

SUPPLEMENT TO PHI DELTA KAPPAN

Phi Delta Kappan

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION GUIDE

By Lois Brown Easton

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Using this guide

This discussion guide is intended to assist *Kappan* readers who want to use articles in staff meetings or university classroom discussions.

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Literature opens doors for all children

By Donna L. Miller

Phi Delta Kappan, 94 (4), 28-33

OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLE

Literature is a way that all students, especially adolescents, can build language skills, explore their own struggles and, at the same time, develop awareness and understanding of those who are differently able.

KEY POINTS

- Literature is a powerful tool for helping all students develop awareness of and empathy for people who live with special needs.
- Adolescents, in particular, identify with characters who struggle, as do most young people, to fit in.
- Differently able students need to see themselves in stories in which characters are not marginalized, are fully developed, and take an active role in life.
- The author describes several books in detail that feature characters who have (or are close to someone who has) autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), cerebral palsy, mobility impairment, or some other exceptional challenge.
- The author lists many other books that address disability and also provides a set of characteristics for evaluating such books.
- Sometimes called “inclusion literature,” these books may help young people reconnect with learning (Andrews, 1998).
- The author describes in detail *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (about a mathematical whiz who has autism), *Rules* (about a girl whose friend is a musician and has cerebral palsy and whose brother has autism), and *Out of My Mind* (about a girl who has the gift of words, is acutely aware of music, and has cerebral palsy).
- Inclusion literature can help young people work to stop prejudice and bullying and develop good citizenship.
- With literature as the core, the English language arts curriculum is the ideal place for helping young people — often in inclusive classrooms — get a healthy perspective on differences (their own and others’), address their fears about being different, refute negative stereotypes, and see differently able people through different eyes.

DEEPEN YOUR THINKING

Choose one or more of these individual inquiry topics for thinking and writing.

1. What has been your experience working with differently able students?
2. How do you think attitudes and approaches towards working with differently able students have changed in the last 20 years?
3. In what ways has the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act changed over the years?
4. What are the repercussions of the policy and practice known as “inclusion” in schools you know?
5. To what extent do the schools you know provide what the author calls “a democratic English language arts curriculum that reflects the experiences and history of all students, including those who represent a range of exceptionalities”?
6. How do the Common Core State Standards support the kind of reading the author advocates?
7. To what extent do you think adolescent readers will be interested in reading about young people who are differently able?

EXTEND YOUR THOUGHTS THROUGH ACTIVITIES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Melody, the main character in *Out of My Mind*, one of the books referenced by the author, declares, “We all have disabilities. What’s yours?” (p. 168). With your colleagues, use the following protocol to discuss this quote as it relates to your school (or a school you know well).

A Protocol for Deconstructing Text

If you have more than five people in your group, have one member serve as facilitator and timekeeper. As facilitator and timekeeper, this person should make sure group members stay on topic, follow the directions for each step, and move to the next step at the right time. With fewer people, the group can divide the facilitator responsibilities among themselves.

The group may also want to have a recorder who takes notes on key points, perhaps on a whiteboard or a large piece of chart paper, using markers, or projected from a computer onto a screen. The important thing is that the rest of the group can keep track of what is being said. For the last step, the recorder might prepare in advance a large copy of the diagram on a piece of chart paper.

Step One: Writing (5 minutes)

Each member of the group should write down the quotation and then do a “free write” on it, that is, writing whatever comes to mind in terms of the quote.

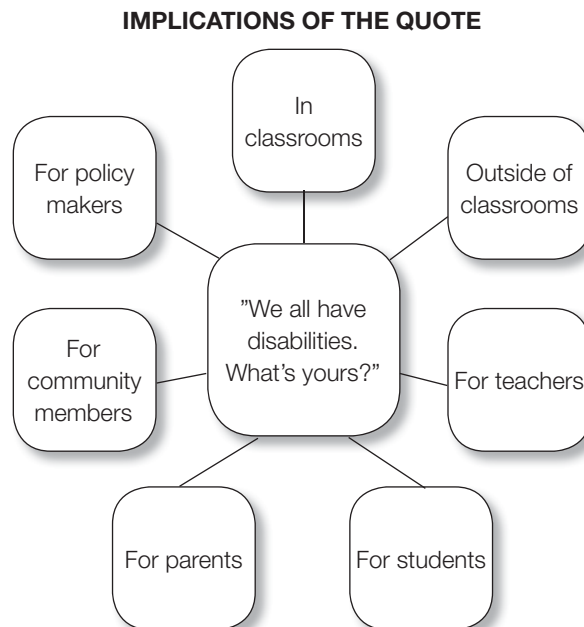
Step Two: Discussion of key words (10 minutes)

The group should then focus on one word or phrase at a time and discuss what the word or phrase means. The discussion should first focus on the literal meaning (denotation) of the word or phrase and then move to the metaphorical (connotative) meanings. In this discussion, participants should discuss these words or phrases:

“We all. . . .”
“Disabilities. . . .”
“What’s yours?”

