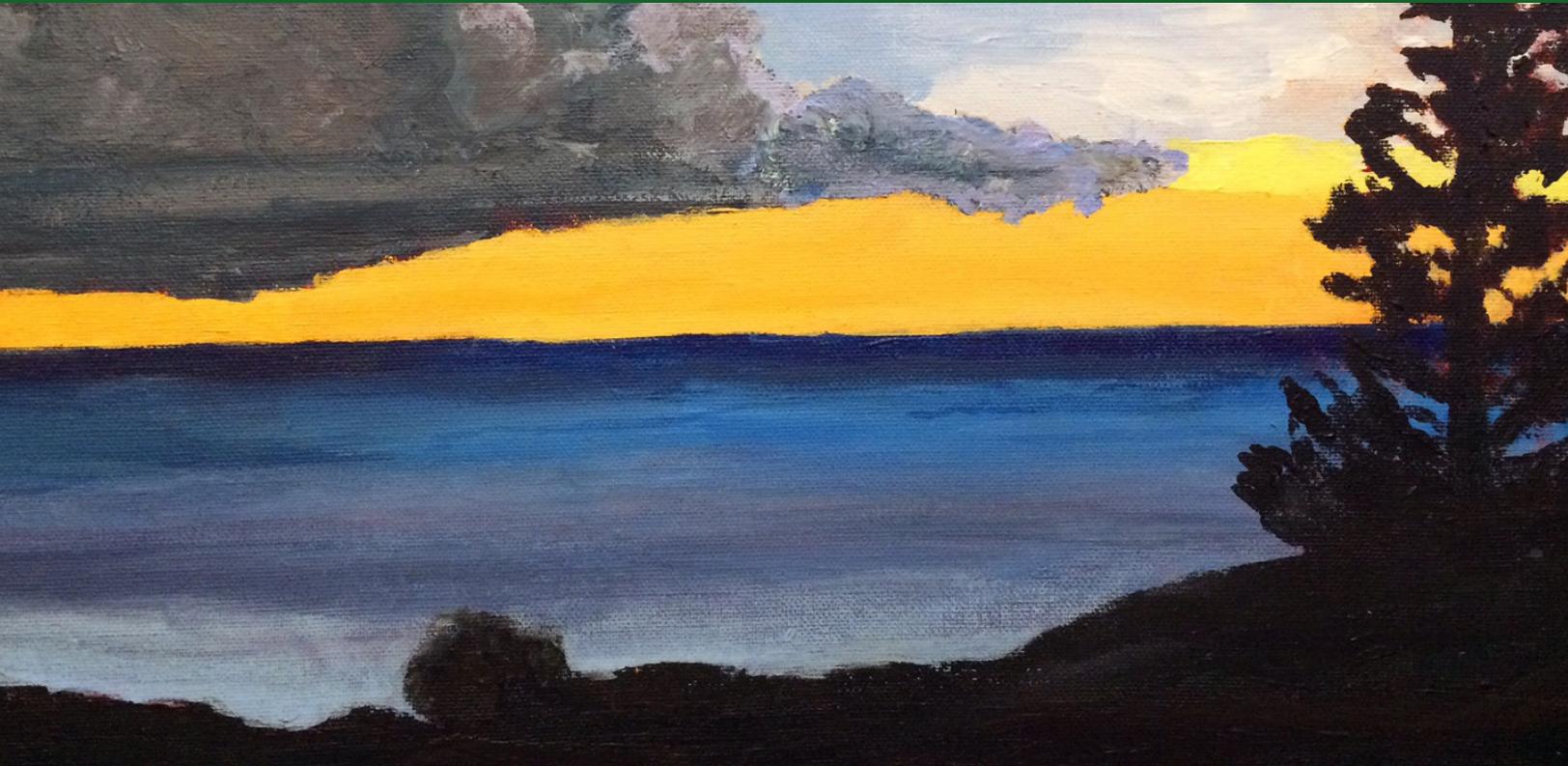


# Innovate!

Issue 4: April/May 2018



**The Center for Gifted**  
a Northern Illinois University partner

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*Innovate!* is a publication of The Center for Gifted and Midwest Torrance Center for Creativity

# Innovate and Create!

Welcome to our fourth issue of *Innovate!* While I write this, spring has begun its steady pace and summer is close on its heels. On the last day of school, hundreds of gifted children will pour out of traditional classrooms eager for the outdoors and new experiences—to learn, explore, and express themselves in more open and creative settings. I think of the e.e. cummings' poem "maggy and milly and molly and may" at this time of year because it captures the essence of what the Center for Gifted tries to embody in its offering to students. The children in cummings' poem were each drawn to something on the beach where they played. One discovered "a shell that sang," another "a stranded star," and another "a smooth round stone/as small as a world and as large as alone" (<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/poems-kids>). Blessed by the promise of unscheduled time and free from tests or assigned work, these children discovered their own treasures on the beach.

