LEANING IN TO GIFTED EDUCATION

https://tinyurl.com/SeaburyMay2025

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Advisor, The G Word Film

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AGENDA

- Lightning review
- Module 1: Grit, Effort, and the ZPD
- Module 2: Acceleration and Enrichment
- Module 3: What Makes a Gifted Curriculum

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LIGHTNING REVIEW

Day 1: These kids are different.

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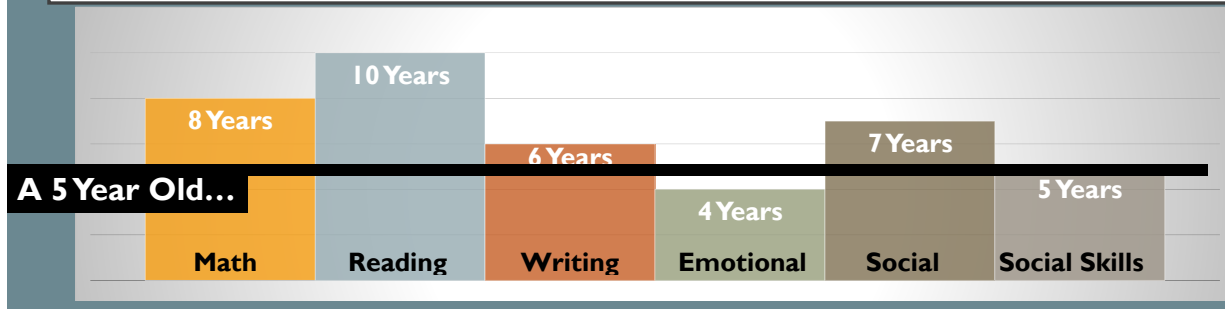
ASYNCHRONY



- Most gifted kids develop asynchronously
- Don't assume a higher level of maturity…
- MYTH: "If she can't do XX well, then she's not gifted"

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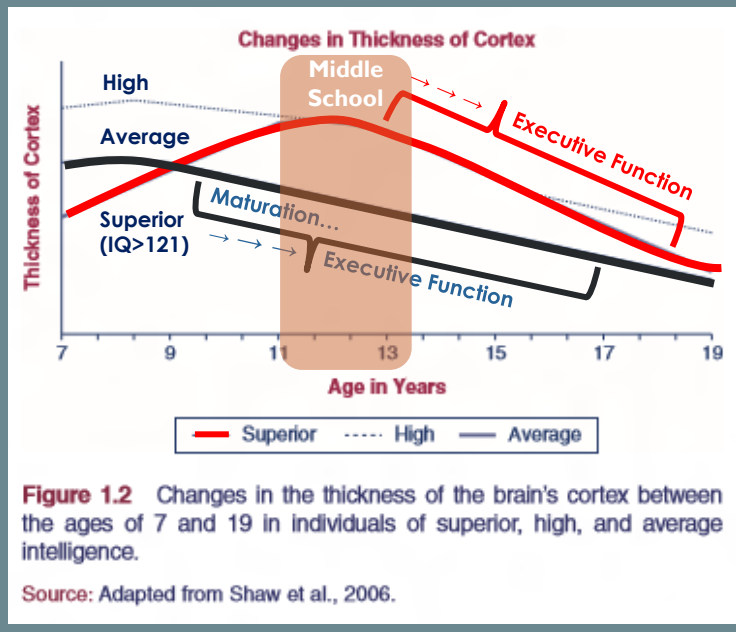

Figure 1.2 Changes in the thickness of the brain's cortex between the ages of 7 and 19 in individuals of superior, high, and average intelligence.

Source: Adapted from Shaw et al., 2006.

PHYSICAL DIFFERENCES IN BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION DEVELOPS LATER?

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THE GIFTED BRAIN IS LIKE

A Ferrari…

with a tiny steering wheel

NEUROSCIENCE

Lack of Inhibition

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OVEREXCITABILITIES - O

- Dabrowski's 5 "super-stimulatibilities"
  - Psychomotor – Sensual – Imaginational – Intellectual –
- Hard wired - fMRI shows "Brains on Fire" (
  - Experience a more intense reaction
  - For a longer period than normal
  - To a stimulus that may be very small
- Honor it! Coach how to cope with it, not chang

Neurodiversity
OEs may be another lens for understanding 2e

OEs aren't an accident; they support higher intelligence.

NEUROSCIENCE
Lack of Inhibition
Larger Amygdala

Feel deeper

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WHO ARE THE TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL (2e)?

Bright, gifted, talented, highly capable, and/or high IQ

AND

Neurodiversity, disability, learning difference, mental health concern, and/or other challenge

"Their gifts may mask their disabilities and their disabilities may mask their gifts."

(Reis et al., 2014, p. 222)

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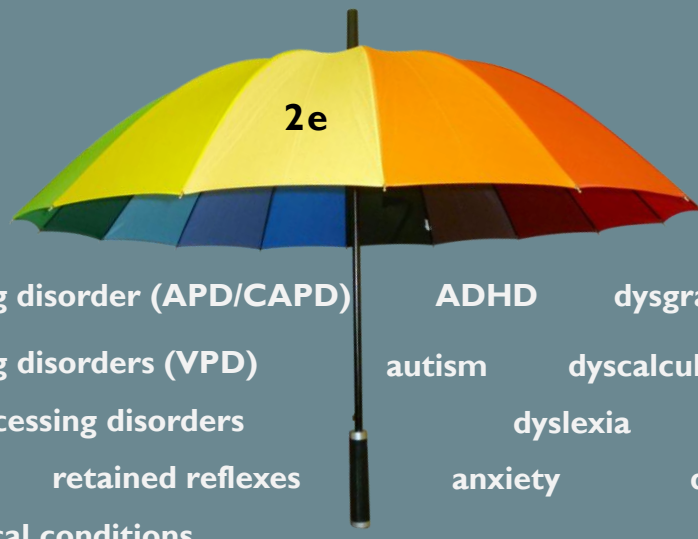

auditory processing disorder (APD/CAPD)
ADHD
dysgraphia
vision processing disorders (VPD)
autism
dyscalculia
sensory processing disorders
dyslexia
medical conditions
retained reflexes
anxiety
depression
physical conditions
PANDAS/PANS
sleep problems

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LIGHTNING REVIEW

Day 1: These kids are different.

Day 2: Flexibility is the key.

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POLYVAGAL SAFETY IS ESSENTI…

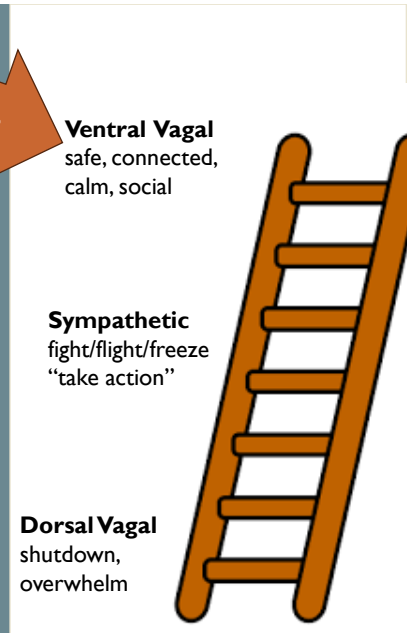
Learning only happens here

Porges polyvagal theory

- **Autonomic nervous system is constantly evaluating the environment for safety**
- Co-regulation with safe, trusted others

Create a neurodiversity-affirming classroom (& home)

- Student can be their authentic self
- Relationship with teacher (& parents)
- Environmental safety in classroom (& home)
- Relational safety with classmates (& family)



Adapted from Deb Dana 2022; Porges 2011

HOW STUDENT NEEDS MIGHT DIFFER

- Vision Clarity/Stamina
- Light Sensitivity
- Auditory Clarity/Sensitivity
- Tactile Sensitivity
- Self-Regulation
- Organization Skills
- Emotional Sensitivity
- Need for Movement
- Social Differences

