



PEP TALK

Supporting the education and well-being of gifted learners of Belmont, Carroll, Guernsey, Harrison, and Tuscarawas County

October 2020

Coordinator's Corner

Lisa Stupak

Happy October everyone! As has been the case since March, this is a time of new situations & procedures. Seeing students, teachers, and school personnel wearing face masks and following social distancing and safety protocols is definitely not the norm in a school setting. As with most changes, everyone has adapted quite nicely. For many, it has been as if they did these things all along. Like it or not, perhaps this is indeed the new normal.

At this point in time, the gifted requirements from ODE remain the same. There has been no waiver on testing for identification of gifted children or for gifted professional development for regular classroom teachers. Many schools are setting up their whole grade screenings and individual testing. This can be altered should directives come down from the state. Most are also continuing with the gifted professional development for classroom teachers. Classroom teachers must ultimately receive 60 hours of gifted PD to count the students in their classrooms as served.

Gifted professional development must cover one of the following ODE competencies:

- a) The ability to differentiate instruction based on a student's readiness, knowledge and skill level, including using accelerated content, complexity, depth challenge, creativity and abstractness;
- b) The ability to select, adapt or create a variety of differentiated curricula that incorporate advanced, conceptually challenging, in-depth, distinctive and complex content;
- c) The ability to provide an extension or replacement of the general education curriculum to modify the learning process through strategies such as curriculum compacting and to select alternative assignments and projects based on individual student needs;
- d) The ability to understand the social and emotional needs of students who are gifted and to address the impact of those needs on student learning;
- e) The ability to recognize and respond to characteristics and needs of students from traditionally underrepresented populations who are gifted and create safe and culturally responsive learning environments;
- f) The ability to use data from a variety of sources to measure and monitor the growth of students who are gifted;
- g) The ability to select, use and interpret technically sound formal and informal assessments for the purpose of academic decision-making; and
- h) The ability to participate in the development of the Written Education Plan.

Should you have a question on any of these or other gifted-related items, please contact your district coordinator. The coordinators are listed on the last page of this Pep Talk.

The winners of September's drawing for "Word A Round" are Wes Shontz from East Guernsey, Bethany Decker from St. Clairsville, and Buffy Monteith from Dover!

**This month's game is
Solitaire Chess by ThinkFun!**



Chess has long been known as the world's deepest thinking game. Solitaire Chess combines the rules of traditional chess and peg solitaire to bring you a delightful and vigorous brain workout! It's okay if you've never played chess before, this is an inviting way to develop critical thinking skills, learn some chess playing strategies, or build the skills that you already have!

Contains: One booklet with solutions, 80 challenges, and 10 chess pieces.

[Sign up for this month's game here! \(https://rb.gy/lolz28\)](https://rb.gy/lolz28)

October Choice Board

Amber Toriseva

Choice boards are a way for teachers to differentiate their instruction and provide choices to their learners. Students are able to choose activities that are interesting to them. Activities/skills may include a variety of options that appeal to multiple intelligences. Choice boards may be used for fast finishers or as a way to hit those higher order thinking skills/depth of knowledge during independent work.

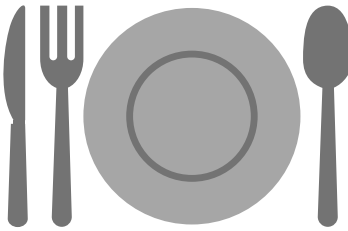
Try this choice board out in your classroom. Think of the CENTER square/box as the non-negotiable. This activity should be focused on a foundational skill/standard that you are teaching. The rest of the squares can be filled in with other skill building activities. You might opt for using the CENTER box as a way for students to "show what they know." In doing so, you would label the CENTER box "student choice" and allow learners to come up with a way to show their learning. Either way, the possibilities are endless. Challenge your students to complete three boxes in a row, horizontally, vertically, or diagonally. You may need to modify the choice board a bit to fit your specific content/grade level needs. Happy learning! Choice board worksheet available on next page.