In this issue of *Innovate*, articles by Kathryn Haydon, Dorothy Sisk, Kristy Doss and Lisa Bloom, and Jerry Flack show how important this creative dimension is for gifted students—how vital to any meaningful exploration of the world within and around them. Invention, intuition, and

artistic sensibility ignite their thinking in so many unexpected ways. The authors' practical wisdom and ideas address the question of how we can respond to their emotional sensitivities and provide advanced enrichment that makes learning more alive and free. How can we guide gifted children to the learning opportunities—places, subjects, resources—that feed their curiosity and hunger for novelty in the summer months?

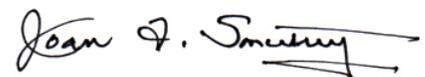
The summer programs at the Center for Gifted aim for the kind of joyful immersion in a subject that gifted learners love. Students, PreK-12, will be able to choose from the arts, humanities, technology, robotics, computer design and animation, and science and engineering. Learning adventures await participants with topics such as, Science Filmmaking; Motors, Mechanics, and Engineering; Makerspace Missions; Sketch Comedy Writing; Physics of Light: Kaleidoscopes, Prisms, and Rainbows; Introduction to Improv; Adventures in Drawing and Painting; Historic Games of Strategy and Diplomacy; and Music Recording in a Home Studio.

The Torrance Legacy Creativity Awards competition for students age 8-18 offers another platform for tapping the imagination of young people this summer.

Inspired by creativity pioneer E. Paul Torrance, the competition received hundreds of entries in 2017 in four categories—creative writing (stories and poems), visual arts, music composition, and inventions. Over the last nine years since the program began, students have sent their work from all over the United States, as well as Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Australia, Poland, China, Singapore, South Korea, Kingdom of Bahrain, India, and several countries in Africa.

The Center for Gifted/Midwest Torrance Center for Creativity publishes a yearly magazine with prize-winning poems, stories, visual art pieces, musical scores, and invention designs. It has become a heartening sign for parents and teachers that, despite increased testing and a narrowing curriculum in many schools, creativity is alive and well among so many children and young people. Application forms and information are on our web site.

We hope you will explore the different opportunities available for your children to express their talents—and that you enjoy this fourth issue of *Innovate!*



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2017 International Torrance Award Winners

## Building Rapport Through Inquiry-Based Instruction

by Kristy Kowalske Doss and Lisa Bloom

### Building Rapport through Inquiry-based Instruction

One of the most crucial aspects of a successful learning environment is a strong rapport between teacher and students. In fact, a positive productive student-teacher relationship may be the most critical and, perhaps, the most elusive. Developing positive rapport results in an environment that is playful, respectful, nurturing, and conducive to learning. Careful consideration of instructional method can help in creating this environment. Opting for a method that promotes high engagement and requires consistent, individual interaction with students can lay down a foundation for a teacher to build strong relationships. Inquiry-based instruction is a perfect tool for providing these opportunities.

### Implementing Inquiry-based Instruction

Inquiry-based learning as a type of instruction has been repackaged over the past five years thanks to popular stories emerging from Google where employees received twenty percent of their time to work on self-generated projects of interest. The most notable of the programs is Genius Hour (Krebs & Zvi, 2016) where instructors allot a time period for students to launch an investigation they design. The instructor walks hand-in-hand with the students as they uncover details, develop new ideas and solutions for authentic problems, take wrong turns down dead-end roads, and rejoice as they uncover new information. As the facilitator, the instructor guides the overall experience, helping students understand the metacognitive

thinking processes and experiences, and providing emotional support along the way.

