cornerstone skills of literacy and numeracy, or self-awareness and self-direction. Other students will explore and apply understandings at more expert levels.

Teaching up also calls on teachers to use formative assessment data to guide instructional planning, scaffold the learning of struggling students, and extend learning for advanced students. In other words, teaching up requires both high expectations and high personalization.

For instance, in a middle school science study of simple machines, the teacher made certain to preteach key vocabulary to students who found academic vocabulary challenging. Students then examined and analyzed several Rube Goldberg contraptions, watched and discussed a video, and read designated sections from a text. This multimodal approach ensured that everyone had a solid baseline of experience with concepts they would then explore.

Following a formative assessment on the topic, students worked on one of two tasks. Students who needed additional reinforcement of how simple machines worked went on a guided tour of the school and speculated which simple machines were involved in mechanisms they came across in their tour, such as an elevator. Later, they used print and web sources to confirm or revise their projections. Students who had already demonstrated solid mastery of the topic worked in teams to identify a problem at school or in their lives that three or more simple machines working together could solve; they also used web and text sources to confirm or revise their projections.

6. Create flexible classroom routines and procedures that attend to learner needs. Teachers who teach up realize that only classrooms that operate flexibly enough to make room for a range of student needs can effectively address the differences that are inevitable in any group of learners. They see that such flexibility is also a prerequisite for complex student thinking and student application of content (Darling-Hammond, Bransford, LePage, & Hammerness, 2007). Teachers who teach up carefully select times when the class works as a whole, when students work independently, and when students work in groups. They teach their students when and how to help one another as well as how to guide their own work effectively. This kind of flexibility is commonly found in kindergarten classrooms—a strong indication that it's within reach of all grade levels.

An elementary math teacher in one such classroom regularly used formative assessment to chart students' progress. On the basis of what she learned, she built into her instructional plans opportunities for small-group instruction in which she could teach in new ways concepts that some students found difficult, extend the thinking of students who had mastered the concepts, and help students connect what they were learning to various interest areas.

Occasionally, she modified the daily schedule so she could work with a portion of the class more intensively. In those instances, some students might work on writing assignments or with longer-term projects in the morning while the teacher met with a given group on a math topic and guided their work. In the afternoon, students would reverse assignments so that she could work with the morning's writers on math. She found that working with the small groups at key times in the learning cycle significantly increased the achievement of virtually all the students in the class.

In the same vein, a team of high school teachers took turns hosting a study room after school on Monday through Thursday. They expected students who hadn't completed their homework to attend. They also invited students who were having difficulty with course requirements and encouraged all students to come if they wanted additional support. Many students did. The sessions, which were less formal than class, also promoted sound relationships between the teachers and their students and among the students themselves.

7. Be an analytical practitioner. Teachers who teach up consistently reflect on classroom procedures, practices, and pedagogies for evidence that they are working for each student—and modify them when they're not. They are the students of their students. They are vigilant about noticing when students "do right," and they provide positive descriptive feedback so students can successfully recall or replicate the skill, knowledge, or behaviors in question. They empower students to teach them, as teachers, what makes students most successful. They share with students their aspirations for student success. They talk with students about what is and isn't working in the classroom, and they enlist students' partnership in crafting a classroom that maximizes the growth of each individual and of the group as a whole.
Consider a group of primary teachers who conducted individual assessments of kindergartners' understanding of symmetrical and asymmetrical figures and then discussed what they observed. They realized that vocabulary played a large role in the success of students who mastered the concept. As a result, they were better positioned to support the growth of students who were initially less successful by adding vocabulary practice to math instruction.

Or, consider a middle school teacher who talked often with his students about his confidence that they were engineers of their own success. To reinforce that point, he carefully observed students during whole-class, small-group, and independent work. He'd make comments privately to students as he moved among them or as he stood at the door when they entered or left the room: "Josh, you provided leadership today when your group got off task. I wanted you to know it made a difference." "Ariela, you stuck with the work today when it was tough. Good job!" "Logan, are you still on track to bring in a draft of your paper tomorrow so you'll have a chance to polish it before it's due next week?"

A Challenge Worth Taking

In her provocative book, *Wounded by School*, Kirsten Olson (2009) concludes that perhaps the deepest wounds schools inflict on students are wounds of underestimation. We underestimate students when they come to us with skills and experiences that differ from the ones we expected and we conclude they're incapable of complex work. We underestimate students when they fall short of expectations because they don't understand the school game and we determine that they lack motivation. We underestimate them when we allow them to shrink silently into the background of the action in the classroom. We underestimate them, too, when we assume they're doing well in school because they earn high grades, and we praise them for reaching a performance level that required no risk or struggle.

Classrooms that teach up function from the premise that student potential is like an iceberg—most of it is obscured from view—and that high trust, high expectations, and a high-support environment will reveal in time what's hidden.
Martin Luther King Jr. (1965) reminded us that human beings are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality.

That truth has never been more evident than it is today. Schools have the still-untapped possibility of helping all kinds of learners become what they ought to be by developing the skill—and will—to proliferate classrooms in which equal access to excellence is a reality for all learners.

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Never make the mistake of underestimating any child, any time, any day.

Have a great week!
Paul K. Smith

It's not who you are that holds you back; it's who you think you're not.
~ Unknown