

**The Teacher's Guide to
The Art of Learning:
The Art of Introspection
Developed by Katy Wells and the JWF Team**





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A Note About the Guide

The Teacher's Guide, The Art of Introspection module supports you in implementing five key learning principles in your classroom – Listening First, Loving the Game, Breaking Down Walls, Intuition: Developing the Internal Compass, and The Middle Way: Navigating Greyness.

The first step is to examine your relationship to these learning principles in the sections entitled Look Inward. These are followed by actions to take, and habits for you and your students to incorporate into your everyday lives. Finally, there is a sample Family Letter to be sent home when you introduce each new concept.

Whether you are probing this material on your own or collaborating with other educators, we hope it deepens your self-awareness and guides you toward developing concrete teaching strategies that further student performance and growth.

Make this work your own by focusing on the content that is most relevant to you and your colleagues. It is not designed to be a curriculum in its own right, but rather a collection of suggestions for ways in which you can incorporate these concepts into your existing curriculum. You may find it helpful to participate in group discussions and to keep a response journal as you work your way through the guide.

Our work with educators is constantly growing and evolving, and your insight and experience play an enormous part in that growth. Please [share](#) with us the materials that you create – [lesson plans, unit outlines, creative assignments and more](#) – as well as the work your students produce in response to these learning principles. We believe that by sharing your own interpretations of these concepts, we and the many educators with whom we work will continue to achieve higher levels of understanding and success with our students.

As always, we are here to support you—please don't hesitate to [contact us](#) with questions or comments, or if you'd like an invitation to join our online community of educators and coaches.

Enjoy!

Sincerely,

Katy Wells
Program Director – JW Foundation



Introduction and overview – family letter

Dear Families,

Our class is embarking on an exciting learning journey in which we will explore how our brains work, develop our strengths as learners, gain tools for improving our areas of need, and lay the foundation for a lifelong love of learning and a path to excellence!

We have begun a program with the [JW Foundation/Art of Learning Project](#), a non-profit educational initiative centered on the learning principles outlined by Josh Waitzkin in his book *The Art of Learning*. In this book, Waitzkin, an 8-time National Chess Champion in his youth and 2-time World Champion in the martial art of Tai Chi Chuan, developed a theory of learning based on a set of principles that enabled him to compete and excel at the highest level in two disparate creative fields.

As a class, we will explore *The Art of Learning* principles as they relate to our own unique characters and learning styles. We encourage you to familiarize yourself with these learning principles as well so that you can reinforce these important concepts at home. Visit the [resources](#) section of the Art of Learning Project website for a detailed description of each learning principle, download a free [Parent Guide](#) to learn how to use the principles at home, and read the letters that will come home as we introduce each new principle.

We look forward to this exciting new learning adventure and the incredible potential it will create for your child!

Sincerely,

Resources - <http://theartoflearningproject.org/educate/resources/>

Guide downloads - <http://theartoflearningproject.org/educate/guide-download/>

For further information about The Art of Learning Project, or to provide feedback about your child's experience, please send an email to info@jwfoundation.com or visit the website at <http://theartoflearningproject.org/>.



Listening First (Chapter 1, 8)

“One of the most critical factors in the transition to becoming a conscious high performer is the degree to which your relationship to your pursuit stays in harmony with your unique disposition. There will inevitably be times when we need to try new ideas, release our current knowledge to take in new information – but it is critical to integrate this new information in a manner that does not violate who we are.” (p. 80)

The first step to artful teaching is tuning in to the essence of the student. It is critical that we appreciate each individual’s unique learning style and natural voice, and take these into account when instructing them. By allowing students to express themselves through how and what they learn, we not only expand their capabilities but also their interest in forging ahead. Teachers have a fine line to walk in preserving in their students a balance between passion and discipline, analysis and internalization of fact and technique. This balancing act demands that they neither offer false compliments nor dismiss seemingly wayward ideas—but rather prompt probing discussions of students’ ideas and methods and coach them in a manner that is in keeping with who they are. A sensitive, tailored teaching strategy accompanied by a clearly expressed expectation of achievement can make the difference between helping students’ minds carve themselves into maturity and stripping them of this ability as well as their joy. Teachers who position themselves more as guides to development than as omniscient authorities end up promoting in pupils a lifelong hunger for absorbing, processing, and applying knowledge effectively.