**Cultivating Curiosity.** One of the most important steps in the process is cultivating curiosity. Before the unit begins, the instructor should build enthusiasm. This can be done by hinting at exciting things to come and emphasizing that students will have time to pursue their own ideas. Giving students personal choice will appeal to some students, but may be scary for others who are accustomed to completing mostly teacher-directed tasks. Letting students generate a list of ideas over time can help them find a topic that truly inspires their passion and interest. If the project is one that will span nine weeks, a semester, or the entire school year, it is very important that students be eager enough about a topic to pursue it over extended periods of time. Having them create an ongoing list and discuss ideas with each other can assist in this process. Topic selection is the cornerstone for students to have a meaningful experience.

**Helping Students Design a Proposal.** After students settle in on a topic, instructors need to help them design a research question to frame their investigation. Students will need help with this aspect, as questions can either be too simple (e.g., something found on the internet) or too difficult (e.g., one that includes too many variables and components that will make the entire process overwhelming). Questions should start with why or how in order to make sure they allow for in-depth exploration.

Next, students design a proposal that outlines how they envision the research process unfolding. This does

not mean they are not able to change course along the way. As new experiences emerge, they will need the flexibility to alter their initial plans. Within the proposal, students should look into alternative forms of research outside of typical article analysis. Real researchers conduct surveys, interviews, and observations. They examine artifacts and analyze environments. Students should be encouraged to learn about these methods and implement them as needed.

**Offering Time.** After proposals are approved, teachers must now offer time. This may be one of the most challenging components of the project for teachers—allowing students enough time to experiment, to research, to investigate, to analyze, to fail, to rethink, and to change course when necessary. Time is precious in education. There will be a myriad of items hurtled down the hallways calling out for attention. Instructors must hold fast to their intention of giving students time for personal inquiry and have faith that the outcome will be worth it.

### Building Rapport

Rapport can be a nebulous term because it pertains to a state of being between student and instructor. There are strategies that teachers can use to make a classroom environment more organized and more disciplined, but what does it take to help them establish a joyful give-and-take with their students? Teacher presence, level of satisfaction with the job, overall well-being, interest in the subject area, attitude toward students' age group, humor, empathy, preparation, and "with-it"-ness all play a role in how well an instructor can

build healthy relationships. For teachers looking to improve their rapport with students, inquiry-based instruction may be an ideal method to implement in the classroom. Aspects of inquiry-based instruction are particularly suited to building and maintaining rapport with students.

**Asking Questions.** Teachers will need to ask questions to prompt quality discussions. How is your project going? What are you investigating today? What challenges are you facing? Can I help you figure out how to research this component? Every student will have a different topic to discuss. Discussions will be authentic and will offer teachers the opportunity to understand more about their students' interests, their personalities, and their educational needs. Teachers can also learn more about the motivational style of each student. Those who under-achieve may find it exciting to pursue a topic of personal choice. At the same time, students with little experience guiding their own instruction may find the decision-making process daunting. Instructors will need to offer different support for each student.

**Helping Students Handle Failure.** Inquiry-based instruction opens the door for students to stumble, fall down, and encounter failure. They may have to rework their initial questions, determine alternative routes to acquire information, or find different formats for showcasing their final products. The instructor has the real-world opportunity to encourage a growth mindset in students. Instructors can also show how this process occurs in everyday life. The research skills students learn are important. They are tools that adults use on a daily basis when making informed decisions.

**Trusting Students.** Giving students the opportunity to pick and cultivate an area of interest and to work independently shows a level of trust and respect for student autonomy. Research has documented the powerful effect of

autonomy supportive teaching practices on students' motivation, engagement, and positive regard for their teacher (Reeve, 2016). Supporting autonomy communicates a positive view of students, including a confidence in their natural inclinations toward learning, and this in turn influences students' view of themselves as competent learners.

Inquiry-based learning has the potential to build enthusiasm in the classroom, while also addressing the standards and preparing students to become confident researchers who can seek answers to burning questions. By allowing students to study a topic they love, teachers have the opportunity to communicate with them in an authentic manner. These conversations can help teachers develop strong relationships

with students. Creating rapport starts with caring relationships. Taking the time to let students guide their learning can be one of the most exciting opportunities a teacher can experience in the classroom.

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2018

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# Exciting Opportunities for Summer 2018!

## Summer Wonders - Grades PreK-8

### Buffalo Grove

Prairie Elementary School  
1530 Brandywyn Lane

Session I: June 11-15  
Session II: June 18-22  
Session III: June 25-29  
Session IV: July 2-6

### Glenview

The Center for Gifted  
1926 Waukegan Rd.

