

# **On the Bull's Eye: Affective Talent Development and Its Urgency for Self and Society**

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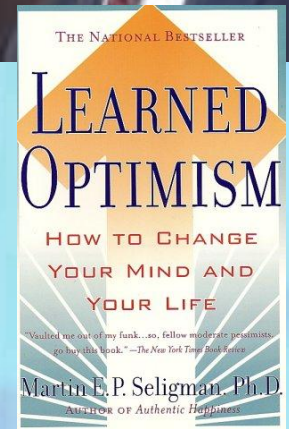


Private Teale had mild reservations about the newly designed army gear.



**Dear State  
Department  
of Education,  
I am  
respectfully  
cancelling  
my  
subscription  
to the state  
testing  
program.**

**“...raising [children] is about taking their marvelous strength -- I call it ‘seeing into the soul,’ -- amplifying it, nurturing it, helping [them] to lead [their lives] around it, to buffer against [their] weaknesses and the storms of life. Raising children, I realized, is vastly more than fixing what is wrong with them. It is about identifying and nurturing their strongest qualities, what they own and are best at, and helping them find niches in which they can best live out these strengths...”**



**Martin E.P. Seligman  
University of Pennsylvania  
(Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 6)**

**“People speak of finding one’s niche in the world. Society, as we have seen, is one vast conspiracy for carving one into the kind of statue it likes, and then placing it in the most convenient niche it has.”**

Randolph S. Bourne, literary critic/social reformer  
(Bourne, 1913, p. 212)



# Defining Affective and Cognitive Dimensions of Education



affective  
domain



cognitive  
domain

# School Curriculum and Instruction Are Pendulum-Like

***Swinging  
from Fad to Fad and  
from Test to Test***



- Attention to affective teaching and learning mostly dominated schools 1940s to 1960s (Taba, 1966)
- Attention to cognitive aspects of teaching and learning largely dominates schools today (Olenchak, 2009)



**“When you are singled out with nothing to help you find a way to fit in and you have no ways to help you handle the mess, you may feel you have no choice but to do the most basic thing – attack the system and the ones making you feel awful about yourself.”**

-- Eduardo  
multi-exceptional student, age 14  
Houston





**“I feel like sometimes the only way I can handle the pressure to be a regular student and to gain acceptance is to switch roles. Instead of being the one who is about to be devoured, I turn myself into the aggressor.”**

-- Lequoia  
gifted student, age 16  
Vancouver



# Some Direction from Background Research

- In a large study that used several quantitative analyses and involved more than 7,000 students in 212 elementary schools in The Netherlands, a significant relationship was found between cognitive, academic outcomes and affective, emotional outcomes (Knuver & Brandsma, 1993).



# Some Direction from Background Research

- Neurobiological evidence in suggests that the types of cognition most heavily courted in schools – learning, attention, memory, decision making, and social functioning – are both profoundly affected by and subsumed within the mental processes of emotion (Immordino-Yang, 2009; Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007).



# Some Direction from Background Research

- Emotion-related processes are required for skills and knowledge to be transferred from the structured school environment to real-world decision making because they provide an emotional rudder for guiding judgment and action (Immordino-Yang, 2010).



# Some Direction from Background Research

- Human action is reliant on self-confidence; self-confident people tend to have an elevated sense of emotional energy and imaginative capacity to shape the future in ways they would like (Ludema, Wilmot, & Srivastva, 1997).
- Students who are self-confident receive higher grades than unhopeful ones, regardless of IQ scores (Scheier & Carver, 1993).
- Self-confident students are able to tackle more difficult goals and tend to have success at achieving their goals (Olenchak, 2001)



# Some Direction from Background Research

- Self-confident students have greater happiness and less distress as a rule when compared to their peers (Snyder & McCullough, 2000).
- Self-confident students in grades 6-8 consistently achieve higher grades and perform better than do those with lower self-confidence (Olenchak, 2008, 2009, 2010).