LOOK INWARD:

1. How would you describe your personal approach to learning? Do you tend to be methodical and organized, charismatic and creative, aggressive, conservative, interactive, independent? Are you most productive when there is a strict deadline and sense of pressure, or do you gradually build your ideas over a longer period of time?
2. Have you experienced a learning situation in which your style was considered irrelevant; where the teacher delivered information without regard to how you best learned? What did that feel like? How did you respond?
3. Have you experienced the opposite, in which the teaching style was adapted to meet your needs and your unique voice was valued? What did that feel like? What was the result?
4. Describe an activity, art form, or project that you embrace with passion and an eagerness to stretch and grow. Which strengths are you using when you rise to the challenge? Describe an area where you shrink from



- or avoid challenges. How can you use those same strengths to face the second challenge more productively?
5. Using an example from the [Dark Horse Project](#), what is something you truly love to do, something you choose to spend time on whenever you're able? It may be a sport, making art, listening to music, etc. List the components of that thing that bring you joy (working with your hands, spending time outside, collaborating with others, and so on). Now, consider other things that must be done in your life that may not bring you as much joy and fulfillment. How can you incorporate the components listed above in order to bring your own unique interests to all that you do?
 6. Josh talks about the importance of "embracing your funk" or your eccentricity. Often what makes someone unique is the key to that person's genius. When thinking about students, this means those qualities that appear to make them difficult may be the very things that drive them to greatness. It's important that the teacher find ways to channel that uniqueness rather than try to change it. Think about a student that challenges you. Are there ways you might channel that student's eccentricities?

ACTIONS:

1. Take some time to carefully observe your students as they work independently and in a variety of settings. What are the different approaches you see in your classroom, in social interactions, during free time, etc? Take careful note of the times when a student is most persistent - what is the driving force behind that persistence and how can you make room within your lessons for your students to tap into those forces? Understanding [why](#) a student is motivated to work hard at something is a window into how to engage them in other learning areas.
2. Consider creating opportunities for students to teach the class or work as peer tutors to increase the representation of a variety of learning approaches in your classroom.
3. Create a culture of discussion in your classroom, where all voices are encouraged and valued. Consider the physical space, how the class meets for discussions, and how the desks are arranged to optimize participation.
4. Build your feedback around listening to your students. Provide regular opportunities for them to explain their decision making processes, analyze their mistakes and, with guidance, develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how to improve upon their process.



DAILY HABITS:

1. Have your students make a list of their unique strengths and characteristics and then, have them consider how they apply these to their daily activities. The objective is to prompt them to gain an awareness of that which makes them unique—qualities that should be expressed in all they do. Encourage them to refer to this list at the start of class each day and make a plan for how they will use their unique approach in that day's lesson.
2. Start each day by assigning student partnerships (a different pairing every day) in which they both make a list of ten words they think best describe their partner. At the end of the week, have each student go back and look for patterns in their personal lists. What comes up the most often? Next, have them make a plan for how to use those recurring qualities to their advantage. This may take some teaching into in order to be sure that students are being thoughtful about how to frame the qualities in a positive light (for example, instead of “hyper”, they could say “energetic”).
3. Set aside some time each day for an activity that allows students to choose their own approach to how they will learn new information and/or how they will demonstrate their understanding of that information.
4. If you have a student who you find particularly challenging, take some time to think about why that student feels difficult. Is the student bossy, overflowing with energy, always talking, argumentative, etc? Think about that student's unique qualities and how they could be beneficial to him rather than problematic. Make a daily plan for how you will support that student in channeling one of those qualities in a positive direction. For example, the bossy student could be assigned the role of team leader on a group project that needs organization. The argumentative student could be tasked with taking one side in a debate about an aspect of your current unit of study. Make an effort to do this at least once every day.

How to Find Fulfillment: Lessons from “dark horse” success - <https://youtu.be/uhK1A4JjZvI>
The Why is Everything: Helping your students find motivation on the path to success - <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/18/12/why-everything>



Listening First – family letter

“One of the most critical factors in the transition to becoming a conscious high performer is the degree to which your relationship to your pursuit stays in harmony with your unique disposition. There will inevitably be times when we need to try new ideas, release our current knowledge to take in new information – but it is critical to integrate this new information in a manner that does not violate who we are.” (p. 80)

Dear Families,

This week we will begin our exploration of the learning principle [*Listening First*](#).

As children in school, and later in our adult lives, we are often required to learn the same skills and information as those around us. However, the methods by which we make discoveries and process information can be vastly diverse. In order to tap into our greatest learning potential, we must be familiar with our unique dispositions, our strengths and points of conflict, and the personal qualities that make us who we are. As we identify these defining elements of ourselves, we are able to see how they impact the manner in which we take on challenges, process new information, and deepen our understanding. The key is to be aware of your own learning style and to approach new challenges in a manner that utilizes your personal strengths and characteristics.