October Choice Board

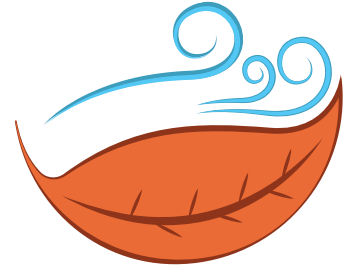
Make a list of questions with pumpkin as the answer.



Design a Fall or Halloween themed menu for a restaurant. What kind of foods would you include? What are the prices? Divide the menu into appetizers, main entrees, sides, drinks and desserts.



Pretend you are a leaf. What direction would the wind blow the leaf? Where would you travel? What would you do? Write about your travels as a leaf.



Invent a fall themed playground for recess. Be sure to include designs for a corn maze and other fall activities.



Write a Story about fall from the point of view of a piece of candy.



Create a list of things made from apples.



Figure out a better system for gathering autumn leaves. You cannot use a rake or leaf blower. Explain your new system.



Convince the crows not to bother the field by making the most effective scarecrow ever. (Hint: Research what makes scarecrows work.)



Add something to a wheelbarrow to make it more useful. Sketch, label, and explain your ideas.



Self-Care in the "New" (but Temporary) "Normal"

Rachel Winters

Before anything else, let's reinforce some facts. You are an expert in your field. You love your students. You work hard. Whether recognized by others or not, facts are facts. ;-)

You may not be feeling these statements to be facts over the past few months. Whereas most education professionals would agree we have chosen a high-stress vocation, stress levels since March have been significantly higher than usual. You may feel depressed, exhausted, confused, and overwhelmed. We all do. With all the factors we can't control--whether or not our district is back face-to-face or virtually, whether or not we have training in teaching virtually, whether or not our students and their families are sick--there is one factor we can control.

We can show ourselves some love; we can show ourselves the care and attention we consistently give to others. By taking better care of ourselves, we will have more and better energy in order to continue to take care of our families and our students. These self-care strategies may not all be new to you, but these days, reminders are a good thing, right?

The most important self-care strategy to remember is that we control our attitude about any situation, and this "new" (but thankfully temporary) "normal" is no exception. We can learn several important things from our current situation. The increased opportunities for quiet reflection, imposed upon us by quarantine and social distancing, allow us the time and the quiet needed to notice the importance of relationships in our lives. We now have the time and the quiet to prioritize what's really important to us. We can navigate new boundaries in our lives as our perception of what's possible change with the times; not the least of which is to establish how technology functions in our lives. While we may not have thought long and hard about balance before, now we have the opportunity to find the balance we need to function and function well.

To cope with life these days, "care" can fall into three categories: taking care of ourselves, taking care of our community, and taking care of our students.

There are several ways we can take care of ourselves that can be implemented in even the busiest of schedules. Do you have a commute to work? Leave the radio off for ten minutes in order to reflect in the quiet. In your mind, list all the things for which you feel gratitude. Do you walk from your car to your office or classroom? Incorporate more physical movement into your day by parking at the far end of the lot; take the non-direct route through the building to your office or classroom. Our minds and bodies are connected; good nutrition and physical exercise--even "little" things like parking farther away--improve our attitude and our ability to problem-solve. Although all of these self-care strategies are important, we get the most "bang for our buck" from mindfulness. The Oxford English Dictionary defines mindfulness as "a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique." Sounds easy, right? Our modern society--especially in the midst of a pandemic--does not encourage mindfulness, but there are some helpful apps (most of them free!): [Headspace](https://www.headspace.com) (<https://www.headspace.com>), [Calm](https://www.calm.com) (<https://www.calm.com>), and [Ten Percent Happier](https://www.tenpercent.com) (<https://www.tenpercent.com>) are some of the best.