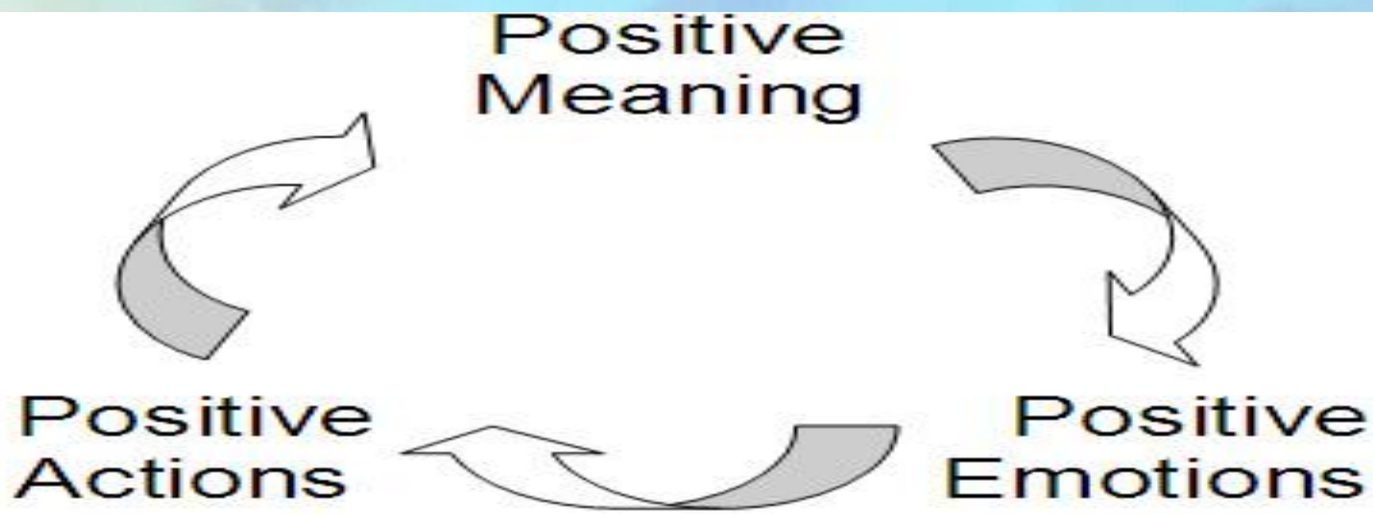
# Some Direction from Background Research

- Student success and self-confidence are reliant on teachers who promote opportunities for them to develop and then demonstrate their strengths rather than spending so much time remediating their weaknesses (Doubek & Cooper, 2007)
- Student self-confidence and motivation are correlated with expectations from both school and home (Tavani, 2003).



# Some Direction from Background Research

- Gifted and talented individuals require frequent exposure to opportunities in which they can practice behaviors in response to high-level stimuli or they will otherwise lack strength of positive emotionality required for effectively handling life's stressors (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000).