As we learn about *Listening First* in class, each student will explore their personal approaches to learning and the unique qualities they bring to the classroom community. We will have opportunities for discussions, peer tutoring, and student-led presentations to allow for the representation of a diverse range of learning approaches. Students will work alone and in partnerships to identify personal strengths and unique characteristics – those qualities that make them assets to the class as a whole - and plan for how to use them to advance their learning each day. We will explore the ways in which those qualities that sometimes hold us back can be reframed as strengths and used to our advantage.

You can support this work at home by assisting your child in observing and understanding his approach to learning. Once this has been identified, help him approach new challenges from his [areas of strength](#) and help him discover how to use those strengths to fortify the areas in which he struggles.

Sincerely,

Listening First - <https://theartoflearningproject.org/resources/art-of-introspection/listen-first/>

Do You Know Your Child's Strengths -

<https://www.institute4learning.com/2019/12/30/do-you-know-your-childs-strengths-here-are-165-possibilities/>



Loving the Game (Chapters 4, 8)

“I arrived at a commitment to chess that was about much more than fun and glory. It was about love and pain and passion and pushing myself to overcome. It might sound absurd, but I believe that year, from eight to nine, was the defining period of my life. I responded to heartbreak with hard work. I was self-motivated and moved by a powerful resolve.” (23)

For children, many of their activities are punctuated by unexpected challenges because so many of those experiences are new. And often, this is what makes them fun! Picture a child determined to tackle a climbing structure at the playground. As she climbs, she may discover that the route she took ends at a place where she can't find a foothold to go further and she has to backtrack a bit. Or maybe she finds that it's quite wobbly near the top and she's got to adjust her climbing style to compensate. In either case, she doesn't give up because the challenge is too great. She doesn't decide she hates climbing because it involves unexpected challenges. She loves it and is eager to climb another, bigger structure next. Once that child has mastered the smaller structure on the playground, she doesn't want to keep climbing it over and over. It loses its excitement. The challenge is what makes it fun.

As we get older, we often lose this eagerness to embrace and enjoy challenges as the implications of failure become more daunting. We get angry with ourselves for our mistakes, feel annoyance at the intrusion of an unplanned detour, and desire a smooth and hassle free path forward. We tend to lose the playfulness and curiosity we had as children to a more self-critical drive to make meaning of our presumed failures. But imagine if we approached these same challenges like the child on the playground. What if we jumped into each project, practice, or presentation with a “bring it on” attitude, eager to discover what was around the next corner? Think of the growth and the joy one could experience with every new challenge.

LOOK INWARD:

1. Think back to a time when you approached a new learning experience with a sense of joy and enthusiasm. What were the circumstances that allowed you to approach the experience in this manner, without regard to risk or fear of failure?
2. How would you define the relationship in your pursuits between the learning process and the goal? Do you tend to put more weight on the process or the end goal? At which point do you tend to experience the most joy or excitement?



3. Are there some pursuits in which you enjoy the process more and some in which the endpoint is where you experience the most joy? Think back to the times when you were deeply engaged in the process. What did you enjoy about it? What made it so engaging? How did it differ from those pursuits in which you most enjoyed the end goal?
4. Is there a particular part of the school day or of a given lesson in which you observe that your students are more engaged and having more fun than others? What factors contribute to this? How could you bring those factors into other parts of the school day in which students tend to be less engaged?

ACTIONS:

1. Consider how you give feedback to your students. It is important that your response to their work reflects your value of a process-first approach to learning. Give praise for hard work, lessons learned, and focused effort. Help them maintain a focus on the immediate goals and the potential for moving forward, rather than the final product.
2. Some students are motivated by competition against others. How can you foster a healthy atmosphere of competition in your classroom or on the playing field? For those who tend to shrink back from competition, help them identify personal benchmarks in order to compete with themselves.
3. Whenever possible, build a sense of [playfulness](#) into your classroom work. Help your students see challenging projects as something to jump into with excitement and without fear.
4. Students who are [intrinsically motivated](#) are more likely to persevere through challenges and enjoy the process of learning. According to Daniel Pink's *Drive*, three key components of intrinsic motivation are autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Some ways to support these factors within the classroom are:
 - a. Autonomy - whenever possible, provide your students with choices about their work and a sense of ownership over what they are doing. Allow them to choose research topics, select their own methods of presentation, and set personal goals.
 - b. Mastery/competence - with your students, set short term, reachable goals along the longer path to understanding. Provide opportunities for them to experience small successes within the process to build a sense of competency. Be sure to offer optimally challenging activities (not too hard, not too easy) to provide the opportunity to experience both stretch and success.
 - c. Purpose - Be sure that students understand the use and value of what they are learning. Whenever possible, place the learning



within real life contexts (for example, if they are learning to write persuasive essays, suggest they write an essay to convince the principal to make a change they'd like to see within the school). Help them see the connections between what they are learning in one subject area and other aspects of their lives (for example, how deepening their understanding of physics will improve their soccer game).