Our Job

Honor individual differences

Provide supports to maximize student learning

Keep supporting until development catches up

Protect from psychological harm

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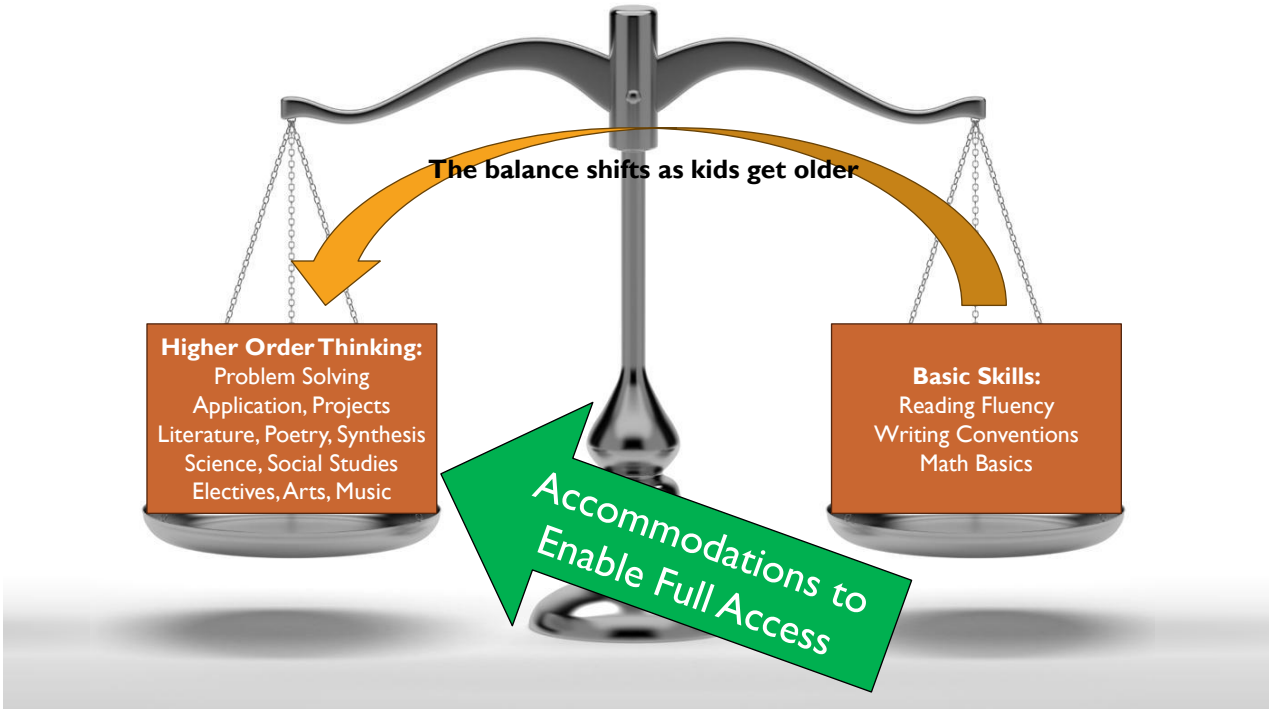

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL) PRINCIPLES

- **WHY**: Multiple Means of Engagement
  - Make the topic meaningful for each student
  - Connect to interests & prior knowledge

"I am interested in learning this"

- **WHAT**: Multiple Means of Representation
  - Use multiple modalities: text, audio, video, models, etc.
  - Provide accommodations universally, especially Assistive Technology
- **HOW**: Multiple Means of Expression
  - Allow students to show what they know in different ways
  - Modify assignments to highlight student strengths

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"I learn in the best ways for my brain"

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- **HOW**: Multiple Means of Expression
  - Allow students to show what they know in different ways
  - Modify assignments to highlight student strengths

"Build up my spiky strength area"

DEMONSTRATING MASTERY VIA STRENGTHS

- Draw a diagram
- Make a poster
- Create a slide presentation
- Draw a comic strip
- Record a podcast
- Make a video
- Build a model
- Write a letter
- **Give choices…**

Each kid could be doing a DIFFERENT thing based on their individual strengths

Flexible assignments

Encourage creativity

Build on student strengths

The point is communication of ideas

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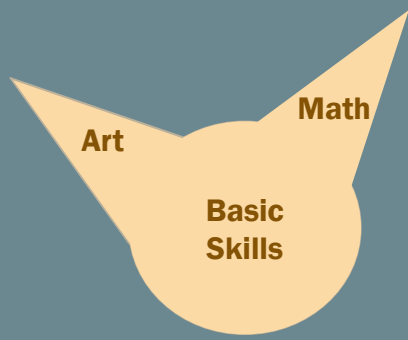
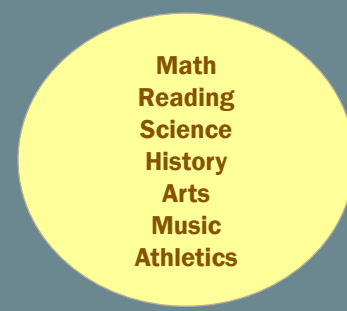
Spiky Strengths



Well-Rounded



Colleges are looking for "spiky" applicants!

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LIGHTNING REVIEW

Day 1: These kids are different.

Day 2: Flexibility is the key.

Today: How do we meet their gifted needs?

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How is Seabury different than Annie Wright, Charles Wright, and religious schools?

How SHOULD Seabury be different?

Chart Paper & Report Out

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MODULE 1

Grit, Effort, and Getting Kids into the ZPD

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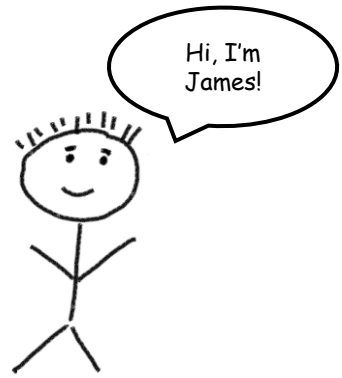
Meet James



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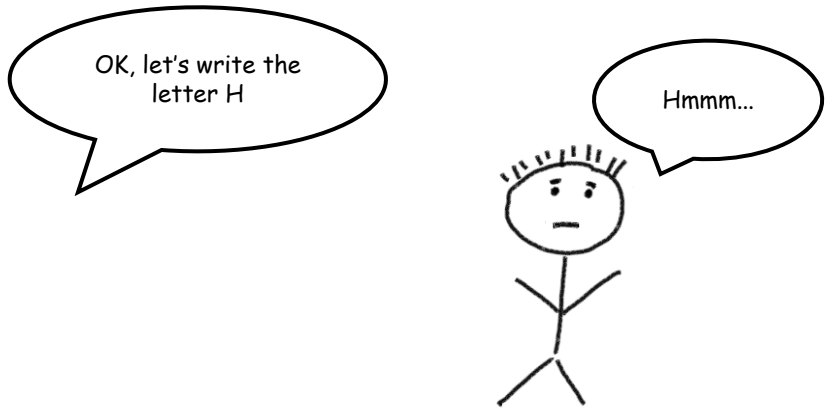
James didn't know how to write his letters when he entered kindergarten