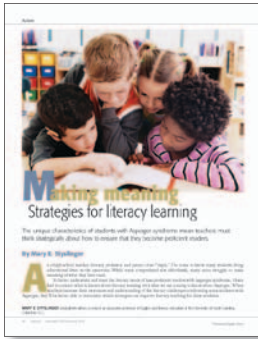
Step Three: Implications (15 minutes)

Having come to some shared understanding of the meaning of the words and phrases, the group should then discuss what the entire phrase means. Have the group use the following schematic to consider the range of implications.



References

- Andrews, S. (1998). Inclusion literature: A resource listing. *ALAN Review*, 25 (3), 28-30.
- Draper, S. (2010). *Out of my mind*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books.



Making meaning: Asperger syndrome and literacy learning

By Mary E. Styslinger

Phi Delta Kappan, 94 (4), 40-44

OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLE

Children with Asperger syndrome are challenged when asked to make meaning through language, but their teachers can draw upon the characteristics of Asperger syndrome to help them with literacy learning.

KEY POINTS

- The author is a high school teacher, literacy professor, and parent of a child with Asperger syndrome.
- Asperger syndrome is a type of autism with varying degrees, but most people with Asperger syndrome experience problems attending to social cues, reading nonverbal behaviors, understanding verbal conventions and other's beliefs, shifting and sharing attention, and differentiating relevancy.
- These characteristics affect learning literacy.
- Students with Asperger syndrome are likely to recognize words but not as likely to comprehend meaning.
- As literal thinkers, they find it difficult to make meaning beyond what is concrete in text, such as making inferences or understanding metaphors.
- Similarly, in discussion, they're unlikely to understand the nuances of facial expression or tone.
- They're also unlikely to monitor their own learning, adjusting what they do in order to understand or comprehend at a deeper than literal level.
- Some literacy strategies, such as use of activating prior knowledge or free-writing, may actually confuse students with Asperger syndrome.
- Some strategies work well with students with Asperger syndrome, such as defining and illustrating for them the meaning of reading beyond literal and word-level comprehension.
- Strategies such as these work well with Asperger syndrome students:
 - Modeling a variety of reading strategies through think-alouds;
 - Incorporating their often intense special interests into literacy experiences;
 - Encouraging students to read aloud;
 - Providing visual pathways to understanding;
 - Demonstrating expected behaviors in discussion; and
 - Adapting writing assignments.

DEEPEN YOUR THINKING

Choose one or more of these individual inquiry topics for thinking and writing.

1. What experiences have you had with young people who have Asperger syndrome?
2. What do you know about Asperger syndrome from them or from other sources of information?
3. What kinds of difficulties do you think students with Asperger syndrome would have learning to read, write, listen, and speak in schools?

4. How do you think the strength Asperger syndrome students have with “visual cue systems, seeing and remembering patterns in letters, words, and text easily” could be helpful in terms of learning literacy?
5. How could the tendency of Asperger syndrome students to understand things literally but not in other ways (such as understanding denotative meanings) interfere with learning in school?
6. How do you think problems with social cues, such as knowing the unspoken rules for conversation, and nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions and tone, could interfere with learning in school?
7. How do you think the inability to self-monitor learning and adjust learning strategies accordingly could interfere with learning in school?
8. The author suggests that otherwise useful literacy skills, such as accessing background knowledge and free-writing, might not help students with Asperger syndrome. Why do you think these skills might actually hamper their learning efforts?
9. In what ways would it help to teach students with Asperger syndrome what reading comprehension is, as well as several strategies for reading to understand?
10. Why would reading aloud and using a variety of visual supports help Asperger syndrome students understand what they’re reading?

EXTEND YOUR THOUGHTS THROUGH ACTIVITIES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Work with colleagues to apply what you have learned about literacy and students with Asperger syndrome. Discuss the following 4th-grade Common Core State Standards for English language arts and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. Which of the strategies described by the author might help Asperger syndrome students achieve the standards?