DAILY HABITS:

1. Incorporate a fun and challenging activity into each day or class period. Some possibilities are to begin the class with a riddle of the day, or end the period with a round of [Stump the Teacher](#).
2. State a clear and relevant purpose for each lesson's learning objective (Today we're learning to multiply fractions. Tomorrow we're going to use this to convert a recipe meant for two people to cook enough for our whole class).
3. Set aside time each day for a curriculum based project that allows the students to connect with a [purpose](#) larger than themselves. For instance, an [art class](#) could have a unit of study in which they plan and create a mural to cover an unsightly wall in the neighborhood, a [design technology class](#) could design shelters for people experiencing homelessness, or a [physics class](#) could design tools to support classmates with disabilities to more easily navigate the school building.
4. End each day or class period with a review of "the best part of the hardest thing". For example, "The hardest thing I did today was the peer editing of my essay. It was hard because my partner noticed a lot of things that I need to change and a lot of places where my writing wasn't clear. The best part of that is that we came up with a plan for what I will change tomorrow and I think it will be a better piece of writing." You may need to model this quite a bit in the beginning, and have the students do their own reflections in their heads. As they become more familiar with the practice, you can begin inviting students to share their best parts of the hardest things

Playing to Learn - <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/19/03/playing-learn>

How to foster Intrinsic Motivation - <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/16/09/intrinsically-motivated>

Stump the Teacher prezi - https://prezi.com/o_mk_w0pgily/stump-the-teacher/

Students With a Bigger Purpose Stay Motivated <https://digitalpromise.org/2016/07/27/students-with-a-bigger-purpose-stay-motivated/>

Beautify Education, Morningside High School - <https://youtu.be/BrJmKAGw2sg>

School Project Builds Conestoga Huts for Boise Homeless - <https://youtu.be/mAVvXYiaU1g>

The Physics Problem Solving Service-Learning Project

<https://medium.com/communityworksjournal/the-physics-problem-solving-service-learning-project-439afe3cab41>



Loving the Game – family letter

“I arrived at a commitment to chess that was about much more than fun and glory. It was about love and pain and passion and pushing myself to overcome. It might sound absurd, but I believe that year, from eight to nine, was the defining period of my life. I responded to heartbreak with hard work. I was self-motivated and moved by a powerful resolve.” (23)

Dear Families,

This week we will begin our exploration of the learning principle [Loving the Game](#).

As children, most of us enjoyed the process of discovery. Exploration and experimentation were at the heart of many of our activities and we approached the challenge with an eager excitement and an open mind. As we mature, however, these challenges often become fraught with the fear of failure and embarrassment. We hesitate to fully immerse ourselves in discovering the unknown because the risk of disappointment carries too heavy a weight. However, the path to success requires that we give ourselves up to the risk, and we will gain the most if we learn to enjoy the ride and learn from the results, regardless of their outcome.

As we learn about *Loving the Game* in class we will use games, projects, and other in-class activities to create opportunities for supportive and healthy competition. Within each unit of study we will develop a clear understanding of both the long-term expectations and the short-term goals that will move us toward that end. Our focus will be centered on enjoying and learning from the process as a key element of the journey, rather than looking solely toward the end goal.

You can support this work at home by helping your child develop a sense of ownership and [intrinsic motivation](#) for his school work and extracurricular activities. Provide opportunities for autonomy and choice in how he studies or practices an instrument or sport. Help her see the greater purpose and value in the work she is doing in school and out. Assist your child in developing a process-first approach to his pursuits by focusing praise on his efforts and lessons learned, rather than solely on successful outcomes. Enjoy her triumphs and allow her to mourn her losses, but then move forward with a focus on learning from challenges and an eye toward how to improve next time.

