

Deceleration and Habits of Mind: Accessing the Cognitive Domain in ENA 101
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A fallacy around the pedagogy of Accelerated learning is that instructors need to do more with less and at a faster pace which naturally leads to less academic rigor. Our ENA 101 course at LaGuardia—a co-requisite model of acceleration—is designed as a standard credit bearing college level course with built in additional support for students. The additional three hours per week with students allows time for instructors to support the successful completion of complex “college-level” tasks which maintains academic consistency. Low-stakes activities, opportunities for revision, group work and other in-class activities are often utilized to give students opportunities to meet course objectives and outcomes, and practice relevant skills. Furthermore, studies show significantly improved outcomes for students in accelerated courses; the same holds true for ENA 101 students at LaGuardia.

In the accelerated composition course, ENA 101, students are given the opportunity to slow down or decelerate to better process course content. Ironically, the end goal of deceleration is to aid students in speeding or catching up. In the course, students are asked to become aware of and reflect on every stage of the writing process including audience, purpose, argument and context. Students are also made to reflect on their reading practices and abilities as they work to develop literacy skills. For instance, students may benefit from (p)reviewing a lesson from ENG 101, writing low stakes discovery drafts, reading activities to help deepen understanding of complex texts, and the modeling of a particular skill by the instructor. In this way, deceleration helps to orient students to cultivating essential skills.

To be fully functioning citizens and to meet the demands of the 21st century, students will need to be equipped with essential skills including critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Engaging with Habits of Mind—first introduced by Arthur L. Costa and Bena Kallick—in the course is one way to get ENA 101 students to become better learners with agency over their own education. Students at LaGuardia are often introduced to Habits of Mind in the First Year Seminar, another required course in the core curriculum. A major objective of the First Year Seminar is to prepare students to be successful in their academic pursuits and to help them develop professional identities. Habits of Mind helps students begin to think about the traits and tools they may need to be successful. Carol Dweck’s work on students’ learning, intelligence and motivation is relevant here. Dweck concept of growth and fixed mindsets highlight the connection between students’ own internal beliefs systems and their performance. A fixed mindset assumes that our character, intelligence, and creative ability are static, and that success is the natural affirmation of that inherent intelligence. Therefore, failure and risks that might shake the student’s sense of well-being must be avoided at all costs. Students who embody a fixed mindset are less likely to perform challenging tasks. Here think about the student who may attend every class but fails to submit any or minimal written assignments. On the other hand, a growth mindset, essential for success, allows for the recognition that failure, though painful, can also be a catalyst for growth. Students with growth mindsets will be more open to learning new skills and self-correction and are more likely to attempt challenging tasks.

The 16 Habits of Mind attributes are traits that foster intelligent behavior especially when students are faced with challenging situations and moments of uncertainty. Costa and Kallick explain that:

A Habit of Mind is a composite of many skills, attitudes, cues, past experiences and proclivities. It means that we value one pattern of thinking over another; therefore, it implies making choices making about which patterns we should use at a certain time. It includes sensitivity to the contextual cues that signal that a particular circumstance is a time when applying a certain pattern would be useful and appropriate. It requires a level of skillfulness to use, carry out and sustain the behaviors effectively. It suggests that after each experience in which these behaviors were used, the effects of their use are reflected upon, evaluated, modified and carried forth to future applications” (17).

Students who exhibit affective issues—non-cognitive issues— will also benefit from learning about and encountering Habits of Mind (see Figure I). Fear and feelings of not belonging can be crippling, leading students to act or fail to act in ways that hurt their chances of success. Students who feel overwhelmed can draw upon those intellectual resources. When students actively include Habits of Mind in their praxis and academic toolboxes, it fosters a disposition toward behaving intelligently when confronted with problems and uncertainty.

The 16 Habits of Mind (Figure I)

(1) Persisting	(9) Thinking and Communicating with Clarity & Precision
(2) Managing Impulsivity	(10) Gathering Data Through All Senses
(3) Listening with Understanding and Empathy	(11) Creating, Imagining, Innovating
(4) Thinking Flexibly	(12) Responding with Wonderment and Awe
(5) Thinking about Thinking (Metacognition)	(13) Taking Responsible Risks
(6) Striving for Accuracy	(14) Finding Humor
(7) Questioning and Posing Problems	(15) Thinking Interdependently
(8) Applying Past Knowledge to New Situations	(16) Remaining Open to Continuous Learning

It is important to remember that these 16 attributes are not performed in isolation but in clusters when utilized. We should also not conclude that human beings only exhibit intelligent behavior in these 16 ways. Click [Here](#) for a Habits of Mind Attribution Chart to be shared with students.

Employing Habits of Mind allows for moments of deceleration where students are required to stop and contemplate a course of action. Students might ask themselves: What is the best course of action available to me? How should I think about/assess this particular situation? What resources are available to me? What do I not know about said issue and what do I need to know? These questions allow students to choose a path and course of action. In their academic work, students develop a critical stance when they engage in inquiry, critical thinking, argumentation, and research. Costa and Kallick posit that Habits of Mind “[enhance] the ways students produce knowledge rather than...merely reproduce it (16). In ENA 101, each habit can be discussed and connected through a writing and research lens as well as to real life/world situations often explored in course texts. The dimensions of Habits of Mind are described below (see Figure 2).

The dimensions illustrate the desired outcomes which are productive actions and behaviors that ultimately lend agency to students.

Dimensions of Habits of Mind (Figure 2)

The Habits of Mind incorporate the following dimensions

Value: Choosing to employ a pattern of intellectual behaviors rather than other, less productive patterns.

Inclination: Feeling the tendency toward employing a pattern of intellectual behaviors.

Sensitivity: Perceiving opportunities for, and appropriateness of employing the pattern of behavior.

Capability: Possessing the basic skills and capacities to carry through with the behaviors.

Commitment: Constantly striving to reflect on and improve performance of the pattern of intellectual behavior.

Policy: Making it a policy to promote and incorporate the patterns of intellectual behaviors into actions, decisions, and resolutions of problematic situations.

Source: From *Learning and Leading with Habits of Mind: 16 Essential Characteristics for Success*. ASCD, 2008.

In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, bell hooks talks about a paradigm shift where students feel empowered, engaged and excited about the learning taking place in the classroom though she concedes that excitement is generated through collective effort to sustain a learning community. Introducing students to Habits of Mind through a communal lens might prove to be useful and lead to self-actualization of both the instructor and student. For instance, instructors may introduce students to all the Habits of Mind with descriptions and then emphasize particular traits relevant to a particular discipline or occupation. Instructors may also utilize guided prompts, reflections, and other creative activities or explicitly tie the Habits of Mind to specific assignments to explore and reveal the relevance of said Habits. Finally, instructors can utilize a “Thought-Full” learning environment with frequent engagement with the Habits of Mind throughout the semester to address time constraints (Costa and Kallick, 95).

Works Cited

Costa, Arthur and Bena Kallick. *Learning and Leading with Habits of Mind: 16 Essential Characteristics for Success*. ASCD, 2008.

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