**Tracking a Student: Reflection**

Student X is one of the 20 G.A.T.E. students in my morning honors class. Along with the other students, he demonstrates not only a high intellectual ability, but also amazing creativity and passion for a variety of areas. His specific area of passion is for technology, specifically film production.

After last year’s G.A.T.E. training, I began implementing extension menus into my curriculum. I designed one for each ancient civilization we studied, from Mesopotamia to Greece. I had used them last year, and the results were varied. As I began teaching an honor’s class this year, I was unsure of what to expect. One option on the menu for Mesopotamia was to write a song about the achievements of Sumer. Student X was the only student to actually make a video of his song for this initial menu of the year. It was catchy, creative, and demonstrated an area of expertise I was unaware he held.

As the year went on, he continued to demonstrate higher intellectual abilities with each passing week. He made connections between curricular areas, saw patterns and trends in the social studies text, and made insightful comments and asked deep thinking questions in our class discussions.

His production abilities progressed as well. By the time our class reached Egypt, he had begun using a green screen to produce films for his menu projects, bringing in classmates, a mix of G.A.T.E. and non-G.A.T.E. students. Two of his productions can be found by visiting the website below: <http://core6.weebly.com/gate-year-2-portfolio.htm>

Sometime in the spring, our school started a media production club with one of the elective teachers. It meets at lunch, and knowing Student X’s propensity for movie making, I encouraged him to attend. I will be following up to see if he has been going or not.

What was even more amazing than just his demonstration of a technological skill was that his creativity inspired the rest of the class as well. Other students, previously unwilling to try something so new to them, began making their own videos as well (which you can also see on the link above). In class, I began using the content imperatives and depth and complexity icons regularly with our social studies curriculum. The class worked collaboratively to identify nearly all the icons in a process grid that tracked them throughout the civilizations (see website for photos). It gave students, especially Student X, a frame for which to organize their thoughts.

The final way I was able to challenge his abilities this year was with the discussion of ethics. He thrived on discussing/arguing the rights and wrongs of both actions of the people of the past and what was happening in the present. His persuasive essay discussed the ethics of cloning, and he frequently commented on the ethical dilemmas he found in ancient Egypt or during the time of early man.

He was an amazing student to teach, and his levels of performance inspired the class to challenge themselves to new levels of creativity and thinking.