Sincerely,



Breaking Down Walls (Chapters 7, 9, 10, 18)

“Once I recognized that deeply buried secrets in a competitor tend to surface under intense pressure, my study of chess became a form of psychoanalysis. I unearthed my subtlest foibles through chess, and the link between my personal and artistic sides was undeniable.” (p. 76)

Themes that arise in one area of our personal lives will also surface in other areas—all aspects of life are interconnected. The ability to learn and perform in consistently effectual ways is therefore impacted by our general state of mind. It is vital that we unearth the psychological patterns and emotional responses that get in the way of our successes, and take our weaknesses on. By bringing awareness to the threads connecting mind and action, we can break down the walls that we have mentally built up between the disparate parts of our lives, and take corrective steps to transform our weaknesses into strengths.

LOOK INWARD:

1. Have you ever had a joyful experience in your personal life that positively impacted your work life, or vice versa? What about a negative emotional experience that did the same?
2. Think about a time when you experienced great success. What else was happening in your life at the time? What were the emotions and psychological state at play?
3. How could you harness feelings of anxiety, anger, or fear and reframe them to work to your advantage?
4. Observe and take note of some of the themes of struggle in your teaching. Do you see them paralleled in any other areas of your life? For example, do you struggle with a need for control in the classroom and also in any areas of your personal life? Do you experience stress and anxiety about upcoming meetings, lessons, or sporting events, and also struggle to remain present in conversations with your children? Identifying these patterns will help you tackle them across disciplines.

ACTIONS:

1. Identify and point out moments of success in your class (especially when that success involved overcoming challenges). Consider having your students maintain a “success journal” in which they regularly log successful moments in their lives, both in and out of school. Teach them to use the journal as a reference tool in times of stress or self-doubt.



2. Encourage your students to identify themes and patterns of struggle within their school and personal lives. Help them make a plan for how to tackle one of those struggles through a physical activity or discipline and to note the impact that change has on other areas of their lives. Some examples of common struggles and how one might work on them are:
 - a. Focus - try a slackline or other [balance activity](#)
 - b. Stamina - any kind of [HIIT activity](#)
 - c. Impulsivity - [jumprope](#) or [hacky sack](#) to help develop patience and timing
 - d. Self-confidence - [strength training](#) or building endurance through [running](#)
 - e. Stress/anxiety - try [qigong](#) or [yoga](#)
3. Have your students write or draw about a time when they felt a strong emotion, such as excitement, embarrassment, fear, joy, etc. Then, give them a scenario (unrelated to the cause of the emotion they described) in which they can envision how that emotion would affect their reaction. For example, if they write a story about being embarrassed when they tripped and fell in front of the whole school, have them describe what would happen if they replayed that feeling in their minds while giving a presentation in class. Next, have them use the same scenario in response to a different emotion, such as joy or excitement, and compare the difference in the impact of a positive versus negative emotion.
4. Help your students identify their personal strengths (e.g. organization, creativity, logical reasoning, humor). Create student groups in which each student's strength plays an important role. Be explicit with your students about the value of their role within that group and give them assignments that allow each member to utilize their strengths.

DAILY HABITS:

1. Assign a daily journaling activity to help you and your students become more cognizant of themes and patterns in thoughts and actions.
 - a. End each day or class period by spending 5 minutes writing about what you worked on that day and what is still unfinished or where you are stuck.
 - b. First thing the next morning, before checking email, social media, etc, spend another 5 minutes putting your unfiltered thoughts down in your journal.
 - c. At the end of each week, review what you've written. Look for patterns in terms of where you've been stuck or left work unfinished, where you've experienced successes, what new ideas you've come up with, and what questions regularly arise.



2. Spend 5 minutes at the beginning of each day or class period leading your students through a guided visualization exercise. At first, use a group experience in which the class persevered through a challenge, walking them through their process. Eventually, transition to having them visualize moments of personal success, and the path they took to get there.
3. As your students become more familiar with their patterns of struggle, you can begin a daily mental contrasting exercise, such as [WOOP](#), in which they identify a wish, identify the best outcome of achieving that wish, identify the obstacles to its achievement, and make a plan for how to succeed.
4. With your students, identify one theme of struggle within your class and set aside time for a daily physical activity the class can take on together to address it. For example, if collaboration and teamwork is a struggle, spend 5 minutes each day playing [Back-to-Back Get Up](#), or the Mirror Game, where students mirror each other's movements. If stamina during work periods is a struggle, spend 5 minutes each day building physical stamina for an activity such as jumping jacks or sit-ups. As students improve within the physical manifestations of these struggles take note of the positive impact it has on those same issues in their academic work.