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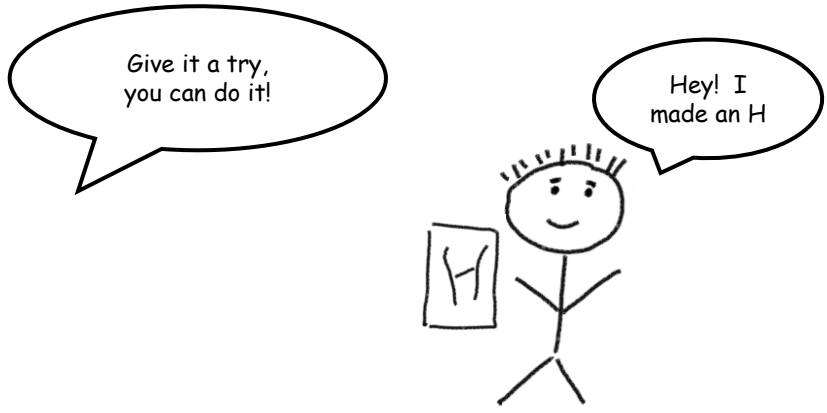
But with some practice, he learned



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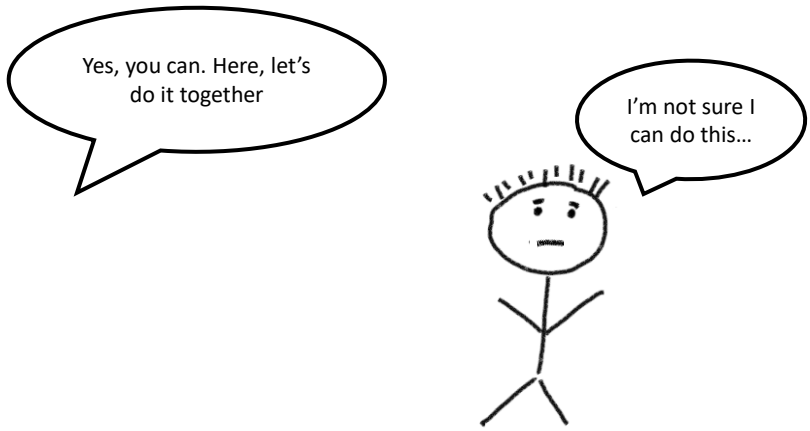
He was nervous about subtraction…



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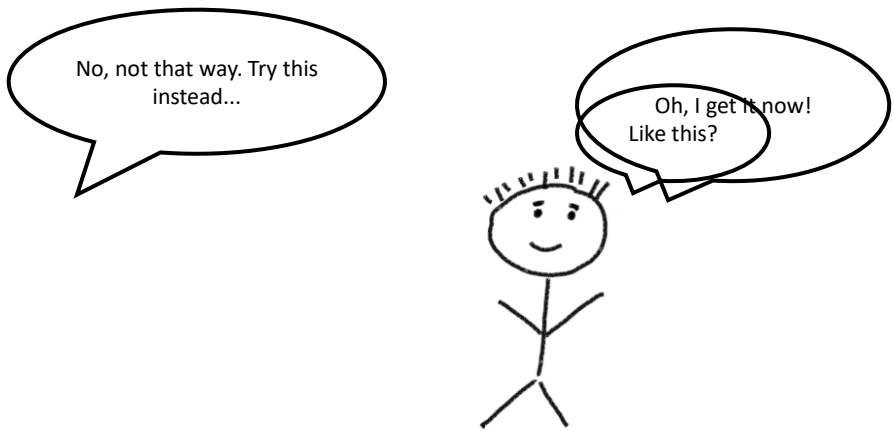
…and he did struggle, but the teacher helped him, and he figured it out



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In Kindergarten, James learned it was OK

- to ask questions
- to try
- to not give up at the first hurdle

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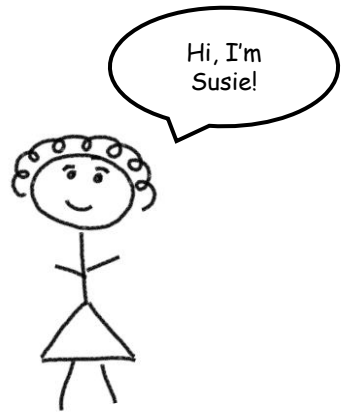
Meet Susie



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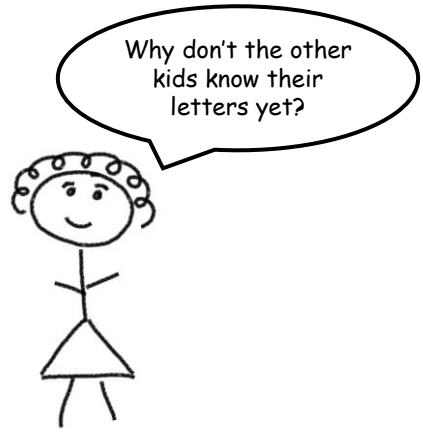
Susie is very bright. She started Kindergarten already knowing how to sound out words, and was surprised that other kids didn't read yet.



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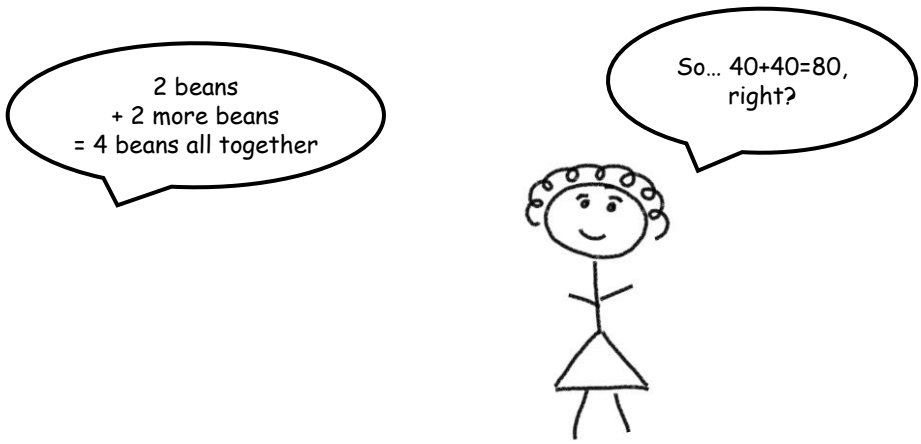
Susie quickly grew in her abilities, seemingly without trying



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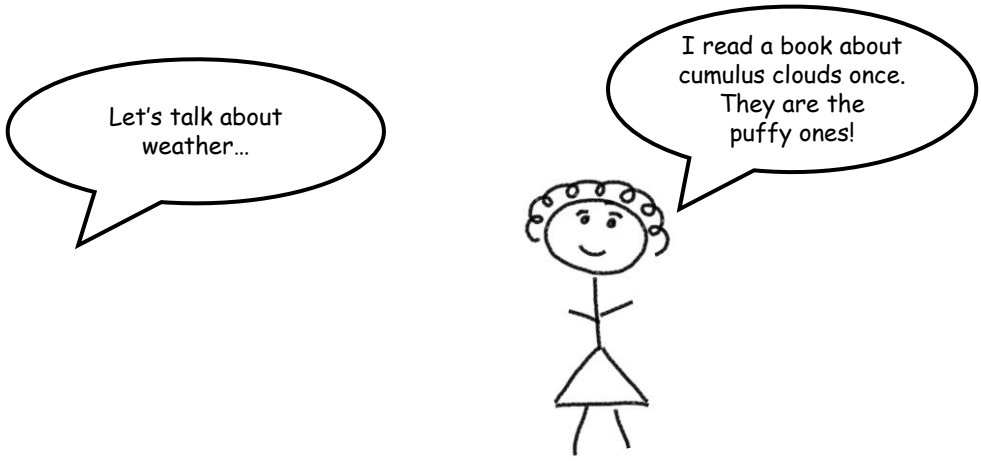
As Susie grew, she easily picked up on new topics



