

SCOPE

NEWSLETTER
OF THE
NAGC
CURRICULUM
STUDIES
NETWORK

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR
Gifted Children

From the Editor

Although leaves are falling from the trees, autumn is still a time of new beginnings for teachers with new faces in our classrooms. If we're lucky, if we're challenging ourselves at teachers and learners, then we have new content to master, new curriculum to compose, new perspectives to consider, and new instructional models to experiment with each unit of study. Eager eyes are staring up at us **all day long, shining with curiosity, hopeful, waiting to find inspiration and encouragement.** I hope you will come to this Fall 2010 edition of SCOPE, "Seeing Our Classrooms Through Fresh Eyes" ready for inspiration and encouragement as well. An aspiring teacher, Marko Cristal, shares his first impressions of a classroom and what he learned about the challenges and rewards of being a teacher, how he moved from a student to conceptualizing the true vocation and passion required to become an amazing teacher. Back by popular demand, I've included the second installment of an article pertaining to *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank. Last edition, I chronicled how I taught Anne's story, analyzing her identity as a writer. This time, I'll share the second reading guide and student responses to the unit.

-Leighann Pennington, editor

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NAGC Curriculum Network

2010

Network Leadership

Outgoing Chair: Carol Ann Williams

Current Chair: Sally Dobyns

Newsletter Editor: Leighann Pennington

Layout Editor: Brianna Pennington

From the Network Chair

My time as chair of the curriculum network is coming to a close and I have enjoyed every minute of it! Every year I have continued to grow as a teacher, as a thinking person, as a wife and mother, and soon, as a grandmother. It encourages me to see young and old students in my post-graduate classroom; they are fresh and eager and ready to engage today's youth. They feel connected in so many ways to the world and they share that connection with their students. **As a member of NAGC, it has been a privilege to meet, discuss and share new ideas with all of you.** This November will prove to be another exciting time to share and talk again with like-minded individuals who all share a common goal of helping children reach their true potential. Our network's sessions are jam-packed with new ideas and well researched strategies to empower you to help them. On Friday evening at 7 p.m., please come to our Annual Curriculum Awards Night and meet the designers of fabulous new curriculums for the gifted. They will share their ideas and insights with you along with samples of student products and lessons. Our annual membership meeting will be held on Saturday morning. That will start another great day of diverse offerings for you from all the networks. At Sunday morning's Super Sessions, we will be highlighting Carol Ann Tomlinson and the Parallel Curriculum Project & 21st Century Skills, and also Shelbi Cole, et al., with Writing Mathematics Curriculum Grounded in Models of Gifted Education, Project M3. I would also like you to come out and meet our Chair Elect, Dr. Sally Dobyns. **Thank you to all who inspired and helped me during my tenure.** See you in Atlanta! ~Carol Ann (see the last page for more Curr. Stud-

Sneak Peak: NAGC Conference 2010

Curriculum Studies sessions to check out in Atlanta!

NAGC's Annual Convention in Atlanta, Georgia:
"Great Minds Leading the Way..."



What should you check out first when you arrive in Atlanta?

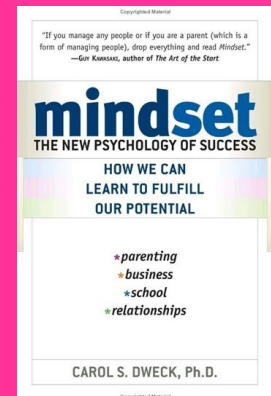
Have you met any Nobel Laureates lately? Well, now here's your chance at Thursday night's opening session, "**Reaching for the Stars: Perspectives on Finding the Next Generation of STEM Innovators.**" Nobel Prize in Physics Laureate Leon Lederman, a "modern day Leonardo da Vinci," will be the keynote speaker.

You've read her work, now go and hear her speak!

On Saturday, you won't want to miss the general session presented by Carol Dweck, psychology professor and researcher at Stanford University and author of *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. The session, entitled, "**Mindsets, Praise, and Gifted Education: How Our Messages Can Help or Hinder the Development of Talent**" should shed new light on the relationship between intelligence, motivation, and achievement for both our high and low-performing gifted students.