13 Exercises for Balance - <https://forkidsplus.com/physical-fitness-for-kids/>

7 Minute Family and Kids Workout -

<https://www.grouphit.com/products/kids-06-7-min-family-kids-workout-full-body-strength-cardio-no-equipment>

Punk Rope videos - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAH9btOKWwG2YfGkEIO-waA>

Learn Footbag Basics video - https://youtu.be/s3_X-0OK-LU

20 Strength Training Benefits for Kids - <https://www.foxhillfitness.com/strength-training-for-kids/>

A Guide to Start Kids Running Safely -

<https://www.womensrunning.com/training/beginner/guide-starting-kids-running-safely/>

Simple 13 Minute Qi Gong Routine for Kids - <https://youtu.be/eAQzFqdc7Hs>

Yoga for Kids video - <https://yogawithadriene.com/yoga-for-kids/>

WOOP for Classrooms - <https://characterlab.org/activities/woop-for-classrooms/>

Back-to-Back Get up Game - <https://www.playworks.org/game-library/back-to-back-get-up/>



Breaking Down Walls – family letter

“Once I recognized that deeply buried secrets in a competitor tend to surface under intense pressure, my study of chess became a form of psychoanalysis. I unearthed my subtlest foibles through chess, and the link between my personal and artistic sides was undeniable.” (p. 76)

Dear Families,

This week we will begin our exploration of the learning principle [Breaking Down Walls](#).

We have all had experiences in which our successes, joys, challenges, and frustrations bleed from one area of our lives into another. Because of a difficult and frustrating exchange at work, we go home and bicker with our spouse or are short on patience with our kids. A triumph in our personal lives leaves us flying high and gives us the space to approach a challenging project at work feeling capable and energized. In observing and recognizing the patterns and connections in disparate parts of our lives we can recognize our weaknesses and develop our strengths.

As we learn about *Breaking Down Walls* in class we will begin to keep track of our personal successes and use them as points of reference when we tackle challenges. We will practice positive visualization and mental contrasting techniques in order to create a powerful framework for success before taking on difficult or stressful tasks. We will also begin to identify our own personal strengths and learn to use them to make positive contributions to group projects and our classroom community as a whole.

You can support this work at home by helping your child to identify conditions that produce strong emotions and to notice the impact those emotions have on other aspects of her life. Draw attention to his strengths and successes and remind him to draw on those when tackling new challenges. Remind her to practice the positive visualization and [mental contrasting](#) techniques she’s learned in class and take note of the patterns that occur in the relationship between her emotions and her performance.

Sincerely,



Intuition: Developing The Internal Compass (Chapters 13, 14)

“Much of what separates the great from the very good is deep presence, relaxation of the conscious mind, which allows the unconscious to flow unhindered. This is a nuanced and largely misunderstood state of mind that when refined involves a subtle reintegration of the conscious mind into a free-flowing unconscious process. The idea is to shift the primary role from the conscious to the unconscious without blissing out and losing the precision the conscious can provide.” (p. 142)

To truly excel, we must cultivate access to intuition—the bridge between the conscious and unconscious mind that is the wellspring of our creativity. We can achieve this access by alternating deep and repetitive study at the highest possible level with periods of rest and relaxation. When we connect with our intuition, we are calling into service a part of our brain that can perceive the interconnections between vast amounts of technical knowledge and instantaneously harmonize them into a single creative solution.

LOOK INWARD:

1. Have you ever experienced a sudden burst of clarity in which you intuitively understood something without consciously accessing that knowledge? Replay the experience in your mind - what were you doing when it happened, what triggered the understanding, how were you feeling at the time?
2. How could you cultivate a connection between your conscious and unconscious mind that would allow you to experience these moments of sudden comprehension at will?
3. What habits or routines do you currently use to open the connection between your conscious and unconscious mind?
4. What habits or routines do you have that might restrict the connection between the conscious and unconscious mind?

ACTIONS:

1. Carefully schedule your class period or school day with optimal creativity and performance in mind.
 - a. Build journaling and other creative, output oriented work into the beginning of each day or class period. For a more detailed description of the journaling process, see the Breaking Down Walls section of this guide.
 - b. End the school day or class period with something creative and *unfinished*, and give your students an assignment to work on it first thing the next morning and bring ideas to school to share. This



- allows them the opportunity to relax their conscious minds and tap into their creativity when it is at its most fertile.
2. Encourage your students to work at a high level and alternate periods of effort with rest and relaxation. Practice [in class relaxation techniques](#) together and, once they've learned how to do them, help your students identify a few they can do on their own whenever they need to.
 3. Where possible, help your students develop a [daily architecture](#) that works best for their learning styles and energy levels.