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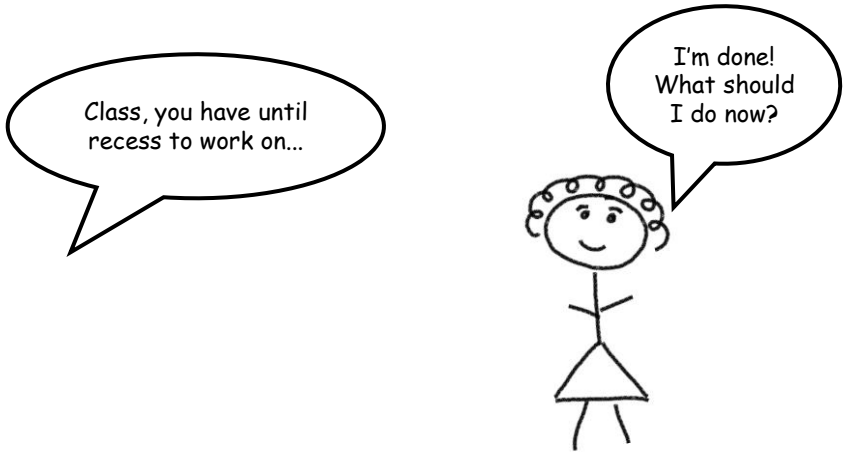
Susie often finished assignments early



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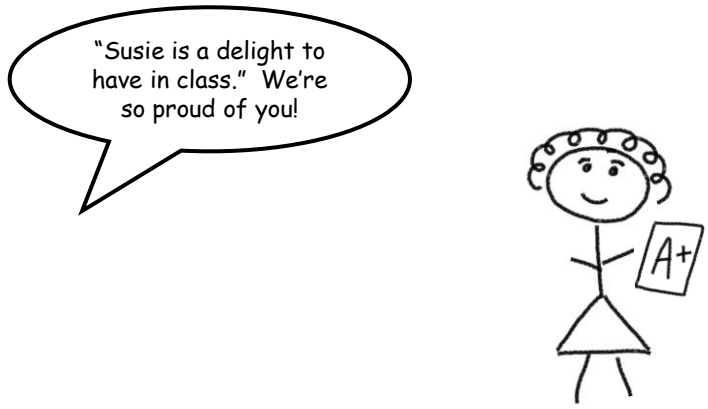
Susie's parents were very proud of her perfect report card, and remarked at how easily she learned new things



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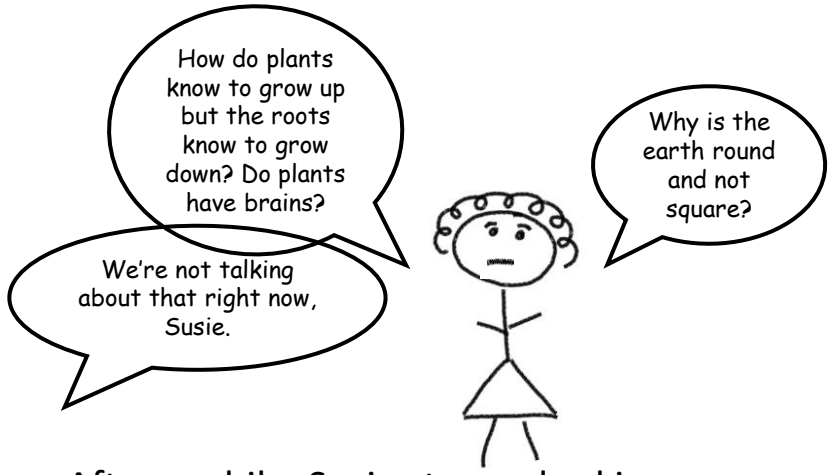
In kindergarten, Susie asked a lot of questions



After a while, Susie stopped asking so many questions

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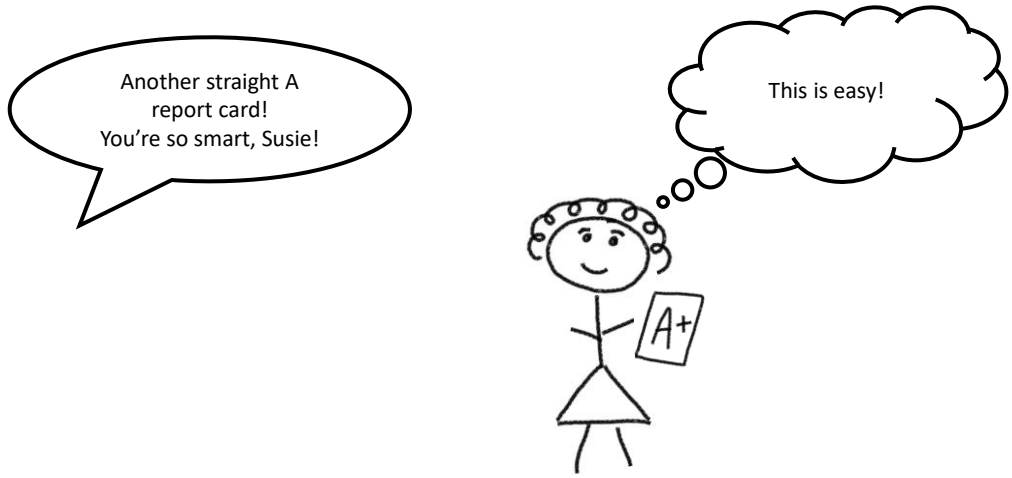
By 2nd grade, Susie realized that she didn't need to work very hard to do well in school.



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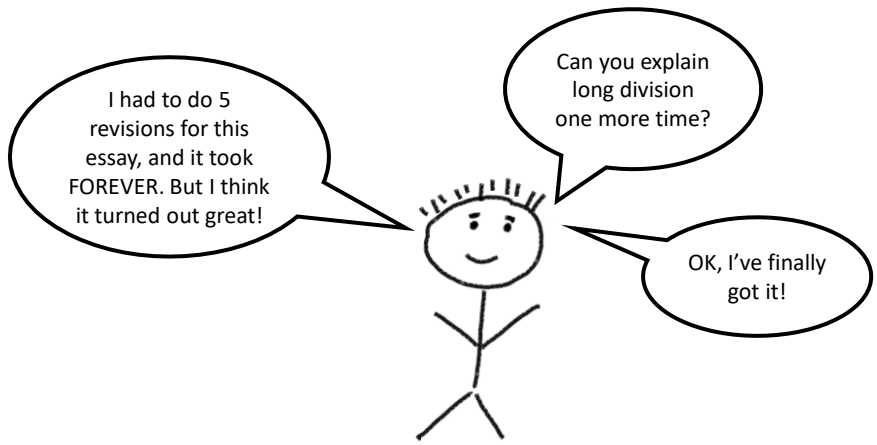
Meanwhile, James grows, and every school year gradually presents bigger challenges…



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James has had lots of practice learning how to attack new, hard challenges.

- He has strategies
  - Don't give up.
  - Read it again.
  - Ask for help.
  - Try it, even if you're not sure how to do it at first.

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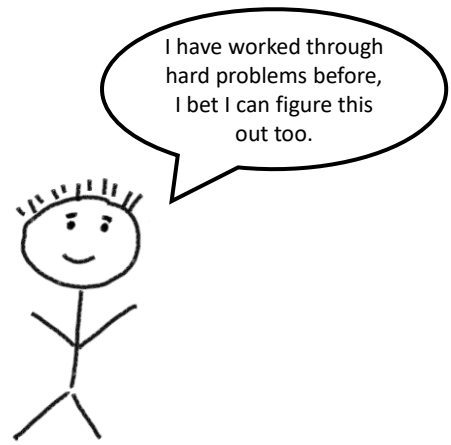
James goes to middle school, high school, college…

All along, learning how to tackle bigger and bigger challenges.