Get Creative on Saturday Afternoon!

This year at the convention, creativity is an integral emphasis, so you won't want to miss the Saturday afternoon general session, the E. Paul Torrance Creativity Lecture entitled "**The Gifted Empire Strikes Back: What Role Does Gifted Education Play in the 21st Century?**" The panel of presenters, including Joe Renzulli, Jim Gallagher, Robert Root-Bernstein and Arthur M. Horne, will address issues such as how our field is unique and gifted education's responsibility to innovate and improve the larger field of education.



Mini-Keynotes: On Friday morning, you'll want to be three places at once!



You will likely have a hard time deciding between these three mini-keynote sessions, including panels on relevant topics moderated by experts in the field including Joyce Van Tassel-Baska ("**Best Practices for Working with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Gifted Students**"). If you're interested in creativity's role in the 21st century or differentiating using technology, check out the other two mini-keynote sessions!

A Fresh Perspective on Classroom Life: Through the Eyes of an Aspiring Teacher

Introduction: Do you remember the first time you stepped inside a classroom to observe another teacher? The first time you met a teacher who had mastered the craft? Perhaps that teacher helped you to realize how far you must journey to become a truly amazing teacher. Go ahead, admit it—that teacher inspired you, yes, and maybe even scared you a little, because you realized: “Oh no...I have a long way to go.”

Lao-Tzu once said something to the effect of: “The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” We all have to start somewhere, so don’t be afraid to take that first step. Last spring, I had the privilege to meet a college student from the University of California—Irvine (UCI) who is taking his first steps toward becoming a teacher. I asked him to share his thoughts with you because his enthusiasm for discovering the career of teaching is infectious! I think all of us teachers wish we could be those fresh-faced innocents, just embarking on our teaching journeys, idealistic, full of ideas and energy. Marko Cristal reflected on his experience as a gifted high school student as he observed classes, led discussion groups, and helped students individually. He observed many English and history classes full of lively middle-school students and this is what he learned... ~**From the Editor**

From Student to Teacher by Marko Cristal

Going through the educational system, it’s hard to imagine that our teachers don’t know everything. It’s hard to imagine that those teachers were once students impatiently waiting for the sweet sound of the last bell. Even more difficult to fathom is the time when our teachers began their careers to become educators. This is an interesting transition period where the student moves from taking notes to planning lessons. I find myself here, a 20 year old student at the University of California, Irvine, working every day to become a teacher. Yet unlike many of my friends who dream of becoming doctors, lawyers, and engineers, I find my career path to be more difficult, less straightforward, because teaching is something that cannot be fully learned from books and lectures, but requires experience. Over the course of my spring quarter at UCI I was able to be a tutor in Ms. Pennington’s 6th grade English class at Tarbut V’ Torah for a total of 40 hours. I observed Mr. Fellowes’ History class as well.

During this time, I found a true passion in teaching and learned vital lessons from my master teacher. The two most valuable lessons that I learned include:

1. the importance of getting to know each student as an individual, and
2. the significance of classroom management.

Getting to know a student on a personal level cannot be emphasized enough when it comes to unlocking a student’s potential. Each

“Getting to know a student on a personal level cannot be emphasized enough when it comes to unlocking a student’s potential.”



student has their own set of strengths and weaknesses, their own desire to learn, and different methods in which they learn the best. During my first few days of classroom observation, the 6th graders were working on persuasive speeches. They chose a topic that was interesting to them. Within a few class periods, I was able to help a student, let’s call her Vicky, with the organization of her paper. From discussion and observation, I’d learned that Vicky was talkative but also easily distracted, so one day, I walked over to her and asked how her paper was coming along. She immediately started explaining all her different ideas and showing me pictures that she intended to use in order to illustrate her speech’s topic, “Animal Abuse.”

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After she shared the pictures, I then proceeded to ask: How would you present your argument? She thought about it and then we were able to discuss her ideas and write them down on paper. Building a relationship with the students and understanding their personalities is an important aspect to guide every student to his or her full potential.

“Classroom management was a lesson that took me by surprise.”

While getting to know students is important, classroom management was a lesson that took me by surprise. This concept never occurred to me as being important. I personally have been in classrooms lacking good classroom management definitely inhibited the learning of the students.