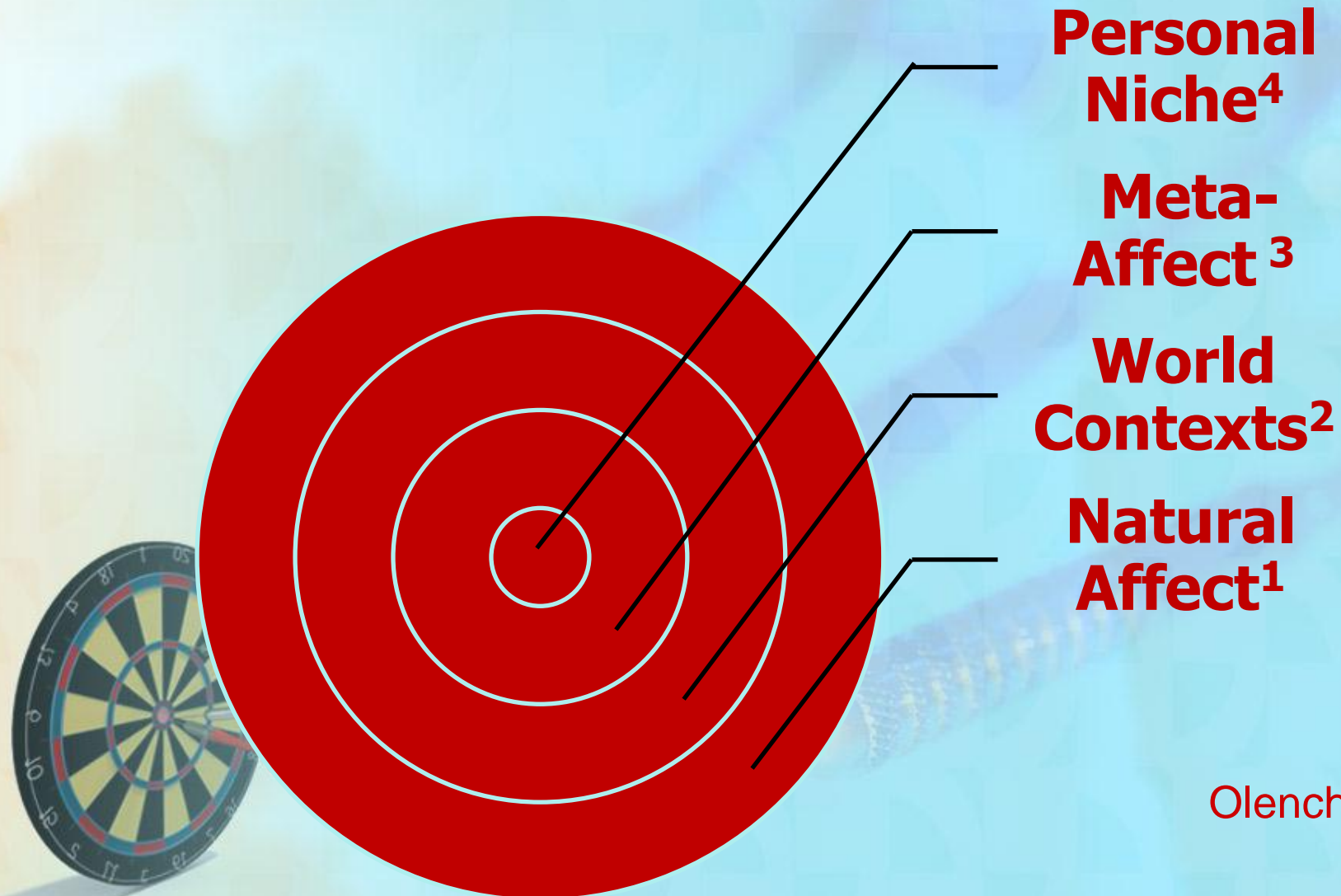


# Some Direction from Background Research

- A meta-analysis of 225 empirical studies revealed that success in personal pursuits does not yield happiness but that actually the converse is more true: that happiness – or positive affect – produces success. Students who hold positive affect are likely to experience success in school, while those who hold negative feelings are less likely to succeed (Lyubormisky, King, & Diener, 2005).



# Bull's Eye Model for Affective Development



Olenchak, 2009

# Natural Affect

- **Personality**
- **Native social proclivity**
- **Natural emotional attributes**
- **Innate abilities for handling affective information**
- **Genetic predispositions**
- **Modifiers imposed by giftedness**
- **Modifiers imposed by other exceptionalities**



# Natural Affect

- The “original factory equipment” -- serves as a platform on which to construct identity in the affective domain
- Cognitively, mental horsepower influences one’s thinking potential and how it can be developed; similarly, one’s personality provides a parallel set of potentialities for developing affective abilities.
- The cognitive dimension of individual differences is more easily understood: that each person has an internal set of attributes, interests, and proclivities that can be developed to some degree of sophistication.



# World Contexts



- **Home and family influences**
- **Peer pressures**
- **School and work expectations and mores**
- **Affective norms of society**
- **Views of others about giftedness**
- **View of others about other exceptionalities**
- **“Big world” circumstances**



# World Contexts

Steinberg & Avenevoli (2000), in a thorough examination of the research undergirding the contexts of behavioral problems, concluded simply that negative environmental situations yield behaviorally negative outcomes and that affective development is shaped by environmental dynamics including location, home life, and timing.