DAILY HABITS:

1. Begin each day by writing in a journal. Do this first thing in the morning - this is an enormously fertile time to tap into the unconscious parts of your mind and spur creativity. This can be helpful for both teachers and students. The Daily Architecture resource above includes a detailed description of how to do this.
2. Build stress and recovery time into each class period. Alternate periods of intense academic work with short relaxation or [physical activity](#) breaks. The [pomodoro technique](#) is a powerful strategy for helping students and teachers learn to quickly get into the flow of their work, remain on task, and stay energized.
3. End each class period on a strong note, allowing students to internalize the feeling of doing high quality work between the end of one class and the beginning of the next.
4. Introduce a concept that will require creative thinking, take a quick whole class exercise break (25 jumping jacks, run in place for 30 seconds, etc), then send your students off to work on the concept independently.

Classroom Relaxation Exercises - <https://britannicalearn.com/blog/classroom-relaxation-exercises/>

Daily Architecture for Students -

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ScI0hsBZvFYoXVGtxSUDnFxVcVFUve9KtUQGmziO1j4/edit?usp=sharing>

Make Your Classroom a HIIT - <https://www.onatlas.com/blog/make-classroom-hiit>

The Pomodoro Technique: A Practical Homework Tool -

<https://medium.com/the-rivers-school/the-pomodoro-technique-a-practical-homework-tool-32f4d62f91c4>



Intuition: Developing the Internal Compass – family letter

“Much of what separates the great from the very good is deep presence, relaxation of the conscious mind, which allows the unconscious to flow unhindered. This is a nuanced and largely misunderstood state of mind that when refined involves a subtle reintegration of the conscious mind into a free-flowing unconscious process. The idea is to shift the primary role from the conscious to the unconscious without blissing out and losing the precision the conscious can provide.” (p. 142)

Dear Families,

This week we will begin our exploration of the learning principle [Intuition: Developing the Internal Compass](#).

Our minds are incredible organs – constantly processing, sorting, organizing, recalling, and utilizing information. We are capable of amazing achievements when working with intense focus and deep concentration. However, we tend to neglect or dismiss the role of intuition in connecting layers of consciousness. When we allow ourselves the mental space to access this wellspring of creativity we open ourselves up to the bursts of insight that occur when our conscious and unconscious minds work in harmony.

As we learn about *Intuition: Developing the Internal Compass* in class, we will examine the architecture of our day and learn to organize our schedules to optimize performance. We will practice alternating periods of intense concentration with rest and relaxation to encourage communication between both our conscious and unconscious thought processes, and will use journaling to tap into deeper levels of intuition and insight.

You can support this work at home by helping your child develop routines for relaxing between periods of intense effort. These can include washing her face, taking a quick walk, practicing [deep breathing](#), or taking a short nap. When your child is working on a difficult problem or project, encourage him to end the day with it unfinished and return in the morning with a fresh perspective and new creativity. You may also want to encourage your child to write in a journal first thing in the morning, when her thoughts are flowing freely and unhindered by the events of the day.

Sincerely,

Intuition: Developing the Internal Compass -

<https://theartoflearningproject.org/resources/art-of-introspection/develop-the-internal-compass/>

Kids Meditation: Five Finger Breathing - <https://youtu.be/DSgOW879jjA>



The Middle Way: Navigating Greyness (Chapters 9, 19)

“To my mind, the fields of learning and performance are an exploration of greyness – of the in-between. There is the careful balance of pushing yourself relentlessly, but not so hard that you melt down. Muscles and minds need to stretch to grow, but if stretched too thin, they will snap.” (p. 88)

To maximize learning and use the knowledge we gain to perform at a high level, we must be willing to engage in a process that pushes us to the outer edges of our abilities, yet does not stretch us so thinly that we run the risk of breaking down. Ideally, we will allow the bar to move a bit higher with each step we take along this balanced middle road—just enough to engage our capacities fully and let us experience some success. This approach can spur us on to additional growth and wins. In order to strike a balance between pushing ourselves forward and preserving a sense of wholeness, we must be willing to let go of our prior notions of adequacy and pursue a strategy of growth that upholds our unique learning styles as well as the passions that give expression to who we are.