Reading

1. Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words. (Phonics and Word Recognition)
 - a. Use combined knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (e.g., roots and affixes) to read accurately unfamiliar multisyllabic words in context and out of context.
2. Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. (Fluency)
 - a. Read on-level text with purpose and understanding.
 - b. Read on-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.
 - c. Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

Writing

1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information. (Text Type and Purposes)
 - a. Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer’s purpose.
 - b. Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.
 - c. Link opinion and reasons using words and phrases (e.g., for instance, in order to, in addition).
 - d. Provide a concluding statement related to the opinion presented.
2. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing. (Production and Distribution of Writing)
3. Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources. (Research to Build and Present Knowledge)



G-R-O-U-P W-O-R-K DOESN'T SPELL COLLABORATION

By Timothy Quinn

Phi Delta Kappan, 94 (4), 46-48

OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLE

Instead of assuming that students can collaborate — a skill that is important in the 21st century — teachers must directly teach them to do so and provide various forms of scaffolding to ensure their mastery of the skill.

KEY POINTS

- Collaboration is an important skill for the 21st century.
- Collaboration through technology has even solved scientific problems that scientists working alone have been unable to solve.
- Group work, which can be used as an unproductive time-filler, does not count as collaboration.
- Teachers cannot assume that students know how to collaborate; they must systematically teach and model the appropriate skills and scaffold the learning and application of those skills.
- Collaboration skills include listening, establishing group goals, compromising, assigning roles, determining how to be accountable, giving helpful feedback, and assessing group progress.
- Teachers can scaffold collaboration by creating an agenda and roles for the first few experiences in collaborating.
- Students can be accountable for their collaborative work by setting goals for their work, creating a division of labor chart, keeping a log, and checking in with the teacher at key points.
- They should also reflect on their collaborative experiences.
- Interpersonal and procedural issues (such as when and where to meet) can be challenging to the teacher who wants students to collaborate.
- Teachers also need to decide how to make sure all students are participating equally and how to assess work created by groups.
- It is because of these workplace issues — inequality, unfairness, interpersonal conflict, and bureaucratic hurdles — that collaboration should be part of classroom life.

DEEPEN YOUR THINKING

Choose one or more of these individual inquiry topics for thinking and writing.

1. To what extent did you experience group work — as opposed to collaboration — when you were in school?
2. To what extent do you think group work is more common in today's schools than collaboration?
3. How do you think group work in schools is perceived by educators? By community members? By business people?
4. To what extent do you think collaboration is important in today's workplace and institutions of higher education?
5. What do we assume students know about collaborating with peers?
6. What are the components of a good collaborative assignment? What should teachers do before, during, and after assigning collaboration?
7. How can a teacher model collaboration?
8. In your opinion, what are the most serious objections to collaboration?

EXTEND YOUR THOUGHTS THROUGH ACTIVITIES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

With colleagues, collaborate online to create a plan for more collaboration at your school. Use Google Docs or another online program that promotes collaboration. Directions are given for Google Docs and will vary for other programs that allow you to create collaboratively online.

