THE HARKNESS METHOD: 21ST CENTURY 'POWER' SKILLS AND GIFTED LEARNERS

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21st Century Power Skills

According to Philip J. Hanlon, President of Dartmouth, communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and collaboration are the 'power' skills – not soft skills – that students must develop to be successful in the 21st century

One strategy for promoting 'power' skills with gifted learners is through responsive, student-led Harkness discussions

WE NEED GIFTED PROGRAMS THAT TARGET EXPLICIT POWER SKILLS

The Harkness Method

STRATEGY FOR CONDUCTING AND EVALUATING STUDENT DISCUSSIONS DEVELOPED AT PHILLIPS EXETER ACADEMY

TEACHER OBSERVES AND GIVES FEEDBACK BASED ON THE QUALITY OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CONVERSATION

DISCUSSION IS EQUITABLE, COLLABORATIVE, AND STUDENT-DRIVEN

What power skills are developed during a Harkness Discussion?

- Communications
- Critical thinking
- Teamwork
- Awareness
- Curiosity
- The ability to connect
- Interacting effectively and harmoniously with others

Student Preparation

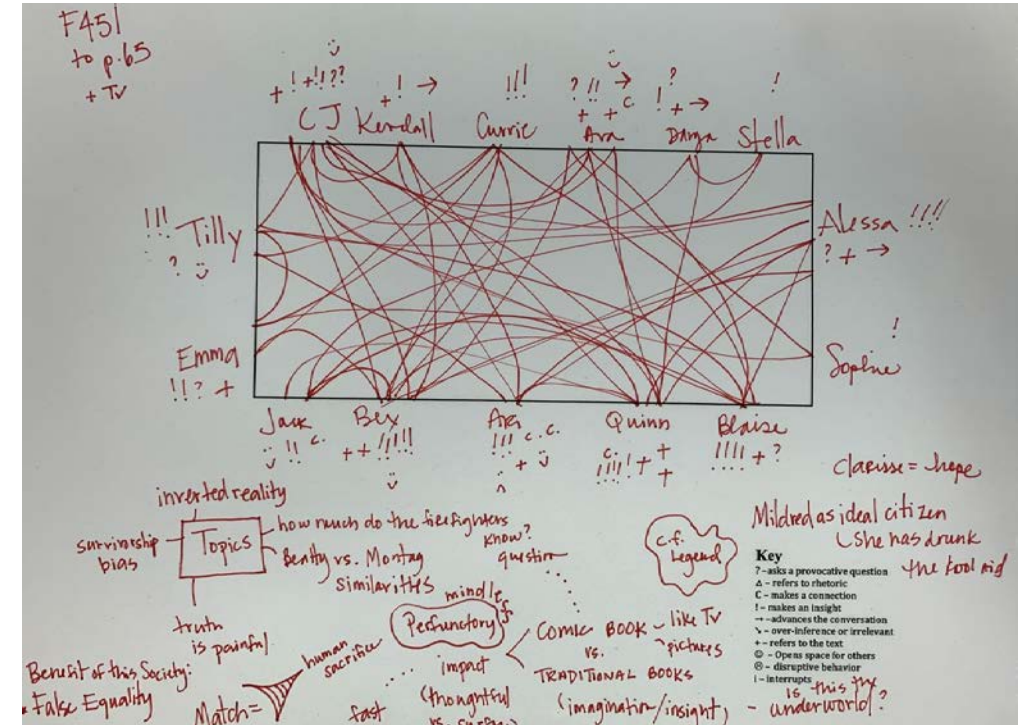READ AND RESPOND TO THE TEXT BEFORE THE DISCUSSION USING READING STRATEGIES

WRITE QUESTIONS, MAKE CONNECTIONS, SUMMARIZE, MAKE INFERENCES, UNPACK LANGUAGE

CONSIDER AND CONNECT ANY SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

FEEDBACK AND REFLECTION (SELF/PEER)

Students then choose how to contribute:

Summarizing, restating, clarifying	Offering examples of evidence from the text	Asking or answering questions	Opening up space for reluctant participants	Commenting on the word choice	Looking for patterns or motifs
Asking for clarification	Building on or politely disagreeing with other comments	Analyzing the text	Advancing the discussion	Making connections (other texts, situations, or comments)	Recognizing when a topic has been exhausted
Unpacking literary devices (symbols, metaphors, etc.)	Reminding others/themselves not to dominate	Listening carefully	Modulating body language and tone	Seeking clarification	Using names and making eye contact

CONNECTION TO NGAC STANDARDS

CURRICULUM PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

Demonstrate growth in cognitive, social-emotional, and psychosocial areas (2.4)	Students self-assess their learning progress (2.5)	Meet the interest, strengths, and needs of students (3.1.3)	Advanced, conceptually challenging, in-depth, and complex content for students with gifts and talents (3.1.4)	Goal setting, resiliency, self-management, self-advocacy, social awareness, and responsible decision making (3.2.1)
Cultivate social and emotional and psychosocial skills that support high achievement and talent development (3.2.2)	Responsive curriculum that connects to students' real-life experiences and includes multiple perspectives (3.3.1)	Educators encourage students to connect to others' experiences, examine their own perspectives and biases, and develop a critical consciousness (3.3.2)	Inquiry-based critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem-solving strategies (3.4.3)	Cognitive learning strategies - rehearsal, organization, and elaboration (3.5.2)

DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Incorporate person/social awareness and psychosocial skill development (1.6.2.E)

Create environments that establish trust, support, and collaborative action (4.1.3)

Feedback that promotes perseverance and resilience and focuses on effort, on evidence of potential to meet high standards, and on mistakes as learning opportunities (4.1.4)

Develop social competence manifested in positive peer relationships and social interactions (4.2)

Safe and welcoming climate for addressing personal and social issues (4.3.1)

Developing many forms of leadership and leadership skills (4.3.2)

Promote personal / social responsibility through advocacy and real world problem-solving (4.3.3)

Practice communicating, teaming, and collaborating with diverse individuals and across diverse groups, using positive strategies to address social issues (4.4)

Competence in interpersonal and technical communication skills (4.5)

Enrichment options to extend and deepen learning opportunities (5.1.2)

SAMPLE 7TH GRADE DISCUSSION

SAMPLE
8TH GRADE
DISCUSSION

PRACTICE DISCUSSION

THE OLD-MARRIEDS by Gwendolyn Brooks

But in the crowding darkness not a word did they say.

Though the pretty-coated birds had piped so lightly all the day.

And he had seen the lovers in the little side streets.

And she had heard the morning stories clogged with sweets.

It was quite a time for loving. It was midnight. It was May.

But in the crowding darknesss not a word did they say.

References

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○ Blaschka, Amy. "Five Hard Truths About Soft Skills That Might Surprise You." *Forbes Magazine*, 12 Apr. 2019, https://www.forbes.com/sites/amyblaschka/2019/04/11/five-surprisingly-hard-truths-about-soft-skills/#79e647e62383.

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