

CONVERSATION WITH A [POTENTIALLY] GIFTED INDIVIDUAL

To be completed for sharing in class on June 13, 2015

The goals for this activity are for you to enhance your understanding of (1) how a gifted individual thinks and feels about her/his abilities, and (2) how this individual likes to learn.

Overview:

- You'll need to locate a gifted individual.
- Meet with the individual, ask some questions and listen.
- Write up your assignment according to the guidelines below.
- Share your write-up with your classmates (June 13th)
- Submit it to Dr. Kanevsky on June 13th

Step 1: Locate a gifted individual you do not know and who does not know you

Find a gifted child or adult to interview. Family, friends and students in your school are not suitable for you to interview. If you have a relative, friend or student that you feel is a great candidate for this activity, let a classmate chat with them, not you. The greater the personal "distance" between you and this person, the more likely s/he is to speak openly and honestly.

Get signed consent from parent if the individual is under 18 years old or from the individual if s/he is over 18 years of age. Make arrangements for the conversation (time, place, etc.). Letters to the school principal, classroom teacher and parents that confirm this request is part of a course requirement will be distributed in class.

Step 2: The conversation

- Schedule the conversation. It should be outside of school hours.
- Prepare the questions you will ask.
- Take and use some sort of audio recorder so you don't have to take notes. Many cell phones and tablets have a voice memo app that will work well. Practice with your equipment before going to the interview.
- Begin the chat by explaining who you are and why you are doing this.
- It's a good idea to take something along you can do together (puzzle or game)--have some fun with this.
- Ask questions. Ideas for questions are provided later in this handout. Make sure you ask questions that will give you the information you need to address #2 and #3 in Step 3 (below).
- After asking a question, wait ... patiently ... for a long time... Listen.
- Probe sensitively for a deeper understanding of the individual's meaning when you don't understand--don't be over-cautious. Say things like:
 - "I'd like to hear more about that."
 - "I don't think I understand what you mean."
 - "So do you mean _____?"
- Scrap your plan if it's not working or something arises that could offer greater insights on their ability and/or learning.
- **Destroy or delete the recording after you have passed this assignment.**

Step 3: Write it up (no less than three pages and no more than 4, typed and double-spaced):

Use a pseudonym for the individual. Base your comments on your current understandings. You don't need to refer to the readings.

1. Begin with a brief description of the individual's background (school history, culture, family, etc.). [1/2 page]
2. The individual's thoughts and feelings regarding abilities: Describe the individual's thoughts and feelings about her/his abilities. Identify and provide your personal reflections on 2 things the individual said or did that were consistent with your expectations and 2 things that were inconsistent. Reflect on each separately. Why was each significant to you? Surprising? Disappointing? [1 1/2 pages]
3. The individual's learning preferences: Describe how the individual likes to learn. [1 1/2 pages]
4. Close with the most powerful insight you've gained from this experience. Reflect on it.
5. Attach the "Chat Cover Sheet" (see p. 3) and the signed consent form to your write-up when you submit it.

Step 4: Share your write up in class on June 13th. You'll exchange assignments with at least one classmate.

Step 5: Submit your write up to Lannie on June 13th for evaluation. The criteria for this assignment are:

- Completeness (Cover sheet, consent form, 3-4 page write-up of highlights, reflections & insight)
- Depth and coherence of your text
- Extent to which your text addresses both goals of this activity (understanding the individual's abilities & learning preferences).
- Appropriate format (as described above)

Grading is Pass/Resubmit. Dr. Kanevsky will return them in the third class (July 4th). Resubmissions are due on or before July 25th.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS ABOUT ABILITY AND LEARNING

Here are two sets of ideas for questions to get you started on your plans for your conversation. The first set is about ability and the second set is about learning preferences. Feel free to adjust the wording to suit the age and interests of the individual you'll be listening to.

Questions about abilities:

- What do you think makes some people smarter than others?
- What do you think makes some people more creative than others?
- What do you do well? Do you like it? Why? How do you know you're good at it?
- What is something you can't do well at all, in fact you're awful? How do you know you're awful? Do you like doing it anyway or not? Why?
- Do you enjoy solving or trying to solve hard problems? Why or why not?
 - If yes, what kinds of problems do you enjoy?
- What is the hardest thing you can remember trying to do in your entire life (either at home or school, or anywhere else)? What made it difficult? What was good about it? What was bad?
- What does it mean to be smart?
- What does it mean to be creative?

Questions about learning preferences:

- Do you ever think about how you learn? What is that like?
- How do you like to learn?
- How did you figure out how you like to learn?
- Do you ever get bored? When? What is boring?
- How would you change your school to make it a better place for you to learn?
- What was your favourite classroom learning experience? What made it great? Is there anything that would have made it even better?
- What kinds of assignments do you enjoy?
- What do you think/feel about doing assignments in groups or with a partner?
- What was the worst classroom learning experience you've had? What made it so awful?
- What should a teacher know or understand about you?