LOOK INWARD:

1. Consider this quotation from the book, “The key to pursuing excellence is to embrace an organic, long-term learning process, and not to live in a shell of static, safe mediocrity.” What does this mean to you?
2. Think back to a time when you pushed yourself beyond your comfort zone and grew as a result. What were the factors that led to this situation? How did you feel before pushing yourself, and then after experiencing growth?
3. Have there been times in your life when you chose to stay in a comfortable, but static position, rather than push yourself towards further growth at the expense of your comfort? Think about how you might have stretched your limits and grown with a different approach.

ACTIONS:

1. Help your students understand the value of pushing themselves to the outer edges of their comfort zones in order to grow and succeed at increasingly higher levels. Give examples of when they may have done this in other areas of their lives, such as learning to ride a bike (and falling many times in the process), improving their speed in a sport through gradually increasing bursts of maximum effort between lower intensity (more comfortable) effort.
2. Just as High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) helps you push your physical limits and expand your abilities, High Intensity In Class Activities (HIICA) help students push their academic limits and expand their intellectual



- abilities. Try intensifying your in-class activities by including [some of these suggestions](#), such as randomly selecting students to share opinions on pre-class reading (make sure everyone knows to prepare ahead of time), assigning roles to all students in group work activities, and so on.
3. Have your students keep track of their progress on regular skill building work such as math fact quizzes, sight word assessments, vocabulary tests, etc. A simple graph is a great tool for showing growth over time.
 4. Help students set individual progress goals on a weekly or monthly basis, pushing the bar a little higher each time. Have them reflect on progress made at regular intervals.
 5. With younger students, work on whole class stamina building for independent, focused work periods such as reading and writing. Gradually increase focused work time over a period of several weeks.
 6. Develop clear and consistent rubrics for unit end goals and help your students plan for how to achieve them incrementally.

DAILY HABITS:

1. Spend a few minutes each day practicing a class physical activity such as yoga, jumping jacks, balancing, etc. Have your students take note of improvements in flexibility, stamina, strength, and balance at the end of each week.
2. If you have students who tend to avoid challenges, help them select one action they can take each day to embrace discomfort. Choose something small at first so that it isn't too daunting. For example, if they avoid speaking in class, have them read the assignment aloud each day, gradually expanding to sharing one comment or opinion per lesson, and so on.
3. If you have students who tend to push themselves too hard, to the point where they often feel unsuccessful and stretched too thin, help them identify one daily action they can take to allow for breathing space. For example, make a plan for a stress and recovery routine during the class period that provides the student with opportunities for relaxation between periods of intense focus. Additionally, they may need support in developing a [daily architecture](#) plan that will help them eliminate unnecessary distractions and improve their focus.
4. Have your students take a few minutes at the beginning of each day to plan for stretch within their school work. "This is my threshold now, I'm going to do x, y, z to push it a bit further."



The Middle Way: Navigating Greyness – family letter

“To my mind, the fields of learning and performance are an exploration of greyness – of the in-between. There is the careful balance of pushing yourself relentlessly, but not so hard that you melt down. Muscles and minds need to stretch to grow, but if stretched too thin, they will snap.” (p. 88)

Dear Families,

This week we will begin our exploration of the learning principle [The Middle Way: Navigating Greyness](#).

In order to truly grow and develop both our physical and intellectual muscles we must be willing to regularly push ourselves to the edges of our abilities. However, it is important to take a balanced approach when doing so. We must stretch ourselves to reach new levels, but not so far that we fall flat in the process. By taking incremental steps beyond our comfort zones we can push the limits of our abilities while experiencing fulfillment and success.

As we learn about *The Middle Way: Navigating Greyness* in class, we are practicing the physical manifestation of this principle through activities that encourage the development of flexibility, stamina, and strength. Students are learning to keep track of academic growth over time and use that data to set personal progress goals on a regular basis. Those students who tend to shy away from challenges are developing daily plans to push themselves slightly beyond their comfort zones, and those who tend to push themselves too hard are working on subtracting unnecessary stressors and building recovery time into their school day.

You can support this work at home by helping your child identify situations in which she was willing to take risks and experienced growth as a result. Help your child determine the circumstances that allowed her to pursue this more difficult path and note the positive results. Help your child identify situations in which he is not comfortable moving beyond his comfort zone and use his previous successful experiences to [build scaffolding](#) for taking incremental steps to stretch and grow in this more challenging arena.

Sincerely,

The Middle Way: Navigating Greyness -
<https://theartoflearningproject.org/resources/art-of-introspection/the-middle-way/>
Helping Kids Step Outside Their Comfort Zones -
<https://www.readbrightly.com/expert-tips-help-child-step-outside-comfort-zone/>