

# GATE Newsletter

Office of Gifted and Talented Education

## Understanding Thinking Tools

### Kaplan's Depth & Complexity Icons



You've seen them in the classrooms and in your child's work. So, just what do these icons mean?

The Depth and Complexity Icons are visual prompts designed to help students go beyond surface level understanding of a concept and enhance their ability to think critically. These critical thinking tools help students dig deeper into a concept (*depth*) and understand that concept with greater *complexity*.

In fact, to truly understand something, one must be able to speak the language specific to that topic. One cannot have a critical understanding of that same topic without knowing the details, rules and patterns associated with it or understanding how it may have changed and the varied perspectives through which it is viewed.

As you examine each icon, pay close attention to the design, as it will help to reveal its purpose. Keep in mind that the goal for our students is not to teach the icons themselves, but rather to utilize them as visual "thinking" tools to help students gain a critical understanding of a topic or concept.



**Language of the Discipline-** The meaning of this icon is pretty self-explanatory. The lips represent specialized language related to a topic or concept. This language includes key words, phrases, signs/symbols, figures of speech, abbreviations, and the like. For example, to truly understand a concept in mathematics, one must speak the "language of math". A student being asked to add and subtract would need to understand not only terms such as "sum" and "difference", but also be able to understand mathematical sentences which often include symbols:  $27 + (16 - 5) =$

In the study of the American Revolution, students would need to know the meaning of "Redcoat" and realize that it isn't something one can purchase in a store!



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### Upcoming Events

#### Month of February:

GATE Testing  
Results will be mailed at the end of April.

#### February 15

California Association for the Gifted Conference – Anaheim Convention Center

#### April 16

GATE District Advisory Committee 6:00-7:00 PM  
District Annex Building  
All parents welcome!

### Quote

"Wisdom begins with wonder  
~ Socrates

### Contact Us!

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**Details** – As you consider the design of this icon, think about the details of the flower and how each part (flower petals, etc.) make up the whole flower. Details contain the information that enhance understanding. They act as supporting information to a big idea or concept (main idea). Details include: parts, factors, attributes, traits, and variables. If we go back to our earlier math example:  $27 + (16 - 5) =$  the details are the numbers themselves (the parts that make up the equation).

Being able to discern important details of a story is key to one's ability to critically analyze that text. While we can concede that one of the pigs in the story, *The Three Pigs* is wearing a red shirt, we can agree that the color of the shirt is extraneous and doesn't lead to a deeper understanding of the story.



**Patterns** – There's no surprise that this icon represents patterns (note the circle, line, circle, and zig-zag pattern). If one were asked, it would be a fairly simple task to continue the pattern. Patterns are recurring elements or factors in ideas, objects, stories, and events. They are predictable, repetitive and ordered.

We see patterns in math: number lines, geometry; literature: "Little pigs, little pigs! Let me come in..." ; social studies: patterns in movement and settlement, behavior. The list goes on... Being able to move beyond simple identification of patterns to defining the cause and effect of a pattern or identifying relationships among patterns is rigorous and requires the ability to think critically. Stay tuned as we explore Rules, Ethics, and Big Ideas in our next issue.

## Hard Work Pays Off!

As parents, we want to protect our kids. It can be difficult to watch your child struggle, whether it's riding a bike, encountering a new concept, or taking an academic risk (honors/ AP courses, attending college, ...) and it is instinctual for us to want to "help" them. All too often though, this help comes in the form of us protecting our children by letting them walk away from academic risks and/or simply doing the hard work (thinking) for them. I'm not advocating that we push children into situations for which they are ill-prepared, but rather that we have the courage to provide opportunities for supported struggle for our kids. Children need to experience the tensions and stress that arise from challenging ideas and high expectations. These foster resilience in our children by communicating that we believe (even when they don't) that they can be successful. This also helps them learn perseverance, the importance of striving for goals, and surviving setbacks. Learning to struggle through something difficult and come out on the other end is a valuable skill, and one much easier to learn as a child than as an adult.

## Looking for a Good Read?

Our parent library has a range of resources available for check out.

### Featuring:

#### ***Guiding the Gifted Child***

by James T. Webb, Ph.D

*Webb covers a myriad of topics on parenting gifted children in this classic book. Some of the topics are characteristics of giftedness, peer relations, sibling issues, discipline, motivation, and stress management.*

#### ***The Gifted Kids Survival Guide: For Ages 10 & Under***

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#### ***The Gifted Kids Survival Guide: A Teen Handbook***

by Judy Galbraith, M.A.

*Galbraith worked with hundreds of gifted children in the writing of this book. It is written in a child-friendly manner, and aims to provide advice and answer questions about being gifted.*

#### ***Cradles of Eminence: Childhoods of more than 700 famous men and women***

Compiled by Ted George Goertzel and Ariel Hansen

*This book offers a glimpse into the childhood lives of such eminent people as Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, and highlights the struggles and experiences that led to their eventual success.*

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