# Meta-Affect

- **Affective self-examination**
- **Social and emotional regulation**
- **Impact of giftedness**
- **Impact of other exceptionalities**
- **Adjusting natural affect with world contexts for self-adjustment and coping**



# Meta-Affect

Meta-affect is the most important aspect of affect (Goldin, 2004); it includes:

- Affect about affect;
- Affect about and within cognition that may again be about affect; and/or
- Monitoring of affect both through cognition and affect.



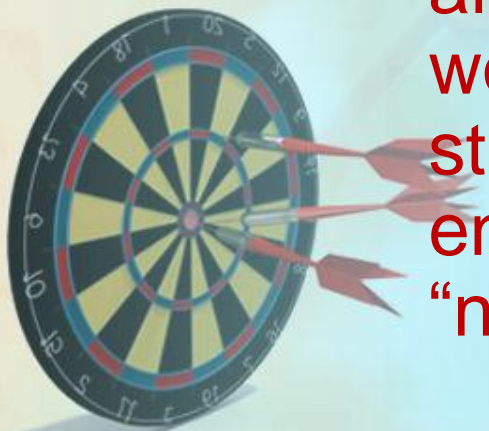
# Personal Niche

- **Affective integration (innate with World Contexts and with Meta-Affect)**
- **Successfully finding ways for one's social and emotional sense to flourish**
- **A place of automaticity where one feels as if one's affective self easily mediates one's behavior as one interacts with the larger world**



# Personal Niche

Each mentally healthy person constantly engages in a campaign to promote psychic wellbeing by shaping, arranging and rearranging, and to the greatest extent possible controlling the influence of ingredients (e.g., other people, environments, and stimuli) on one's life. Here, feelings are every bit as critical as are thoughts; cognition and affect must work as coequal cogs in a mechanism for streamlining what amounts to a never-ending task for each individual to erect a "nest" in which one feels at peace.



# Examining Student Affect: Two Schools as Pilots

- School 1 – Elementary School in Seattle
  - 31% Asian, 31% Latino, 18% African American, 14% Anglo, 6% Indigenous
  - 76% free/reduced lunch
  - 23% English language learners
  - 7% Special Education
  - 1% identified as G/T



# Developing Student Affect: Two Schools as Pilots

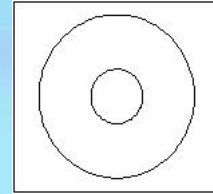
- School 2 – High School in Newark
  - 94% African American, 6% Latino
  - 38% free/reduced lunch
  - 16% Special Education
  - <1% identified as G/T



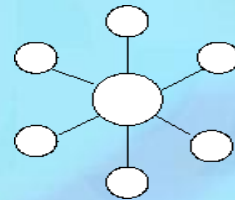
# Schoolwide Affective Interventions

- Thinking Maps (Hyerle, 1988)