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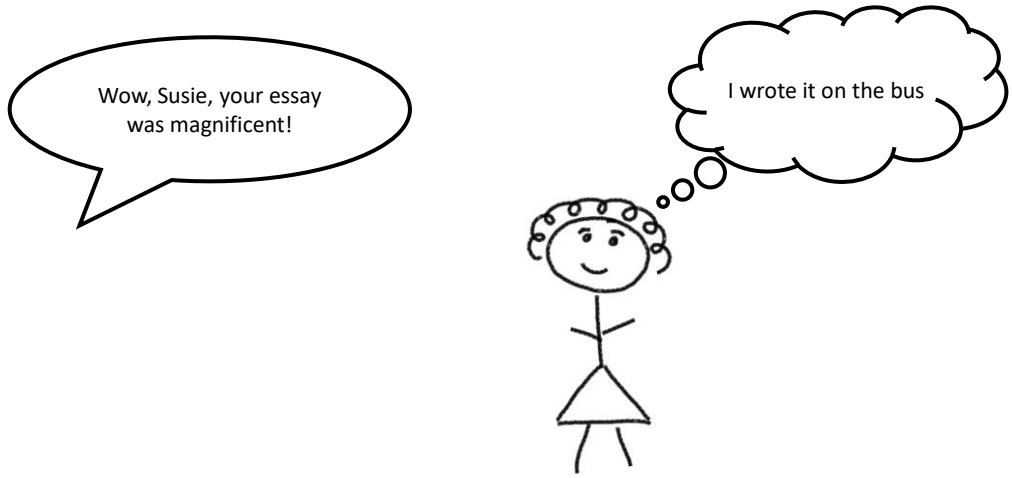
Meanwhile, Susie continues to achieve
despite not putting in any real effort



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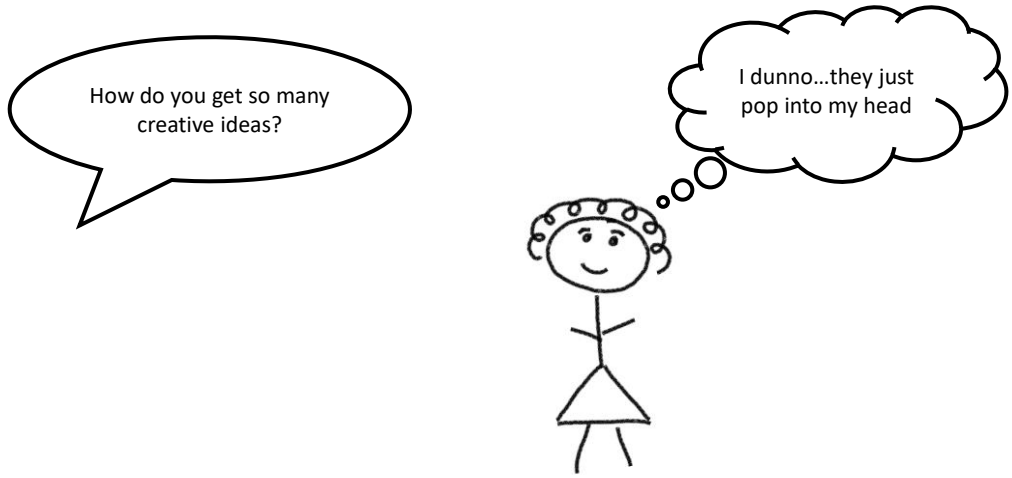

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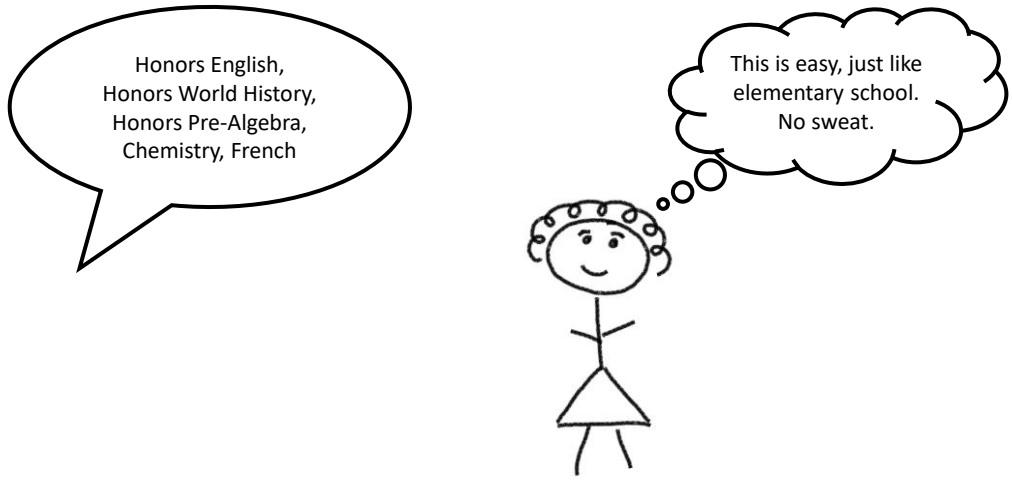
Susie grows too. She starts middle school, and does well in her honors classes



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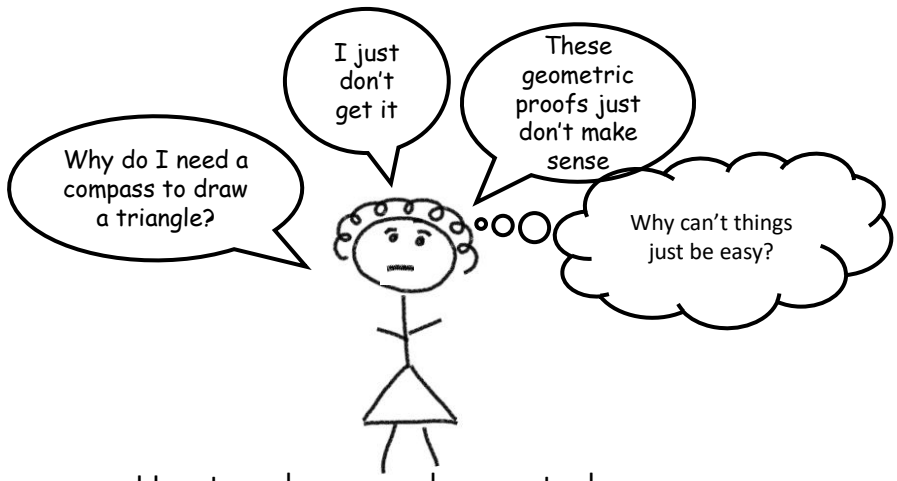
But the next year she takes Honors Geometry…



Her teacher sends a note home that Susie's grades are slipping.

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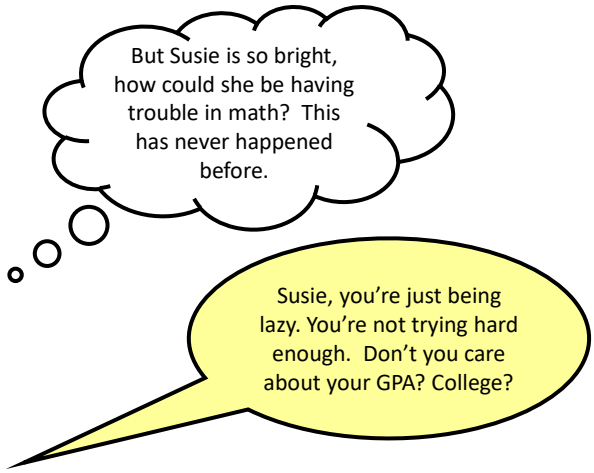
And her parents react…



