

Elizabeth Woods, Elementary Gifted Support Teacher  
Robyn Bailey Orchard, Jr. High English Teacher  
Matt Scaife, Sr. High Gifted Support Coordinator  
Gifted Education Meeting  
2/19/19, Blairsville High School

- A. Regina Geesey and her staff of two gifted support teachers K-12 organized a meeting of gifted support teachers in Indiana County in order to meet collectively and discuss the following topics:
1. Models of programming -How do you engage your gifted learner in the classroom? Differentiated learning - stations? Common Core/adding complexity & depth? etc.
  2. Twice Exceptional Students - ADHD? Asperger's Syndrome?
  3. Underachievement of Gifted Students - Organizational skills/executive Function?
  4. Assessment - Use of Pre, Formative and Summative
  5. Learning Models - (ATM -Autonomous learning model), Mentorships/career opportunities, Individual/self study? etc.
  6. Co-teaching and Collaboration -working with other teachers

A Google Classroom was created for Indiana County gifted support teachers and coordinators to warehouse questions, answers, and materials for all things related to gifted education.

- B. There is benefit to participating in Indiana County Gifted Support meetings. The opportunity to discuss topics related to gifted education with others is meaningful especially when it comes to understanding best practices and mandates. The materials and handouts provided by the Blairsville/Saltsburg gifted support teachers were very informative and useful.

Regina Geesey charged the gifted support teachers in attendance with finding out how many gifted evaluations took place this year based on parent requests versus teacher or data referrals in our districts.

Regina Geesey hopes that "as a group we would like to analyze how many students (no names...just numbers) were evaluated before a universal screening process is established, and then after using a universal screening process...this would assist us in strongly recommending a universal screening process in our districts." Bobbi Mack gave her approval to share this information with Regina Geesey.

Systematic universal screening for students who match the data profile of potentially gifted students is mandated by Chapter 16. Systematic universal screening of data district wide is an area that can be strengthened.

In regards to the universal screening process at IASD at the elementary level, Elizabeth created gifted screening data collection sheets and is piloting the process from the perspective of the District, at all four elementary schools.

Bobbi, Lawra, and Elizabeth have discussed the fact that a clear explanation of IASD's screening and evaluation procedures and the roles and responsibilities of teachers and staff needs to be provided to staff.

An additional discussion of interest was the wide diversity in county schools with the percentage of students identified as 'gifted'. Indiana High School was noted with the highest percentage of students identified followed by other Indiana Area buildings. Discussion regarding possible explanations for the significant difference in county schools noted that Indiana does have both the IUP Campus and IRMC facilities within their school district, which would likely correlate with an expected elevated rate in comparison to the other geographical locations. This conversation lead to further discussion with noted changes in need of a GIEP (specially designed instruction) as students move from elementary to middle school to the high school level.

Developmental milestones were discussed as one of the possible explanations. Another explanation was attributed to the diversity in the depth and breadth of course offerings, most notably at the high school level. The difficulty in determining NEED of specially designed instruction at the high school level was discussed in depth. It is important to note that the Chapter 16 guidelines do not consider the following courses when provided in the same manner as they would be for all students, as providing Enrichment and/or Acceleration that are mandated requirements of a GIEP: AP courses, Honors courses, dual enrollment or college in high school.

Bill Waryck  
PSFCA  
Feb. 14, 15, 16

Teacher/Coach  
  
Penn State Univ.

**RESUME:**

**Part A.**

I attended the PSFCA football coaching clinic on February 14-16 at Penn State, State College, PA. Thursday night headed by coach Franklin from Penn State and Temple head coach Rod Foley who promoted his new program and Temple. Also Thursday I was able to attend talks by California University of PA and Edinboro University of PA defensive coordinators talk about schemes and coaching kids in general. Both coordinators had ideas that may help us more safely and effectively coach our student athletes. Mike Craig from Cal U. was particularly interesting in terms of strategy because he coaches a defensive framework similar to ours asking his players to compete using similar assignments and techniques. Coach Franklin's talk emphasized coaching for the right reason and keeping the important things in mind. He had just lost his friend and mentor from Vanderbilt University who died of a heart attack, suddenly, the day before his retirement party. That event made Coach Franklin think about not just winning but enjoying the process and helping kids enjoy the process as well. That is something that is even more important at our level. Friday, multiple coaches were available during multiple sessions. I saw Temple's defensive line coach discuss defensive line techniques, Penn State's defensive coordinator talk about blitzes, and Pitt's defensive line coach talk about basic drill and pass rush techniques. There were two headlining coaches at the end of the day. Coach Narduzzi from the University of Pittsburgh talked about coaching linebackers effectively with an eye toward safe tackling. Finally, retired hall of fame coach Frank Beamer from Virginia Tech discussed his specialty, coaching special teams. On Saturday morning the coaches from Pitt, Penn State, and Temple demonstrated on field drills for coaching running backs, offensive linemen, long snappers, wide receivers, and punt protectors and punt coverers. They emphasized details and points to best coach players safely.