1. All participants should create a Google account or sign in to a Google account they already have.
2. Select one person in your group to be the initiator. All members of the group should give the initiator their email addresses.
3. If there are more than three people in the group, the group should divide into writing groups of no more than three persons each, staggering the times that they work on the document. For example, three people may sign up to work on the document from 2:00 to 2:15, followed by three more, and then by three more. Eventually, everyone will review the nearly final version of the document and agree to changes that will lead to a final version.
4. After accessing the Google Docs site, the initiator should click CREATE on the left side of the screen. Clicking that button will yield a list of products the group can cocreate: Document, Presentation, Spreadsheet, Form, Drawings, Folder, or More. For the purpose of this activity, select Document.
5. After selecting Document, the initiator should find a screen called “Untitled document” and what looks like a blank page. The initiator should type “Our School’s Plan for Collaboration” on the document itself.
6. Then, the initiator should save the document by clicking on the title “Untitled document” and typing in the name “Our School’s Plan for Collaboration.”
7. The simplest way to share a document and allow multiple persons to work on it is to click the “Share” button in the upper right corner.
 - a. This leads to a screen that has the words “Sharing Settings” at the top. The initiator should click on the button marked “Change” in blue, next to the “Private — Only the people below have access.”
 - b. This will lead to three choices: 1. Public on the web. 2. Anyone with the link. 3. Private. The initiator should click next to the “Anyone with the link.”
 - c. Then, the initiator should click the words in blue “Can view” to give the other options. The initiator should choose the “Can edit” option by clicking it.
 - d. The initiator should click the Save button on the bottom of this screen.
 - e. Then, the initiator should click on the URL that is provided on the top in the box of the screen called “Sharing Settings.” The initiator should email this URL to everyone in the group with an invitation to access the site. The initiator should go back to the blank document titled “Our School’s Plan for Collaboration.”
 - f. Group members receiving the URL in an email message should click on it, and they will find themselves on the same page as the initiator.
8. An alternative to this method is listed below.
 - a. The initiator can click the third choice in Step 6b, “Private.” This leads to a screen that allows the initiator to enter everyone’s emails (“Add people”) at the bottom of the screen. The group’s email addresses may already be in the initiator’s contact list, in which case, placing the cursor in the box for the email addresses of others brings up the box “Choose from contacts,” and the initiator can click on those. Otherwise, the initiator needs to add the emails manually.
 - b. The initiator should click the box marked “Notify people via email” and click “Add message.” The message could be as simple as “You are invited to collaborate on a document in Google Docs.”
 - c. Next the initiator should determine how the rest of the group will interact by clicking on the blue “Can edit” button, which brings up two other choices: “Can comment” and “Can view.” The initiator should select. “Can edit.”
 - d. Finally, the initiator should complete the sharing process by clicking on “Share and Save” as well as “Send a copy to myself” and then click the “Done” button at the bottom of this screen to return to the main screen.
 - e. Participants should receive this message in their inboxes:

I've shared an item with you.

You are invited to collaborate on a document in Google Docs.

Following that message will be an icon (probably in blue) followed by the words "Our School's Plan for Collaboration."

Participants should click on the words "Our School's Plan for Collaboration," and they will find themselves on the same page the initiator is on.

9. Once everyone is on the page containing the document called "Our School's Plan for Collaboration," anyone can contribute to the document as well as comment on it.
 - a. Names of participants are featured in the upper right corner of the document page, color-coded.
 - b. To make a contribution/change/delete something, participants simply begin to type on the document. As participants type, the cursor changes color (matching the color for the participant in the upper right hand corner) and the email address (except for .com) is displayed so everyone can tell who is typing.
 - c. To comment on the document, participants can click on the participant list to bring up a chat box, which everyone can use to talk about the document, entering text at the bottom of the chat box and pressing enter to display.
 - d. At this point, the initiator (or someone else) may need to become the facilitator, especially if more than three people are working on the document at once. The facilitator may need to keep order so that people do not "interrupt" each other to type in additions/changes/deletions. The chat box can be used for this purpose. The facilitator might also help participants follow some common norms of collaboration (see Garmston & Wellman, 1999, p. 37).
 - e. If more than three people are working on the document, the room becomes too crowded; instead, as suggested in Step 3, writing groups can stagger their work, paying respectful attention to what has been written earlier and making changes/additions/deletions carefully. After everyone has worked on the document in a writing group, the whole group needs to look at it and discuss changes through the chatbox. The facilitator should make changes that are agreed upon by the entire group.
 - f. The final document can be printed and shared or shared online.



What immigrant students can teach us about new media literacy

By Wan Shun Eva Lam

Phi Delta Kappan, 94 (4), 62-65

OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLE

Young people who have immigrated have developed highly effective media literacy skills to get information and network with people from their countries of origin, and these skills can help them become more effective learners in schools.

KEY POINTS

- Many adolescents — as many as 72% — in families that have immigrated are using social media and online tools to communicate.
- They are developing language, literacy, and social skills that teachers can use to help them learn in other areas.
- In addition to networking and getting information, they engage in “interest-driven practices, such as online gaming, music, fan fiction, and fan art.”
- They are prime candidates for “connected learning,” which advocates for the use of multiple resources, including digital networks.
- Culturally responsive learning — connecting to students’ cultures and identities, first languages, and home as well as original communities — can help students engage in learning and achieve.
- Young people who have immigrated show “dexterity of language use” as they communicate with different people using different languages and tools, such as social networking sites, instant messaging, and online journals; navigate a variety of web sites; and negotiate “varying social and cultural contexts and communities.”
- Educators need to understand how to tap into immigrants’ expertise and experiences in communicating across national borders outside school and to reconsider how teaching practices could take advantage of these within school.
- Indeed, immigrant youth’s linguistic, research, and social skills can be seen as cultural capital, comparable to the skills and experiences of upper-class children.
- Immigrant youth, who may see issues from local, national, and global perspectives, can help broaden the treatment of curriculum topics.