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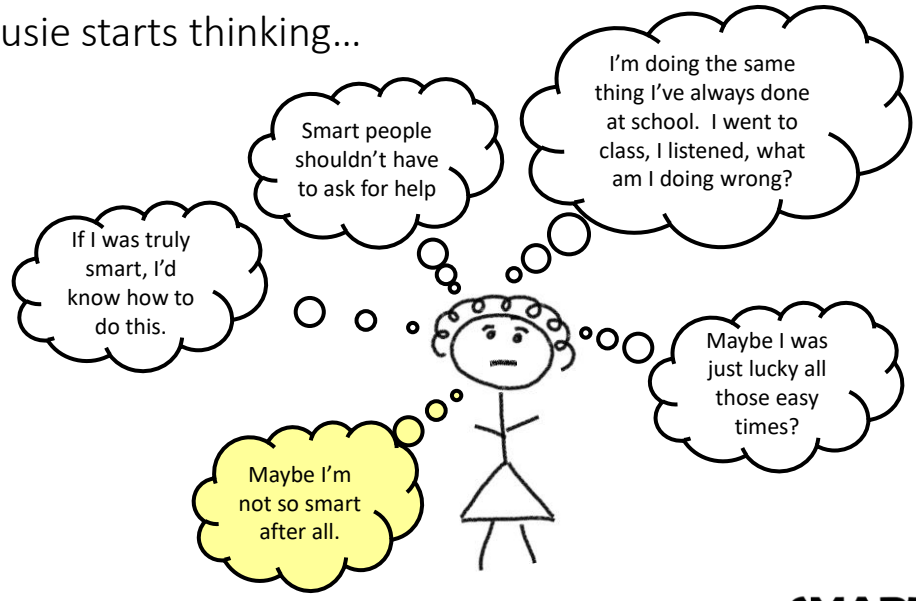
And Susie starts thinking…



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Because Susie's elementary school experience didn't challenge her, Susie never had the opportunity to develop these skills:

- Self-confidence
  - to know that she can tackle a truly hard problem
- Emotional coping skills
  - to persevere through a challenge
- Delayed gratification
  - to put forth sustained effort
- Tolerance for failure
  - and learning from mistakes
- Study skills
  - to learn something you don't already understand

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Susie never learned how to LEARN

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THE BRIGHT STUDENT DILEMMA

Most kids "learn how to learn" in elementary school

Reading, spelling, subtraction, multiplication, etc.

Learning to tolerate confusion, recovering from mistakes, asking for and receiving help…

Building persistence, perseverance, grit, growth mindset

Time management, study skills (middle school)

Bright students already know most of the curriculum

School is too easy, not challenging

Two implications:

1. Lack of opportunity to build these skills
2. Any 2e disabilities remain hidden

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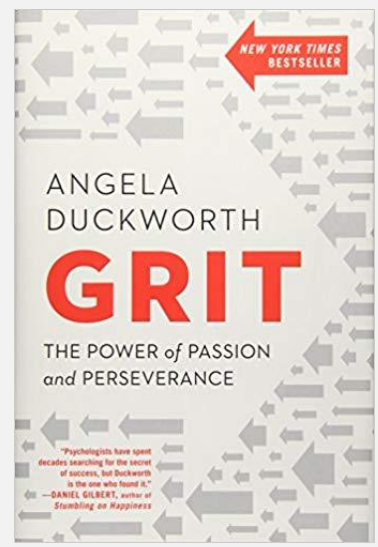
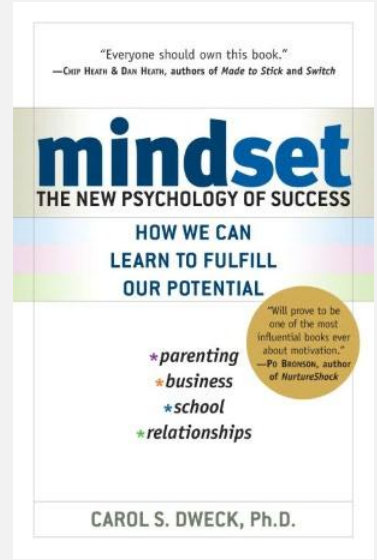
GRIT >> IQ (2016)

- Duckworth studied success at:
  - West Point Military Academy
  - National Spelling Bee
  - High school juniors, 8th graders
- "It wasn't social intelligence. It wasn't good looks, physical health, and it wasn't IQ. It was **grit**."
- "Self-discipline predicted academic performance more robustly than did IQ."
- **"In our data, grit is usually unrelated or even inversely related to measures of talent."**



GROWTH MINDSET (2006)

- "Effort Effect"
  - Kids who were told they were smart didn't try as hard next time
  - Kids who were praised for effort did better
- Takeaways
  - Don't praise kids for being smart
  - Praise real effort and progress (not results)
    - "Keep on trying…"
    - "Practice really works!"



TERMAN STUDY (1921 – 1993…)

- 1,500 students with IQ > 140, studied whole lifetime
  - Largely middle class, White, male (and Terman meddling)
- 2/3 got bachelor's degrees (10x expected rate)

Takeaway: Grit & Support matters.

- "Oden compared the **100 most successful and 100 least successful** men in the group, defining success as holding jobs that required their intellectual gifts…But here's the catch: the successes and non-successes barely differed in average IQ.
- **The big differences turned out to be in confidence, persistence and early parental encouragement."**

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LUBINSKY/SMPY (1972 – ONGOING)

- Studied 5,000 students who scored in top 3%, 1%, 0.1%, and 0.01% on SAT "baccalaureates (90%, 92%), masters (39%, 37%), and doctorates (28%, 24%) well beyond the base-rate expectations of 23%, 7% and 1% respectively"
- "top .01 percent of testers in their adolescence—accomplished these things at significantly higher rates even when compared to the top 1 percent"
- **"Grade-skippers were 60% more likely to earn doctorates or patents and more than twice as likely to get a PhD in a STEM field"**

What Predicted Success?
The most successful individuals had
support & acceleration

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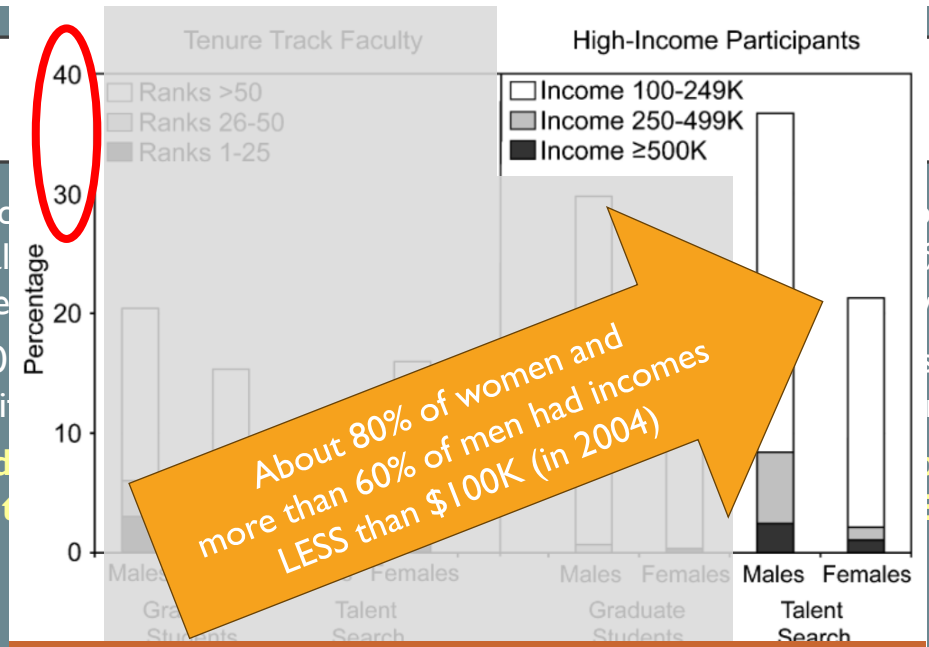

Yes, more successful on average - BUT look at the MEDIAN!
Most highly gifted individuals led typical adult lives