**Part B.**

This workshop was highly informational and quite beneficial for coaching football. It helped learn how to better prepare both myself and my players for competitions. It also helps look at how to more safely teach our players to both achieve successful results and do so with minimum risk of injury. This is important to our school and district at minimum as part of our student activity and participation in our middle states assessment. Coaching football is constantly changing both to "keep up with" the opposition and to keep our athletes safer. Clinics like this and the programs they present help us in our attempts to do those.

I have and will continue to share these ideas with other coaches via HUDL, e-notes, and coaches' meetings.



PMEA District 3 Jazz Festival - Penns Manor High School - February 15-16, 2019

On February 15th and 16th, I had the privilege of attending the PMEA District 3 Jazz Festival. The festival was held in the Penns Manor School District over two days with almost twenty school districts attending. Indiana Senior High School had fourteen successful musicians audition into one of the three jazz ensembles. It was an educational and fantastic experience for both students and directors.

The festival contained several opportunities for development of both students and directors over the two day conference. A large amount of insight was gained simply by observing the guest conductors work with the students in the large rehearsals. Dr. William Stowman worked with the top band (red band), Mr. Joshua Hilliard worked with the middle band (white band), and Mr. Royce Hetrick worked with the developing band (blue band). Each director filled a folder with music that was both challenging and educational.

Dr. William Stowman worked with the red band through several methods. I spent some time watching Dr. Stowman discuss elements of improvisation. He likened it to telling a story using notes that helped the story along. He did a lot of demonstration and modelling with the band's rhythm section. One student asked "Is there a scale that I can use over this section?" This is a very common question asked by students at IHS. He took a minute to explain levels of using scales to play the changes. However, he encouraged students to take risks and color their solos. The activity he used required the rhythm section to vamp the solo section while everyone took four measures to solo. It was a proud moment as 3 of the 4 rhythm section members were from Indiana! Every student in the band took a four bar solo using scales Dr. Stowman suggested. Their solo parts. As the director at Messiah College, it was apparent these methods work at the university level as well.

Mr. Joshua Hilliard worked with the blue band in similar successful methods in the middle band. I observed him spending more time on fundamentals. Breathing, articulation, pitch, and rhythm dominated his approach to the music presented in the folder. He was conscience of "chops" or fatigue that comes with playing. It was fantastic to see him steer rehearsals around this inevitable fatigue. Most time was spent rehearsing sections in small groups, singing parts, or clapping parts. He would ask for full out a few times to get a big picture, but again it was with student fatigue in mind.

Mr. Royce Hetrick was an excellent choice for our developing band. I observed him with great respect as he kept the energy level very high throughout the two day festival. He had students committed to playing well for him and themselves. I was most impressed with the music he chose for the folder as I look to use some of this for our developing jazz ensemble (Jazz II ensemble). I can envision things being done with this band to our jazz II ensemble. Again, he focused on the fundamentals of breathing, articulations, pitch, and rhythms. Mr. Hetrick also used common language and phrases that I find myself telling students each rehearsal. Additionally, he took time to discuss history with students as it is an important element when trying to play in the style. For example, he spoke with students in regard to Count Basie and his orchestras. Taking the time to discuss the Basie style allowed students to apply the feel and understanding of the written parts. It was appreciated to hear another professional emphasize points made in our home school.

As a director, I was treated to a presentation about jazz and its application to the developing pianist. Dr. Keith Young gave an outstanding presentation demystifying the young jazz pianist. Our very own Lily Boulard was his case study that he referred to often. He praised her for her work and dedication to learning jazz theory and jazz piano. Dr. Young gave extremely helpful handouts that I immediately put into action. During the break I was able to directly apply this to music that we will be playing in April with our guest artist in residence. I now have a resource to start young pianists in our jazz program. So far in my career, it has been difficult to teach this without the students already having a tremendous amount of theory learned. Dr. Young was able to give some insight to starting and continuing students through the process provided.