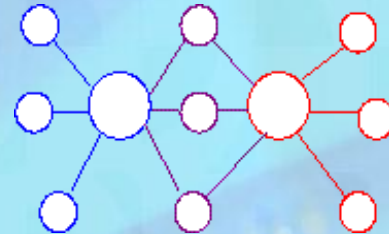
- Circle Map



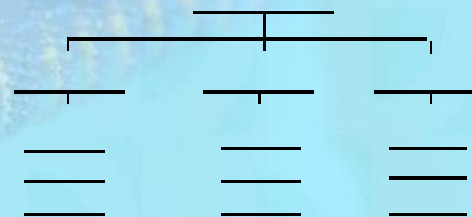
- Bubble Map



- Double Bubble Map

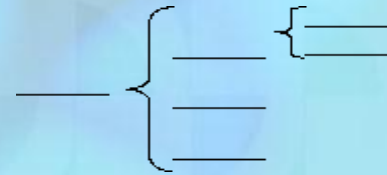


- Tree Map

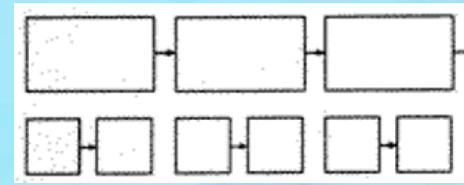


- Thinking Maps (Hyerle, 1988) continued

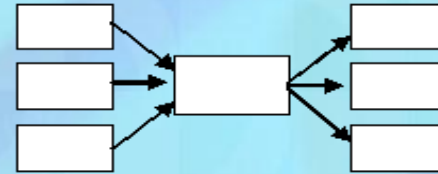
- Brace Map



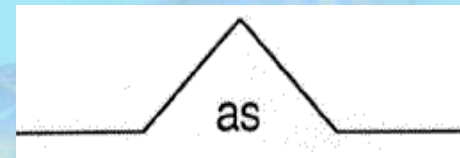
- Flow Map



- Multi-Flow Map



- Bridge Map



# Schoolwide Affective Interventions

- Talents Unlimited (Taylor, 1967; Schlichter, 1968)
  - Productive Thinking
  - Communication
    - 1. single words describing something;
    - 2. single words describing feelings;
    - 3. simile;
    - 4. personal experience;
    - 5. network;
    - 6. without words
  - Forecasting
  - Planning
  - Decision Making





# Implementation

- Teachers trained in both interventions
- Follow-up coaching to support implementation provided:
  - In person every 6 weeks first school year
  - As needed via e-mail and phone thereafter
- Degree of implementation assessed through teacher journals and lesson plans
  - Some teachers implemented both interventions as much as daily in both schools (18% Seattle, 7% Newark)
  - Some teachers never implemented (1% Seattle, 14% Newark)
- Of teachers implementing both interventions at least once weekly (84% Seattle, 47% Newark), seven videos (4 Seattle, 3 Newark) were randomly filmed of classroom applications of interventions



# Surveys of Student Confidence

1. For using the two intervention systems (intervals of 3 months over 2 school years)
2. For ability to complete academic work successfully (annual pre/post over 2 school years)
3. For setting goals in and out of school (annual pre/post over 2 school years)
4. For achieving goals in and out of school (annual pre/post over 2 school years)



# Results of Surveys

- Students felt confident
  - in using both interventions (end rate: 94% Seattle, 68% Newark)
- Students felt significantly more confident:
  - In ability to complete academic work successfully (start: 42% Seattle, 38% Newark; end: 81% Seattle\*, 59% Newark\*)
  - In setting goals in and out of school (start: 28% Seattle, 38% Newark; end: 84% Seattle\*, 65% Newark\*)
  - In achieving goals in and out of school (start: 25% Seattle, 21% Newark; end: 75% Seattle\*, 57% Newark\*)

\*  $p < .05$



# Talents Unearthed in 18 Months

## Seattle

- District science fair awards up over 200%
- District arts awards up 95%

## Newark

- District social studies awards up 50%
- District arts awards up 37%



# Academic Results during the Study Period

Percent meeting state standards increased

- **Seattle**
  - Reading from 61.4% to 68.8%
  - Writing from 24.6% to 57.4%\*
  - Math from 18.8% to 28.1%\*
- **Newark**
  - Language Arts from 53.1% to 54.5%
  - Math from 31.6% to 34.9%

*p < .05*





**“If somebody can help me see some ways to be more in charge of my feelings, maybe I can be happier.”**

-- Eduardo  
multi-exceptional student, age 14  
Houston





**“Teach me ways to handle my anger, and I know that I can be a better person here and in the world.”**

**-- Lequoia  
atypically gifted student, age 16  
Vancouver**



**“But you’ll never find  
Peace of mind,  
Til you listen to your heart.”**

George Michael,  
*Kissing a Fool*, 1988



# KISSING A FOOL

Words and Music by  
GEORGE MICHAEL

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). It consists of three systems of music. The first system shows the instrumental introduction with guitar chords Eb, E0, and Fm. The second system includes the first line of lyrics: "You are far when I could have been... your star". The third system includes the second line of lyrics: "you lis - tened to peo - ple, who scared you to death and from my heart,". The score includes treble and bass clefs, a key signature, a time signature, and various musical notations such as notes, rests, and triplets. Chord diagrams are provided for several chords: A6b, Bb, Eb, Fm, Fm7, Cb-5, and Bb7.

**Urban  
Talent  
Research  
Institute**  
**University of  
Houston**



*Thank you for caring  
enough to spend your  
time with me!*