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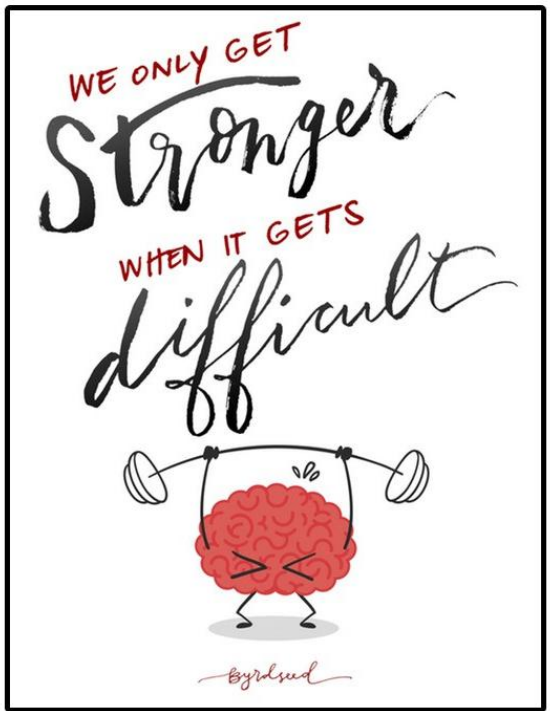

"THE BRAIN IS LIKE A MUSCLE. IT NEEDS A WORKOUT TO GET STRONGER."

POSTERS & LESSON PLANS
BYRDSEED.COM

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SMART KIDS AT A DISADVANTAGE

- When not challenged in school, LESS likely to develop
  - Grit & perseverance
  - Tolerance for failure
  - Growth mindset
  - Time management, study skills
- It's hard to truly challenge a gifted kid
  - They are capable of a LOT more than they let on
  - Perfectionism leads them to stay away from challenges that they aren't sure they can tackle

The more time kids spend in a school that is "too easy" the more that perfectionism takes hold

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THE CENTRAL CONCEPT

Provide experiences with **genuine** challenge

Teach grit & growth mindset
in an area of STRENGTH (not disability)

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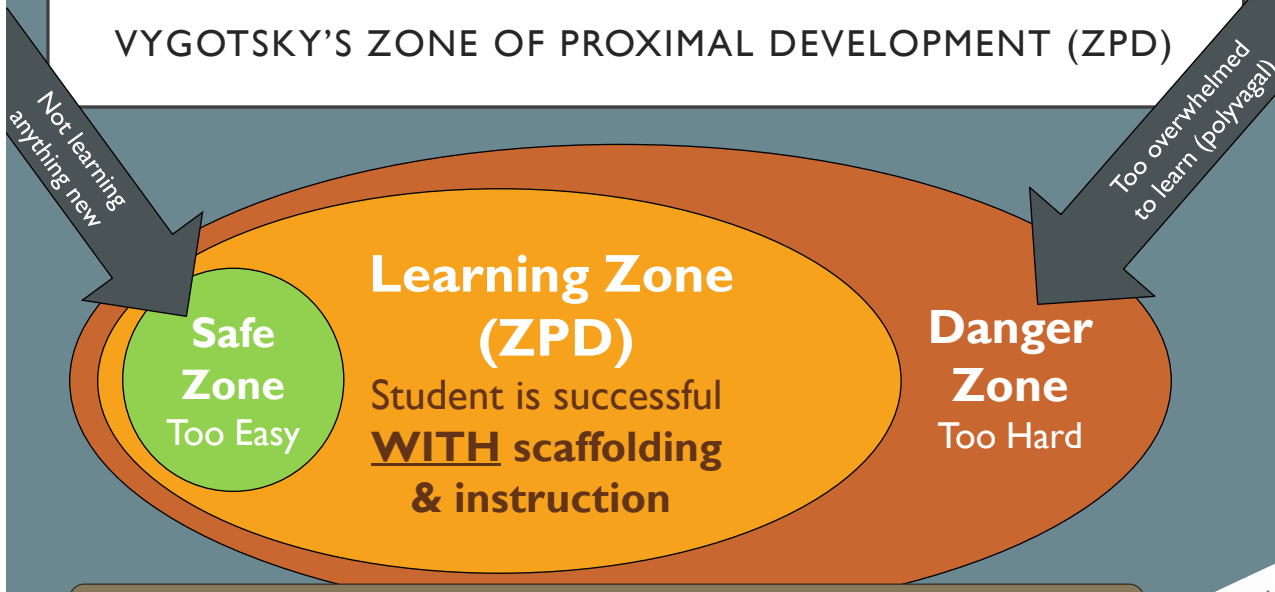
VYGOTSKY'S ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT (ZPD)



Goal: To build grit, every kid should be in their Learning Zone at least once a day

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PROVIDING SUPPORT IN THE "LEARNING ZONE"

- Meet each student where they are - DIFFERENTIATION
- Accommodations so ALL can access challenging content (not just struggle with disabilities in low-level areas)
- Direct instruction
- Providing a model to follow
- Scaffolding to break down into steps/parts
- Productive struggle
- Peer interaction
- Adult support/coaching

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Let's get up and move

Safe Zone, Learning Zone, Danger Zone

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MODULE 2

Acceleration and Enrichment

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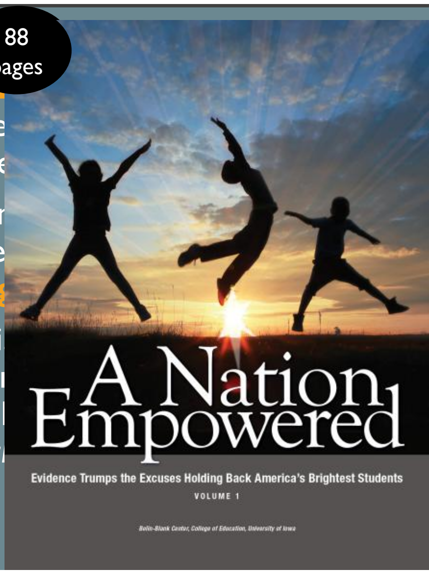
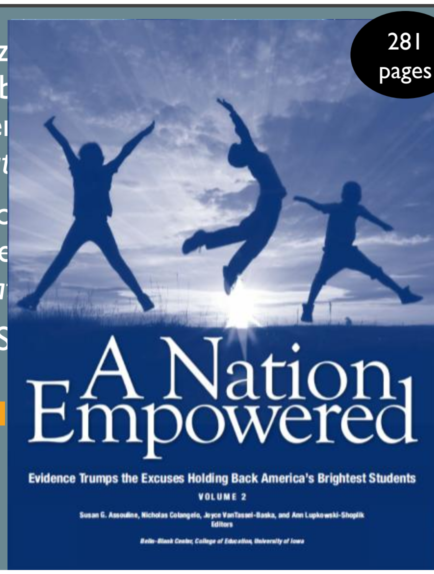
DEEP RESEARCH ON ACCELERATION

88 pages



281 pages



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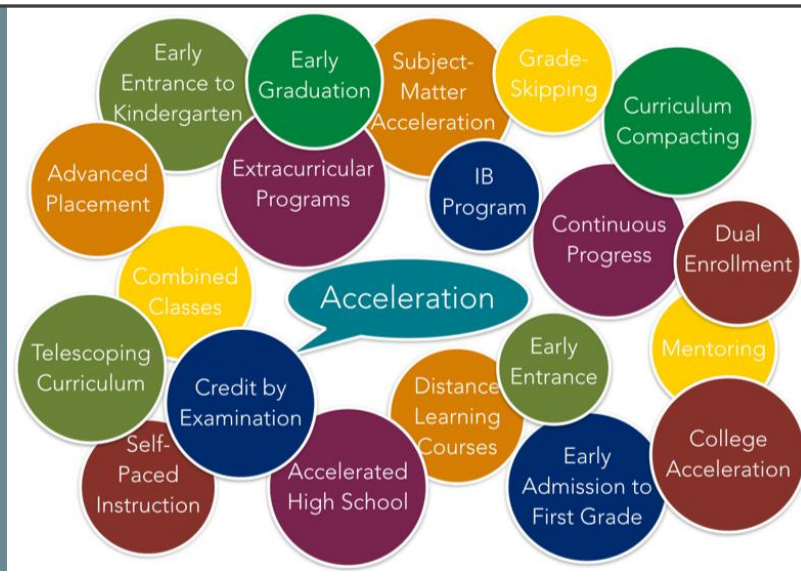
ACCELERATION IS THE CONSENSUS RECOMMENDATION