Session I: July 2-3  
Session II: July 5-6  
Session III: July 16-20  
Session IV: July 23-27  
Session V: July 30-Aug 3  
Session VI: Aug 6-10  
Session VII: Aug 13-17

### Lincolnshire

Half Day School  
239 Olde Half Day Rd.

Session I: July 9-13  
Session II: July 16-20  
Session III: July 23-27  
Session IV: July 30-Aug 3

### Round Lake / Ingleside

Big Hollow Middle School  
26051 W. Nippersink Rd.

June 18-29

Questions?? 847.901.0173

## Worlds of Wisdom and Wonder - Grades PreK-8

### Barrington

Prairie Middle School  
40 E. Dundee Rd.

Session I: June 18-22  
Session II: June 25-29

### Elmhurst

Sandburg Middle School  
345 E. St. Charles Rd.

June 11-22

### Naperville

Prairie Elementary School  
500 Charles Ave.

Session I: June 18-22  
Session II: June 25-29

## This Summer at Elmhurst College!

### Project '18!

*Innovative summer challenges  
for advanced learners!*

Grades 5-12

### Tinker-A-Thon 2018!

*A MakerSpace for  
younger students!*

Grades 1-5

# Ingenuity. Inspiration. Imagination. Innovation.

# Understanding A Word

by Jerry Flack

*The investigation of the meaning of words is the beginning of education.*

– Antisthenes

Language fluency is a primary trait of gifted, creative, and talented youths. They develop amazingly large vocabularies at a tender age. However, language acquisition is a trait that should emphasize quality as well as quantity. Yes, precocious youth need to engage in vocabulary-building exercises such as the creation of ingenious alphabet projects (e.g., a third-grade student's alphabet book of the cosmos). But they should also pause long enough in their attainment of new words to further appreciate the richness and beauty of language. Verbally gifted youths can learn to experience and savor language in the same way talented art students contemplate a painting by Renoir or precocious musicians listen to a Bach fugue. The **Understanding A Word** project invites such comparisons. By coming to know just one word intimately and understanding its multiple levels of meaning, creative students gain a greater appreciation and understanding for the way all words are utilized. Their innovative explorations become lessons in both the connotative and denotative meanings of words. This undertaking may well introduce students to advanced and specialized dictionaries and thesauri. The **Understanding A Word** investigation is also versatile enough to be used in classrooms, homes, or both.

First, students choose one word, typically an abstract noun that they would like to know more thoroughly and intimately. Sample words may include beauty, patriotism, love, giftedness, inspiration, ingenuity, imagination, innovation, faith, honor, hope, perfection, justice, pride, freedom, nature, peace, and joy. For very young students, concrete words may be substituted. Family (mothers, fathers, or siblings), seasons, birthdays, friendship, sports, parades, pets, and libraries may be suitable words or topics.

Once students have chosen a single word to investigate they can follow the **Understanding A Word** rubric that follows. Innovative teachers, parents, and students may add even more inventive steps.

## Understanding A Word Project Steps

1. Write your own definition of the word. What do you think the word means?
2. Find pictures, news articles, and other media and create a collage that suggests or represents your feelings about the meaning of the word.
3. Write about a personal experience in which the word played a significant part.
4. Either write or find a story, poem, or song that illustrates the meaning of your word.
5. Ask at least five other people what they believe your word means. Record their answers. Interview people who represent different age groups (e.g., best friend, father, and grandmother).
6. Use electronic media to search for your word in at least five different languages.



7. Make up an entirely new word that you would like to include in a dictionary as a definition or synonym of your chosen word. One example: goladdy may be a new definition for male seniors. "Go gently into the sunset of your life taking with you the memories of your golden days as a boy."

8. Finally, when you have thoroughly explored the connotative value of your word, use a dictionary to locate and copy the denotative meaning of your word. If possible, use an unabridged dictionary that may include the derivation of your word (e.g., from the Latin).

9. Compile all of your inventive writings and images into a book with an inspired keepsake cover. You will now have your very own complete history and meaning of a word.

Inspire students to use their unique ingenuity and heightened imagination to complete step four. One haiku and three cinquain verses revealed here celebrate a season, nature's beauty, and patriotism. Encourage students to submit their completed works of creative writing, music composition, and the visual arts to the 2017 or 2018 International Torrance Legacy Creativity Awards.