CONVERSATION COVER SHEET
(attach this to the front of your assignment)

Your Name: _____

Pseudonym for the individual: _____

Age _____

Number of older brothers _____

Number of younger brothers _____

Grade(s) currently attended _____

Number of older sisters _____

Number of younger sisters _____

Gender: M F

Language(s) spoken:

at home _____

at school _____

Current class placement and any recent special program participation (regular mixed-ability class, multi-age class, UBC Transition Program, Challenge Program, etc.)



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May 16, 2015

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Dear Principal,

This letter of introduction is offered as a means of facilitating the efforts of one of my students to hear the ideas and opinions of one of your students regarding her or his abilities and learning preferences. Each student in Educ. 428 (Nature and Needs of the Gifted) is expected to locate and chat with a "gifted" individual.

I understand that your school policy requires that evidence of enrollment in the course be provided as well as documentation to explain the nature of the activity. As the course instructor, I confirm

_____ 's enrollment. She or he will provide you with a copy of the assignment if you would like one. Letters to the participant's teacher and parents are also available. My student will not undertake the conversation with the child unless a signed consent form has been returned by the parents. The parents and student will then be contacted to arrange a time to meet that is mutually convenient and outside of school hours.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me or the student. Our contact information is provided in the sidebar and below my signature.

On behalf of my students and I, thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lannie Kanevsky".

Lannie Kanevsky, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Educ 428 Student's contact information

Name:

Phone:

Email:



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Dear Teacher,

_____ has enrolled in a course at Simon Fraser University on educating gifted students and one of her/his course requirements is to listen to the ideas and opinions of a student who is or may be gifted. I understand she/he would like to ask your student,

_____ to participate in this conversation. The purpose of this chat will be before the SFU student to gain a “student’s view” of abilities and her or his learning. This usually lasts 30-60 minutes. It is hoped that the outcome of these discussions will enlighten the SFU student’s future efforts to understand and meet the needs of high ability students.

This conversation will be scheduled outside of school time. The SFU student can provide you with a copy of the course assignment if you would like to see it. The SFU student must have the consent form signed by the student’s parents before initiating the conversation. A letter to the student’s parents with a consent form has been provided to the SFU student for this purpose. Your student may return this form to you or directly to the SFU student.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me or the student. Our contact information is provided in the sidebar and below my signature.

On behalf of my students and I, thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lannie Kanevsky".

Lannie Kanevsky, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Educ 428 Student’s contact information

Name:

Phone:

Email:



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Dear Parents,

During the next few weeks, teachers who are students enrolled in a course I teach on educating gifted students at Simon Fraser University (EDUC 428) have been given the task of meeting with a very bright student to hear her or his thoughts and feelings about their abilities and learning preferences. This usually lasts 30-60 minutes. It's hoped that the outcome of this conversation will enlighten the SFU student's future efforts to understand and meet the needs of the high ability students in their classrooms. This conversation will be scheduled outside of school time.

If your child is willing, and you will allow her or him to chat with an SFU student, please complete the attached form and have your child return it to his or her teacher or directly to the SFU student.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me or the student. Our contact information is provided in the sidebar and below my signature.

On behalf of my students and I, thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lannie Kanevsky". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lannie Kanevsky, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Educ 428 Student's contact information

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Consent Form

My daughter/son, _____, has my
(child's first and last name)

permission to chat with a student from Simon Fraser University.

Child's age: _____

Teacher's name: _____

Gender: Male Female

Please provide your phone number and email address below so you can be contacted to arrange a time and date that is convenient for you and your family.

Phone numbers: Day _____

Evening _____

Email address (if available): _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Parent's or Guardian's Name Printed

Date

Thank you again!



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The purpose of this conversation will be for the SFU student to gain a gifted individual's thoughts on what it means to be "smart" and/or creative, and her/his learning process and preferences. This usually lasts 30-60 minutes. It is hoped that the outcome of these discussions will enlighten her/his future efforts to understand and meet the needs of highly able students. This conversations will be scheduled at your convenience.

If you are willing to participate in this interview, please complete the consent form attached to this letter and return it to the student.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me or the student. Our contact information is provided in the sidebar and below my signature.

On behalf of my students and I, thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lannie Kanevsky".

Lannie Kanevsky, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Educ 428 Student's contact information

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Consent Form

I, _____, agree to be
Print first and last name of participant

interviewed by a student from Simon Fraser University who is enrolled in Educ 428: Nature and Nurture of the Gifted.

Please provide your phone number and email address below so the student can contact you to arrange a time and date that is convenient for you and your family.

Phone numbers: Day _____

Evening _____

Email address : _____

Participant's signature

Date

Thank you!