DEEPEN YOUR THINKING

Choose one or more of these individual inquiry topics for thinking and writing.

1. What experiences have you had working with immigrant children and youth?
2. Generally, what assets do immigrant students bring to school learning experiences? What challenges do they offer educators?
3. How do the schools you know help immigrant students acculturate to their new learning environments?
4. In the schools you know, how well is school learning connected to students’ cultures, native languages, identities, and communities?
5. To what extent do schools you know recognize and use the digital expertise that students of all backgrounds bring to school? Immigrant students?
6. To what extent do schools understand how dexterous immigrant students are in terms of language use? Information access? Ability to build social networks?
7. What are some actions schools can take to understand what their immigrant students bring to the learning environment?

EXTEND YOUR THOUGHTS THROUGH ACTIVITIES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Work with colleagues to have a dialogue about this article according to the protocol “The Most Important Thing” (Killion, 2001). Select any of the subtopics below and follow the rules of dialogue.

Subtopics: **The most important thing**

About immigrant students is. . . .

About digital media in schools is. . . .

About media literacy is. . . .

About literacy learning is

About socialization is. . . .

About culturally responsive pedagogy is. . . .

About interest-driven practices is. . . .

About connected learning is. . . .

About home and community experiences is. . . .

About perspectives from outside the immigrant’s new country is

About dexterity of language use is. . . .

About the ability to navigate the Internet is. . . .

About plural literacy practices is. . . .

About cultural capital is. . . .

RULES OF DIALOGUE

- Engage in inquiry, not advocacy.
- Listen first to understand.
- Avoid making grand pronouncements (“Everyone says so.”)
- Speak for yourself (not for people in your department, for example).
- Refrain from characterizing the views of others in a critical way.
- Listen with resilience (willingness to hold your thoughts but readiness to contribute them when appropriate).
- Avoid making negative attributions (“You only say this because you are. . . .”).
- Refrain from side conversations.
- Work together on ideas.
- Discuss assumptions.
- Keep an open-minded attitude about the outcome (and the interim).
- Share your best thinking.
- Suspend your disbeliefs, opinions, and judgments.
- Search for strengths in every idea.
- Follow other norms as agreed upon in your group.

Reference

Killion, J. (2001). *The most important thing*. Personal communication.

Applications

This Professional Development Guide was created with the characteristics of adult learners in mind (Tallerico, 2005):

- Active engagement
- Relevance to current challenges
- Integration of experience
- Learning style variation
- Choice and self-direction

As you think about sharing this article with other adults, how could you fulfill the adult learning needs above?

This Professional Development Guide was created so that readers could apply what they have learned to work in classrooms (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001):

- Identifying Similarities and Differences
- Summarizing and Note-Taking
- Reinforcing Effort and Providing Recognition
- Homework and Practice
- Nonlinguistic Representations
- Cooperative Learning
- Setting Objectives and Providing Feedback
- Generating and Testing Hypotheses
- Cues, Questions, and Advance Organizers

As you think about sharing this article with classroom teachers, how could you use these strategies with them?

References

Marzano, R.J., Pickering, D., & Pollock, J.E. (2001). *Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Tallerico, M. (2005). *Supporting and sustaining teachers' professional development: A principal's guide* (pp. 54-63). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

About the Author

Lois Brown Easton is a consultant, coach, and author with a particular interest in learning designs — for adults and for students. She retired as director of professional development at Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center, Estes Park, Colo. From 1992 to 1994, she was director of Re:Learning Systems at the Education Commission of the States (ECS). Re:Learning was a partnership between the Coalition of Essential Schools and ECS. Before that, she served in the Arizona Department of Education in a variety of positions: English/language arts coordinator, director of curriculum and instruction, and director of curriculum and assessment planning.

A middle school English teacher for 15 years, Easton earned her Ph.D. at the University of Arizona. Easton has been a frequent presenter at conferences and a contributor to educational journals.

She was editor and contributor to *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning* (NSDC, 2004 & 2008). Her other books include:

- *The Other Side of Curriculum: Lessons From Learners* (Heinemann, 2002);
- *Engaging the Disengaged: How Schools Can Help Struggling Students Succeed* (Corwin, 2008);
- *Protocols for Professional Learning* (ASCD, 2009); and
- *Professional Learning Communities by Design: Putting the Learning Back Into PLCs* (Learning Forward and Corwin, 2011).

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