(Seasons)

Spring

Budding leaves on trees,  
Birds singing, flowers blooming,  
A new year begins.

(Nature)

Rainbows  
Prism colors  
Stretching in the sky  
Remembered loveliness and beauty  
Rainbows

(Patriotism)

America  
One nation  
People living free  
Wonderful and beautiful land  
America

Flag  
Stars, stripes  
Furling, flying proudly  
One nation under God  
Glory

The **Understanding A Word** project is very popular with students and especially allows them to be innovative and inventive. It is not uncommon for middle school students to create their own word albums that are 20, 30, or even 40 pages in length. The project has a significant affective component. In coming to know one word, it seems that students often come to know themselves better too.



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**Jerry Flack** is Professor Emeritus of Education and President's Teaching Scholar at the University of Colorado. He is a reviewer of children's literature for various publications, author of 10 books as well as numerous articles on creativity and curriculum development. He is the 2003 recipient of the E. Paul Torrance Award from the National Association for Gifted Children.

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# How to Bring Creativity Home

by Kathryn P. Haydon

Creativity is becoming a household word, yet it's still hard to pinpoint what it means because of the many myths associated with it. The most prevalent myth is that creativity is expressed only through the arts, or craft projects. But when we get to the heart of what creativity is, it becomes clear that the arts are only one mode of expression, and some craft projects don't even involve creativity!

Creativity is thinking differently to solve a problem in a new way. A common challenge that many parents solve creatively is, "What should I cook for dinner with only a few items in my refrigerator?" Figuring out a new dish with the limited items we have on hand is indeed creative. We have to use our original thinking to find a novel solution. We do this when we plan trips, fix things around the house, and solve parenting challenges.

Like the scientific method, there is a process that we go through naturally in order to be truly creative. It involves two types of thinking: divergent and convergent. In the cooking example, we have to first generate possible ideas of dishes we might make. This ideational thinking uses our imaginations and ability to make connections. We may even come up with crazy and silly ideas that are unrealistic, and that's a good thing because it pushes us beyond the obvious. Divergent thinking is often called brainstorming, a specific ideation process invented in the 1940s by Alex Osborn, a lead partner at BBDO advertising agency.

After we have generated numerous ideas, we must look back at the constraints of our problem and use convergent or analytical thinking

to choose the best option under the circumstances. When we check our ingredients and consider our family's food preferences, we can accurately narrow the options down to a meal that is possible without going to the grocery store—and that will actually be eaten.

True creativity uses both divergent and convergent thinking. Finding a recipe, writing the ingredients on a list, going to the store to buy them, and then following the instructions to cook the meal (the way I cook) is not inherently creative. Neither is a craft project like building a model airplane according to the package directions, or assembling a boxed Lego set. These all may be enjoyable and worthy activities for other reasons, but they do not exercise our creative thinking.

Beyond waiting for our cupboards to become bare so we are compelled to invent new meals, what can we do to bring true creative thinking into our homes? Divergent thinking is the element most often missing from our interactions with kids, either at home or at school. When they ask a question, we usually respond with a single answer or directive. When it's time to decide what to do, we don't usually take the time to brainstorm. After a busy day, it's hard to harness the energy to use our imaginations. But there are many easy ways we can bring creativity back into our homes without stress.



When I give a keynote speech to a group of parents, I often ask them what ideas they have to incorporate more creativity into their lives. Here are some of my favorite parent-generated ideas:

- take a walk with no destination
- ask open-ended questions
- write stories together
- say “yes” to my children’s ideas
- go on an unexpected adventure
- brainstorm creative projects and write them down; fill a jar and choose one every weekend
- listen without expecting a certain answer
- go cloud watching together
- allow mistakes
- brainstorm different types of meals that we can create together
- don’t evaluate or criticize their ideas before they execute
- praise crazy ideas
- encourage curiosity and exploration
- value free time and don’t over-schedule

There are so many more ideas where these came from! When parents like you do their own divergent thinking with their kids or by themselves, they can't help but come up with many ways to easily and naturally incorporate true creativity into their lives. So I pose the question to you: In what ways might you make space for true creative thinking in your home? Now, I invite you to brainstorm!

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**Kathryn P. Haydon** is a speaker, author, and executive coach who works with schools, businesses, and families to help teams and individuals maximize their creative thinking and potential for innovation. She is the author of *Creativity for Everybody* and the founder of Sparkitivity.