Collectively, not only is the world experiencing a COVID pandemic, but also a "grief pandemic," and it helps to know that we aren't alone in feeling anger, depression, and fatigue as a natural part of mourning the world that once existed. It's always important to show others that you appreciate them; now it's even more important to take a moment and let someone know you've noticed and appreciate their hard work, extra effort (or just effort!), kindness, and care. Random acts of kindness make both of us feel better, and little notes of appreciation don't cost anything extra. Just as Marie Kondo has encouraged us to de-clutter our physical surroundings, we can also improve our mood and focus by "de-cluttering our people." Who makes you feel better about yourself? Who makes you feel better about our situation? Who supports you even when things are difficult? With whom do you feel a positive connection of shared interests or attitudes? Try to surround yourself with those people when you find them.

Lastly, we serve as role models and support for our students. No matter what the age, our students are thinking about the pandemic and how it has changed our daily lives. If they ask, give them the information they need: talk about the grieving process. Talk about death as a natural part of life. Talk about the facts we know about COVID-19 and the information we know is not true. Talk about our worries; even older students could benefit from a strategy called "worry tickets." Find a graphic that looks like a ticket. Print some and cut them out. Find a box or bucket with a lid and cut a slit in the lid slightly larger than the ticket. Before students come into your classroom, have them write what's worrying them on the ticket and place it in the box. The physical process of "removing" the worry from our minds and placing it in a closed box--taking the worry out of our minds even just for the time we're in that classroom--provides a necessary support and relief.

Sometimes our modeling involves risk: by trying something new, like a new creative habit or time management strategy, in front of our students, including talking through the process of embracing this new habit and the inevitable failures and mistakes that are a normal part of trying something new, is scary. We make ourselves vulnerable to others and we admit that even though we are the adults, we aren't perfect. These are valuable lessons for all of us.

Because, after all, we're in this together. And we will come out on the other side stronger and better.

A Moment of Calm

Lisa Burrell

In uncertain times, stress can be overwhelming and chaos seems to be everywhere. Do not forget the importance of taking care of yourself. Take or make time to relax and focus on positive things in life including school, home, family, etc. Virtual calming rooms can be applied for use at home and incorporated into your lessons for students. We know how we feel as adults during uncertainty, imagine how our students feel. Especially those with heightened social/emotional functioning. Virtual calming rooms were created by social workers, school counselors, and psychologists to provide the best relaxation and mind calming experiences for students and adults. Click on the links below, relax, and rejuvenate then share with your students. Enjoy!

<https://calmingroom.scusd.edu/>

<https://sites.google.com/apps.district279.org/virtualcalmingroom/>

As Easy as Riding a Bike

Marina Colombo



<https://youtu.be/MFzDaBzBIL0>

Knowledge does not equal understanding and we need to work to see the world from many lenses. To prove this point, Destin, from Smarter Everyday worked to ride a special bicycle. Share with your students or peers. What can this teach us about the way we learn, unlearn, and re-learn?

Design a Mask Lesson

Lisa Stupak

Since we are all wearing masks, why not make a lesson out of it? Read about the history of masks. Why they were worn in history, for what occasions, how certain cultures used them in rituals and ceremonies. Students can use DOK Level 4 actions to Analyze & Synthesize this information, then apply their knowledge to design their own masks. They can tell what their mask represents, why they chose that design, does it show their family history, values, etc.?

This YouTube video is a brief introduction to Masks from Around the World. It would be a good introduction to the history of masks for any classroom.

https://youtu.be/YWb_en6Fr-k

Find the student worksheet for this lesson on the next page.

Design a Mask

Student Name: _____

Design a mask that represents you. Make sure you answer at least the following questions. Please feel free to add additional information you would like to include.

Why did you choose this design? Is there any significance?

Have you included your family history? Describe what/how.

What values have you represented in your mask?

What event might this mask be worn for?

Is your mask similar to any from history & if so, how?





Upcoming Events

October 2nd

1pm-3pm

Tuscarawas County
Gifted Advisory
Council (Virtual)

October 5th-9th

Academic Field Day
Boxes Completed

October 16th

Visual & Performing
Arts Showcase
Meeting 1:00 ESC
St. C.

October 16th

Launch of virtual
Young Authors &
Illustrators Program

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