Every time I walked into Ms. Pennington's class, the students were excited to see me. However, as soon as the bell rang, the students would get out their journals. A song would be playing and they would write what the music meant to them. By doing this daily routine, the students would know exactly when class begins. The routine, “song warm-up,” would get them mentally prepared to focus on their studies. Being explicit, having a routine, and treating students according to their age are all things that I was exposed to during my time at the school where I observed.

On another note, one of the most rewarding aspects of tutoring was seeing student's work and how much progress they made. In the short amount of time that I was there, I managed to help them achieve their own goals. Every day I felt that I had helped at least one student become a better learner. In one discussion group, Ms. Pennington asked me to have the students make connections between Aesop's fables and the book they were reading, *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. At first, I asked them if they noticed any similarities between the fables they read and the novel. As they presented their ideas, I asked them to back up their suggestions with specific quotes from the texts. By the end of the discussion, most of the students made sure that they added evidence to back up their thoughts.

At the end of the day, I had a feeling of inspiration and achievement, as I helped these students reinforce their argumentative skills. While I still have a long road ahead of me before I can become like the teachers that made a positive impact on my life, experiences such as these are truly life-changing. It's not every day that you are able to have an opportunity to be on the other side of the classroom, observing and learning useful techniques about how to lead a classroom.



A Fresh Perspective on Anne Frank: In the Words of Students

by Leighann Pennington, Editor



Every day we begin English class by writing in our journals during “song warm-up.” We listen to a song and write whatever comes into our head, such as visual image or what we feel that day. Many students have bloomed into poets through this process. As she answered questions on the Anne Frank Reading Guide, one student, Dina wrote: *“Writing is a good experience for me when I write in my journal for song warm-up. I feel like I can write anything I want to; nobody will judge me. Music definitely inspires me to write. Slower songs are better for writing; they get you in a writing mood.”* Arielle wrote about how writing and art can help us reflect on our feelings and feel less alone in the world: *“When I look at an old writing, I like to reflect on them. I like it when I was feeling super happy or super sad and the writing makes you go back to that feeling. If I felt alone in the world, first I would write and paint. When I don't feel like myself, I do art. It helps me because I can truly express myself.”* Writing each day and reflecting on what it means to be a writer helps students become more fluent writers who no longer hesitate to put pen to paper. Sometimes writing can be scary because we have to confront ourselves and look at those big questions: Who am I? What am I thinking and feeling? The questions on the Anne Frank Study Guide allowed Dina to reflect on her own writing process. The same question also urged Dina to reflect on what it means to truly be a writer and how you could affect the world: *“To be a writer means that you have to be respectful of other people and other cultures. Anybody could be a writer as long as other people would read their work or comment on it.”* *Continued on page 5...*

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Many students read *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank in middle school or ninth grade, peak adolescent years. This is the time when students are formulating their identities and trying on personas to find out who they will be. As you may know, Anne did not always get along with her teachers. She was an unapologetic “chatterbox” and this annoyed one of her teachers who called her “Miss Quack-Quack,” not fondly. Anne responded to that insensitive teacher by writing a hilarious essay about a family of ducks. Later in her diary, as she matures, Anne reflects on her bubbly, silly public self, and her private self, who is thoughtful and serious. I hope that you’ll stop and wonder today, “Is there an Anne in my class? A sensitive child, a writer with great potential who longs to release her true self and true talents?” Will you be the teacher who draws a child out of his or her shell and into the world of intellectual inquiry and emotional expression? The questions composed for the Anne Frank Reading Guide can aid you as a teacher with this challenging yet fulfilling task.

“To be a writer means that you have to be respectful of other people and other cultures. Anybody could be a writer as long as other people would read their work or comment on it.”