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# Using Mindfulness Practices to Inspire Gifted Children

by Dorothy Sisk

*Mindfulness helps you to touch the wonders of life  
for self-nourishment and healing.*

-Thich Nhat Hanh

Thich Nhat Hahn (2008) developed ten mindful movements that have been practiced for decades by the residents of Plum village, his home in exile. These mindful movements develop an awareness and enjoyment of physical movement while one remains centered or focused. These activities can be practiced individually by parents, care givers, or teachers with one child or with a group of children. Movement # 2 is below:

Begin with your arms at your sides. Breathing in, lift your arms in front of you. In one continuous movement, bring them all the way up, stretching them above your head. Touch the sky! This movement can be done with your palms facing inward toward each other, or facing forward as you reach up. Breathing out, bring your arms slowly down to your sides again Repeat three times. (p. 34).

This is a wonderful activity to do with your child early in the morning as a sort of *Salutation to the Sun* or in the evening prior to a bedtime ritual. These activities will inspire your child to become more thoughtful and introspective.

Emmons (2013) in his book, *Gratitude Works*, points to a body of evidence-based research that illustrates how activities that cultivate gratitude yield a myriad of benefits. Gratitude can help your child to experience satisfaction with life and to feel more optimistic and compassionate. After you complete the movement activity above, you can start gratitude exploration with your child by saying what you are grateful for such as a beautiful sunny morning or a quiet gentle rain. Then ask your child to share things for which he or she has gratitude.

## Pebble Practice

Pebble Practice was developed by Thich Nhat Hahn (2012) as a "tangible way for children and families to return to their breathing and their bodies and connect with the world around them" (p. 7).

1. Find four pebbles and each one will represent a specific quality. One pebble can be a *flower* for a fresh perspective; another can represent a *mountain* with stability and strength; a third can be *calm water* which is still and beautiful; and the last pebble is space where you and your child can find joy and experience freedom. Pick up the pebble representing the flower and say:

Breathing in, I see myself as a flower.  
Breathing out, I feel fresh.  
Flower, fresh.



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2. Then say the following with the pebble representing a mountain:

Breathing in, I see myself as a mountain.

Breathing out, I feel strong.

Mountain, strong.

3. Now try the pebble representing calm water:

Breathing in, I see myself as calm water.

Breathing out, I feel still and beautiful.

Calm water, still, beautiful.

4. And with the last pebble representing space:

Breathing in, I see myself as space.

Breathing out, I feel joyful and free.

Space, free. (pp. 15-21).

*Pebble Practice* is a natural segue to helping your child become more aware of Mother Earth and the need to sustain our natural resources. Today's children need to be reintroduced to nature and the feeling of enjoying natural space outside, particularly when so many activities are inside.

These mindfulness practices are tools for addressing sleep issues that are sometimes a problem for intense and high energy gifted children and youth. Learning to turn off their busy minds can be encouraged with these simple activities, and they will inspire your child to develop an inner awareness and sensitivity to self.

### Enjoying Natural Space

Spend time with your child in a natural space so that he or she can explore their connection to the Earth. Help your child understand how the Earth relies on them to be healthy and to model ways that they and others can contribute to the environment, such as recycling and disposing of trash, or participating in local restoration projects. As a family, you can talk about the possibilities of composting or ways to limit garbage (Sisk & Kane, 2017). These discussions can be the beginning of introducing the notion of *family service* to your child.

### Family Service

Search for videos or movies for the whole family to enjoy, especially ones that demonstrate how you and your children can offer assistance and participate with others within your community or beyond. Then make connections to local or-

ganizations that would benefit from the volunteer services that your family could collectively provide. Remember you can start small with service activities such as donating used clothing to a local shelter or providing a day of service to a nearby park or beach (Sisk & Kane, 2017).

Enjoying natural space and family service activities will inspire you and your child to further develop compassion and sensitivity to the needs of others. Research has proven that infants show compassion when another baby cries or is stressed. This compassion and caring for others is sorely needed in today's stressful and turbulent world. Gifted children want to make a difference and as a parent, caregiver, or teacher, you can begin to build that foundation for mindful learning and living.

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**Kashta Dozier-Muhammad**  
2017 International Torrance Visual Arts Award Winner  
Savannah, GA

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