

take more courses for credit (2004). The study was conducted with students grade 6-12 that met minimum qualifications for Northwestern's Center for Talented Youth programs. In a survey, students noted that they enjoyed being able to work at their own pace, acquiring positive study habits, and being able to interact with their like-ability peers. CTY reported that for students who took an AP test corresponding to an AP course that they took at CTY, they averaged a 3.81 on the AP exams, which is higher than the national average. One of the major downfalls that students noted was a lack of face-to-face interaction in the program. Most of the learning occurred via mail, CD-ROM, and some phone conversations, so they were not forwarded the opportunities that we have today with the advancement of technology (Olszewski-Kubilius & Young-Lee, 2004).

Because computers and other advancements are now common, distance learning via online platforms has had a major impact on offerings for gifted students. 44 states report having a significant online learning presence to supplement school programs (Watson, 2008). While the necessity of teaching online may seem like a hinderance to our routine, it is important to note that, especially for gifted students, online learning is an opportunity. Without being stuck within the confines of the classroom, this opens up possibilities for enrichment, work with their HAL teacher, and the ability to work independently and go in-depth in areas of interest.

Things are not ideal right now. As educators, we want to give our students the best experience possible, and it is difficult when trying to navigate new systems and major changes. This can be especially distressing when we already feel as if we don't get enough time with our HAL kids, and now it could be even less. Stay in communication with your general education teachers to continue to provide those services for your gifted kids. You are their advocate, and remember—if they could effectively hold programs in 1998 via mail and CD-ROMS, we can do it now!



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Advanced Placement Update: *What does the 2020-2021 school year look like for Advanced Placement Classes?*



In early August, the state leaders met with the College Board Advanced Placement team to discuss the 2020-2021 school year in regards to AP classes. Below are the most important pieces of information:

- The 2020-2021 AP test will be their traditional, published format for the exam covering ALL material (one year's worth). It will NOT omit certain information or pieces of curriculum due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- If the COVID-19 pandemic affects AP testing in the spring, they will have contingency plans. To adhere to social distancing protocols, they are allowing a 2-day window for each exam in order to safely administer to all students. Additionally, they will prepare an online backup for if schools are closed.
- AP is offering No-Risk Registration. Students are being encouraged to sign up for the AP exams by the deadline (November 13, 2020). If the student has to cancel their test, there will be NO CACNELED EXAM FEE.

Additionally, College Board has worked to ensure all students and educators have access to their materials no matter their learning situation. On the AP Classroom platform, they have resources for online, hybrid, and in-person learning. Visit myap.collegeboard.org to access these resources.

Mindful Moments

Stop. Breathe. Take a moment for you! Try one of these simple mindfulness strategies:

Body Scan:

Lie down or sit in a comfortable place. Close your eyes. Start at your toes and work your way to your head. Take notice of your muscle tension, the feeling in each part, and releasing the stress. Take note of where you carry your stress. Make a conscious effort to release that area!

Mindful Breathing

Mindful breathing is one of the simplest and effective mindfulness strategies. Sit in a comfortable place and find something to focus on. You can close your eyes if you prefer. Breathe in through your nose for 5 seconds, hold for 7 seconds, and release for 5 seconds. Repeat this 3-7 times.

Name the Sensation

This easy exercise is a great way to ground yourself if you are feeling overwhelmed. Sit quietly for a moment. Name 3 things you hear. What do they sound like? Name 2 things you see. What do they look like? Name one sensation you feel. What does it feel like?



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HAL Spotlight: Jadie Beam

The purpose of the HAL Spotlight is to allow you to connect and meet your counterparts across the state. Feel free to reach out to one another! Establishing a cohesive network is super important, and it reminds us that we all have one common goal—serving HAL students.

The educator in the spotlight this month is Jadie Beam from ESU 13. Ms. Beam displays evident passion for High Ability Learners and strives to implement best practices and professional development for HAL. At her ESU, she has been assisting her schools to integrate HAL into the MTSS structure for services.



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Previously, Jadie taught...

Gering Public Schools – HAL and Special Education Support for ELA

What is your favorite thing about working with HAL students?

I love challenging HAL students and differentiating the daily curriculum to keep them engaged. I push these students to stretch themselves to do challenging work, problem solve and advocate for their own learning.

What are some fears you have for the coming school year?

It feels like we are running a race with no finish line and the course changes with every turn on a daily basis. I worry about teacher and student mental health and having a sense of belonging in the changing world.

What is some advice you would share with others about HAL?

When you are creating your MTSS (Multi-tiered System of Support) system, a district should spend as much time developing the interventions for your HAL students as you do for your Tier III students. Remember many times they are the same kid. We have to be intentional about our planning and make adjustments when students aren't making adequate growth.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I love to read and watch FOOTBALL!

What is one fun fact about you?

I'm not a fan of chocolate, but bring on the chips and salsa.



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Distance Learning and Gifted Students: A Qualitative Study of the Positives and Negatives as Told by Teachers



While the world, especially school, is changing, we may feel overwhelmed that we will not be able to do our students justice in an online learning setting. This is a real fear that many of us have. Luckily, there are resources and so many positives in relation to distance learning! In 2010, a study was done by Thomson where she interviewed more than 25 teachers about their experiences with online

learning. While there were pitfalls, the results were overwhelmingly positive. The study was done in an interview style, and three main patterns of interaction emerged: student-teacher interaction, student-content interaction, and student-student interaction. Teachers overwhelmingly reported that they were able to individualize work, and 80% of teachers interviewed noted that they felt that their relationships with students were stronger than in a traditional classroom. More than half stated that they felt learning was more student-centered in an online environment. When students are interacting with the content, almost every teacher underscored the need for clear, concise directions with expectations. You are not there in person for everyone to ask questions and hear additional instructions, so it is crucial to be clear. In terms of content, it was found to be easier to differentiate, especially allowing students to enrich their experiences with the vast possibilities on the internet to research areas of interest. Many of the teachers found online learning to be more effective, citing less interruptions (pep rallies, fire drills, etc.), flexibility in time (not be constrained by the 50-minute time period), and the permanence of written communication for more in-depth reflection. Under half of the teachers noted using synchronous learning as a class. Many students wanted to work on their own and focus on the academics, not the socialization. Although, when there were student interactions, students displayed being less shy online and enjoying the diversity of students they interacted with. Many of these findings were supported in a meta-analysis of other studies done by Olszewski-Kubilius & Corwith (2010).