However, before I share the reading guide, I must comment on two significant reasons for reading Anne Frank with your students, identity formation and cultural literacy. In the previous edition’s article, I mentioned that, when presented from a certain angle, Anne’s words can help students develop their identities in general and more specifically, identities as writers. The identity of a writer can be useful for everyone because writing teaches us to *be introspective and self-aware*, which is important for students navigating adolescence and making important decisions about which activities to participate in, which friends to hang out with, even which colleges to attend and careers to pursue. Further, *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank is important as both a book and a cultural artifact. Around the world, there are 31 million copies (and counting) of the *Diary* in print, translated into over 50 languages. **To be a culturally literate citizen of the world, we should read and become familiar with Anne Frank’s story.**

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“Is there an Anne in my class? A sensitive child, a writer with great potential who longs to release her true self and true talents?”

Excerpts from the Reading Guide and Sample Student Work What do students have to say about Anne’s story? Read on to find out.

How inspired were students by the Anne Frank Reading Guide? Follow along below with sample questions from the reading guide and answers written by 7th grade students. Would you like a copy of the Anne Frank Reading Guide? Please feel free to email me at

projectaspire@gmail.com – I would love to share this resource with you!



On page two, Anne wrote: “I want to bring out all kinds of things that lie buried deep in my heart.” Does writing help you do this?

“Yes, I get out feelings and thoughts without being judged when I write. It is a form of communication that makes me feel free. Writing is a great help.” ~Dora

On page 123, Anne says that paper is patient. Have you ever found the process of writing on paper a good experience? Share about your experience. What do you think it means to be a writer?

“Writing is a good experience for me. It shows that I have different styles of communication with myself, and I cannot be judged by someone when I write down my feelings.” ~Dora

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On page 127, Anne feels confused upon looking back on the “old Anne,” such as how she felt before about situations and feelings, including anger at her mother and sentimental feelings toward Peter. As she reads her old diary entries, Anne doesn’t recognize herself. How do you think looking back at your old writings and reflecting can help you understand yourself? Could this make you a more mature person? How and why?

“Looking back at your old writings can help you understand yourself, because it gives you a chance to remember how you were when you were younger and how you’ve changed since then. Whether it be to change back to the type of person you were or to continue to change for the better, looking back at your old writing makes you a better and more mature person.” ~Josh

“To be a culturally literate citizen of the world, we should read and become familiar with Anne Frank’s story.”

One page 192, Anne realizes/decides she could publish her diary. How does Anne begin to see herself as a writer? Why does she want to publish her diary? What does she want to share with others?

“Anne saw herself as a writer who wanted to inform other people about the lives of Jewish people at that time. She probably wanted to publish her diary to help the world understand what life was like without freedom during World War II. She must have wanted the world to become more intelligent and tolerant.” ~Dora

Anne wrote: “I am the best and sharpest critic of my own work.” Do you agree or disagree with Anne? What have you learned in the past two years about revising your own work?

“In the past year, I have realized that in most cases, the writer is the only person in writing or even reading a story that completely understands the work. I have noticed that others can fix grammatical errors, but only you can correct the storyline.” ~Josh

On page 203, there was a break-in near the Secret Annex. Anne thought about what she would do if the burglars were to steal her diary: “If my diary goes, I go with it!” What is your most precious possession? Why does it mean a lot to you?

“My most precious possession is my writing, because you can’t always write the same thing twice. Writing comes with how you are feeling about a specific thing and you might never have that same feeling again.” ~Cara

Writing affects Anne by giving her new courage: “I can shake off and courage is reborn.” Write about a time when writing something or giving a speech has encouraged you.

“Whenever I am writing, in any case, I feel as if I am capable of anything. In writing, there are no guidelines, rules or boundaries. When I write, I am inspired to take on the world like I do with an essay, to do my best, and hope for the best as well.” ~Josh

Conclusion:

“We have many reasons to hope for great happiness, but...we have to earn it. And that’s something you can’t do by taking the easy way out. Earning happiness means doing good and working...” —Anne Frank, July 6, 1944



The process of writing teaches students that if they work hard, they can be rewarded by both the final product of their writing and the process of reflection and learning more about who they are and can become. Responding to Anne’s introspective words is not always an easy task. Dealing with her entire life’s story and grappling with history is not easy either. However, we can find happiness and learn how to “do good and work hard” as Anne says, not only through her example, but by embodying those values in our classrooms. As teachers creating positive classroom environments each day, I know that you don’t just “hope for great happiness,” you work to earn it for your students, to create a happy and safe space where doing good and working hard are highly valued.