2023 National Working Group on Advanced Education

- Allow children who are ready for advanced material in all subjects to skip entire grade levels
- Allow children to skip grade levels in particular subjects
- Offer "grade-compressed" pathways for students
- Automatically enroll students participating in elementary school advanced education programs in subsequent advanced learning opportunities in middle and/or high school

SMART ≠ easy

MANY FORMS OF ACCELERATION



FREE Belin-Blank Acceleration Presentation

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ACCELERATION FIRST, THEN ENRICHMENT

Accelerate to where student has not yet mastered standards

THEN add depth, complexity, problem solving, and enrichment

Ensure conceptual learning (not just memorizing algorithms & facts)

You can't enrich your way out of an acceleration problem

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WALK TO MATH

- One of the easiest models to implement
- Several classrooms align schedules for math time
- At math time, students walk to the right classroom for their needs
  - Each teacher teaches a different level
- Assess for placement at beginning of the year
  - Adjust student placement as needed

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How could we make whole-school walk-to-math work at Seabury?

Let's brainstorm & discuss

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MODULE 3

What makes a gifted curriculum?

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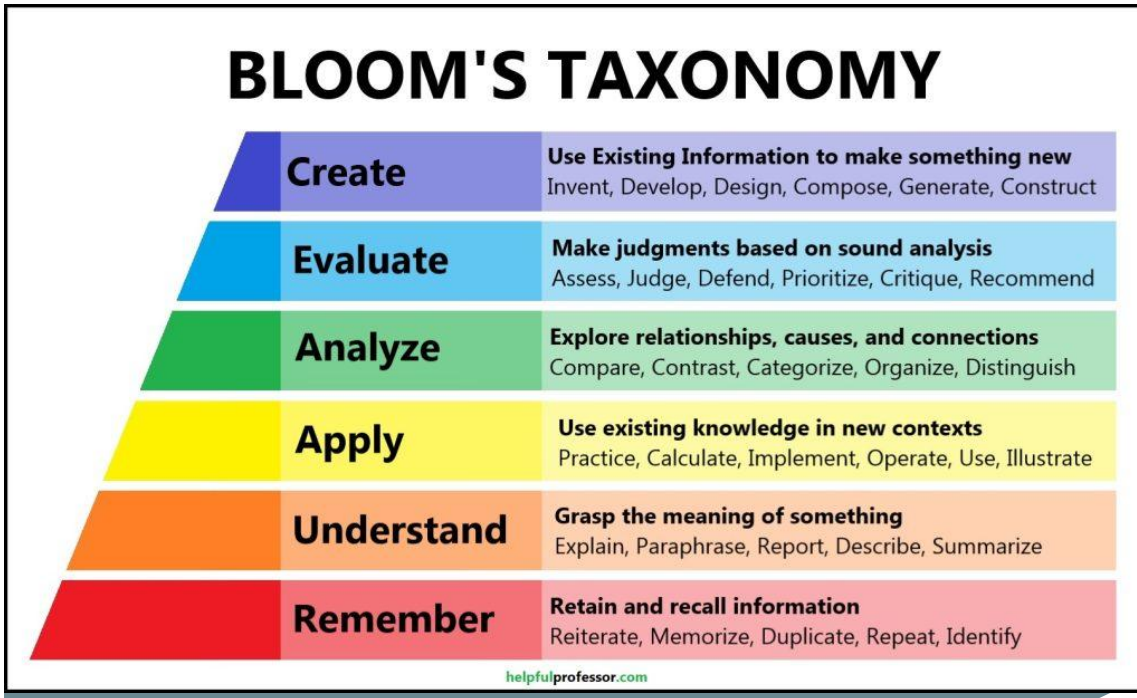

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GIFTED CURRICULUM MODELS

- Differentiation – take existing curriculum deeper
  - Depth and Complexity Icons
  - Vertical Differentiation (Mofield)
  - Project Zero Thinking Routines
- Enriched Curriculum – curriculum designed to go deeper
  - Problem-Based Learning – solve real world, complex problems
  - Project-Based Learning – integrated projects to explore a topic
  - Parallel Curriculum Model – core, connections, practice, identity
  - Integrated Curriculum Model – overarching concepts, advanced content, process-product
  - Schoolwide Enrichment Model – topic-based enrichment clusters to help kids discover & develop talent areas

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OVERARCHING IDEAS FOR GIFTED CURRICULUMS

- Higher levels on Bloom's taxonomy (create, evaluate, analyze, apply)
- Connect to underlying conceptual questions & abstract ideas
- Organizing, generalizing & synthesizing knowledge
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Think like an expert / Work like a practitioner
  - Authentic tools, problems, products
- Authentic projects for real audiences
- Opportunities for productive struggle

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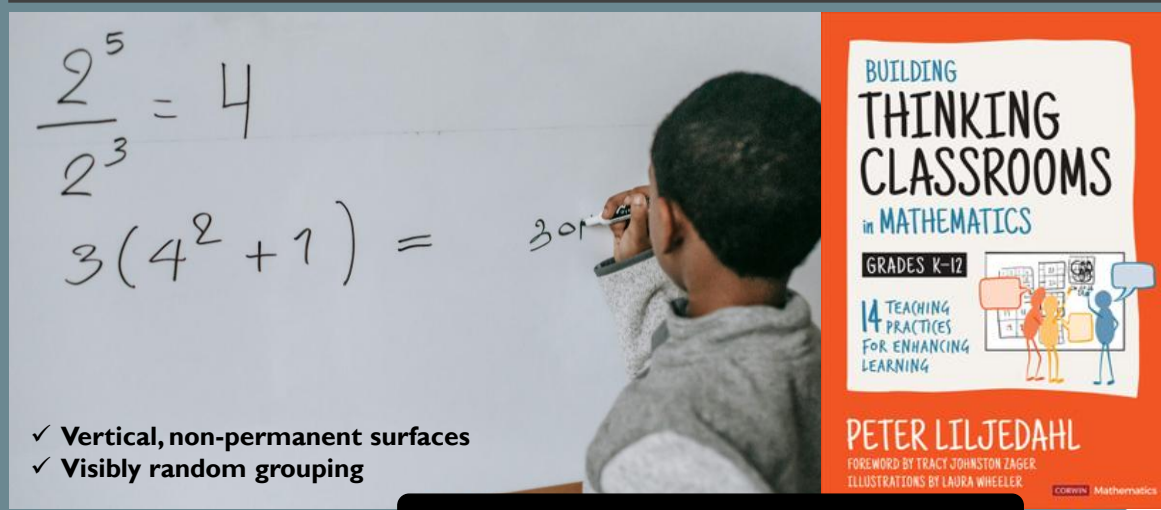
BUILDING THINKING CLASSROOMS



✓ **Vertical, non-permanent surfaces**
✓ **Visibly random grouping**

Photo by Katerina Holmes @pexels.com

But don't overdo it…

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Let's explore some gifted curriculums

Select a lesson and discuss how you'd use it with students.

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THANK YOU
https://tinyurl.com/SeaburyMay2025

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THE END

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