Overall, the festival and concluding concert were very successful. I hope that our students are afforded the opportunity in the future to attend these types of festivals. They work extremely hard to get into the ensembles and then continue to work hard with other outstanding musicians throughout the area. We had a record fourteen students successfully audition for the ensembles! Furthermore, they work with some of the leading educators in the field. It is great to get this type of learning for both students and directors that we can take back to our programs. I look to share this experience with my fellow music colleagues and certainly with our students at IHS!

**Names: Amy Rebanyski and Beth A. Murphy Positions: P.E. and ESL**

**Conference Attended: Mindfulness With Children in Community and School Settings, Diane R. Gehart, Ph.D. (California State University, Northridge)**

**Date: March 1, 2019 Location: Westmoreland Intermediate Unit, Greensburg, PA**

**A. Summary of conference session attended.**

Diane R. Gehart, Ph.D., is a professor in the Counseling and Marriage and Family Therapy Program at California State University, Northridge. She has developed mindfulness programs for use in school, university, and private-practice settings. She authored several books. The objectives of the day's workshop: 1. Choose an appropriate mindfulness-based curriculum for agency/practice- or school-based settings.; 2. Introduce basic mindfulness and related skills to K-12 youth.; and 3. Conduct a mindfulness exercise with children and youth.

**Mindfulness definition: Self-regulated, present-moment awareness; welcomes all experience without preconception or judgment; accepting this with curiosity and compassion. In other words, observing a single phenomenon (e.g., breath) while compassionately and non-judgmentally quieting the inner chatter in the mind. NOT about stopping thoughts, but quieting it. It's not about suppression of emotions or negative feelings. It IS to focus on purpose.**

In our society, immediate gratification, multi-tasking and the value of productivity dominate. For many, practicing mindfulness is most likely a radical idea. This shift from "full-speed" to allowing oneself to sit mindfully for 2 to 5 minutes per day seems challenging. The idea of acceptance is also countercultural. Societally, we have a drive to always improve, aspire for more, and constantly fight for beliefs and rights. We have the tendency to not like ourselves. The concept of accepting where we are now, is challenging. If I accept where I am right now, I may get stuck here. Acceptance is about being emotionally present to this reality.

The evidence shows that if mindfulness is practiced consistently, many disorders that are exacerbated by stress, can be managed. These include both physical and mental disorders including chronic pain, cancer, depression, anxiety and trauma. Mindfulness helps the body better respond to the stressors that "feed into" the disorder. If a person can get their body into that relaxation, mindful state, the body can better respond and "heal" itself.

Further, there are proven relational benefits from practicing mindfulness. Not only can it support relationships with others, but a person's relationship with him/herself. Research shows that practicing mindfulness affects the brain in the following ways. It increases left-sided anterior activation (the brain pattern associated with positive disposition); reduces the grey matter density of amygdala (stress response); and increases grey matter density of hippocampus (memory). The long-term effects include: greater grey matter density in the brain stem (relaxation response) and in the prefrontal cortex; improved attentional processing; and increased activity in anterior cingulate cortex (believed to govern self-regulation).

**Mindfulness in schools. Canada is the leader in implementing this in their schools. It has improved the focus and intention, the regulation of strong moods, improved behavior and social outcomes, academic performance, improved physical well being and treatment for ADHD.**

To teach mindfulness, teachers and parents need to keep some things in mind. We must generate motivation because this is countercultural to slow down and meditate. Develop a realistic plan and keep it small (2-5 minutes to start). There are 6 basic steps for teaching: 1. identify need/interest, 2. strengthen motivation,

3. introduce the practice, 4. develop a practice plan, 5. anticipate barriers to practice, and 6. fine tune and follow up.

**B. Reflection on conference value. How aligns with district initiatives, programs, and instruction.**

IASD is currently building an SEL (Social Emotional Learning) program. Next year, Ben Franklin will pilot the PATHS program. Our intention would be to add mindfulness lessons to this program as a district-wide plan unfolds. We would like to offer some professional development for teachers in order to begin using the techniques and strategies to introduce and practice mindfulness with their students. Long term, our hope is to create a school-wide, district-wide culture of mindfulness.