While there are many positives, they do not come without barriers. One problem that almost all of the teachers noted was the inability to read facial expressions and body language. So much of the way students interact with material can manifest physically, and online learning makes that difficult. One of the biggest findings, especially with gifted students, is that motivation and task commitment are tantamount to success. If a student is not motivated or have good self-regulation skills, they may fall behind in online work without the physical classroom to reign them in.

In the conclusion, it is noted that the teachers felt that the benefit of online learning outweighed the barriers (Thomson, 2010). As stated in a related article, "Contrary to most people's beliefs that distance learning is passive, distance-learning programs depend on the premise that students are active participants and collaborators (McLoughlin, 1999) who actively construct their own knowledge (Hull, Bull, Montgomery, May, & Overton, 2000)." (Olszewski-Kubilius & Corwith, 2010). Students need our help to build this knowledge. It is hard to not feel the entire weight of a student's individual education on our shoulders, but even in a non-traditional setting, we must allow gifted students to grow and create knowledge.



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SEL and COVID-19: How Can We Help Our Gifted Students?

While students are trying to transition into their new “normal” it is important to make sure we are addressing the emotional well-being in addition to their educational needs. Gifted students tend to be hypersensitive to things going on around them (Dabrowski, 1972; Amend, 2020). They also develop asynchronously—meaning that they can cognitively understand things that they may not be ready for emotionally. This can cause a lot of stress and anxiety surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic (Amend, 2020). Children take their cues from adults (Amend, 2020), and they are more susceptible to emotional trauma from natural disasters than adults (Bartlett, Griffin & Thomson, 2020).



Since March, there has been a swath of research and articles published with techniques to be aware of and strategies for parents and educators. Upon reviewing much of the body of work, the following patterns emerged:

- **Keep students engaged:** Social distancing does not mean social isolation. Ensure that children have an outlet for their talent domains, and even use them safely in the community. For example, making thank you cards for delivery drivers or read to younger children via video chat (Amend, 2020). Allow them to use their area of interest to explore the pandemic. For example, if a student is interested in math, give them mathematical models of this pandemic vs others to compare, or if they are strong in ELA, have them keep a journal of their experiences and interview someone/find interviews from the 1918 pandemic to compare (Boonstra, 2020).
- **Discuss emotional and physiological self-awareness:** Students and parents alike have had their routines disrupted and lives altered in the wake of COVID-19, and everyone responds to stress differently. Talk with children about empathy and understanding that the way they show they are upset may be different than their peers, and neither is inherently wrong (Kane, 2020). Encourage students to learn more about themselves and others. Misdirected and inappropriate reactions may also be common when students are under extreme stress. Talk with kids when they have an inappropriate reaction to something seemingly small in order to help them cope with their emotions and find the root cause (Bartlett, Griffin & Thomson, 2020).
- **Provide Age-Appropriate Information:** While gifted students may be able to read articles about COVID-19 and understand them does not mean that they should. Knowing your students and their emotional readiness for information is very important in disseminating the proper amount of information. It is noted that gifted students, especially those with high anxiety, may use their imagination to fill gaps in their knowledge and begin to worry about untrue scenarios (Boonstra, 2020; Amend, 2020). Allow them to ask questions, but ensure that they are receiving their information in a way that is appropriate for their emotional development.
- **Create Routines and Structure:** In a world where everything seems uncontrollable, create an environment that has structure and predictability (Amend, 2020; Boonstra,



2020; Kane, 2020). Having a set routine and a predictable schedule can help students control emotions and reactions to feel more at ease. Continually reassure them of their safety and their routine.

- **Make Time for Yourself:** Making sure students are being taken care of emotionally has to start at the core—you. If you are overly stressed, it take away your ability to accurately assess a situation (Amend, 2020). Engage in self-care so that you can be the best version of yourself for students. Being present with your own emotions and feelings allows for positive modeling of regulation (Kane, 2020).

As always, there are several resources out there for SEL. Some examples include:

- **The RULER Method (The Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence:**
<https://www.rulerapproach.org/>
 - Recognize emotions in self or others
 - Understand the causes and consequences of emotions
 - Label emotions accurately
 - Express emotions effectively
 - Regulate emotions effectively
- **Check-in with yourself every day**
- **Allow students to ask questions, even if the answers are hard.**
- **Best...Worst...Most Likely (Amend, 2020)**
 - If a student is super anxious, they often imagine a scenario that is virtually impossible. This happens in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Brainstorm with the student the best possible outcome of the source of their anxiety.
 - Brainstorm the worst possible outcomes. Vocalizing them brings them to reality instead of inside their head.
 - Brainstorm the continuum of the scenarios that are most likely to happen.

Professional Development Season

As the school year kicks off, we are back in full swing (virtually) providing professional development! If you would like me to speak to staff, provide training, or assist with a professional development plan for the year (regarding HAL), please reach out. I am willing to do training sessions whenever it is convenient for teachers.

Email me at Sheyenne.meadows@nebraksa.gov for all PD inquiries.



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