

SPAN Meeting Minutes  
November 14, 2016 – 7 PM  
Westwood Media Center

Apryl Henry introduced Wendy Behrens as our speaker for the evening. Wendy Behrens, Gifted and Talented Education Specialist from the Minnesota Department of Education, will be speaking on the development of critical thinking skills tonight.

A reminder there will be no meeting in December. We will meet again in January with a panel of Middle School and High School Students telling what they wish they would have known in elementary school.

Our Remaining Schedule for 2016/2017 School Year: :

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Event</b>
Tu. Jan. 17	7pm	WW Media Center	Meeting. A panel of high-school and middle-school students taking advanced/AP classes will discuss what they wished they would have known in elementary school. They will take questions as well.
Th. Feb. 9	7pm	WW Media Center	Meeting. Showing of <i>2e Twice Exceptional</i> film ( <a href="http://2emovie.com/">http://2emovie.com/</a> ) with discussion to follow. Film is 54 minutes in length.
Th. March 9	7pm	WW Media Center	Meeting. Speakers Sandra Mortensen (Guidance Counselor) and Tim Chivarri (Assistant Principal), both from Bloomington's Oak Grove Middle School, will present on the Science and Engineering of Calm - Providing Tools for Parents to bring Mindfulness into their home .

WW: WestWood Elementary School (5370 WestWood Dr. SE; Prior Lake, MN 55372)

Wendy Behrens

Question: What are critical thinking skills?

- Going beyond the facts?
- Evaluating, critiquing, analyzing?

Critical thinking skills are the use of systems, rationale, fact gathering, logic, and looking for logic patterns as ways to problem solve.

Question: How is this different from Creative Thinking skills?

- Different connections, ideas?
- Innovation?

Creative thinking is basically brainstorming various solutions to a problem inside and outside the box

Question: How do we get Critical Thinking Skills to develop?

1. Logic Games
2. Real Life Situations
  - a. What do we know?
  - b. What's reasonable?
  - c. What connects?

As a parent you are the guide

Ask questions and allow your child to use the knowledge at hand for discussion and to draw conclusions

Question: In real life, what ways do you use critical thinking?

Follow Up: As an engineer, what ways do you use critical thinking skills in your work?

Dave talked about the process he uses to build bridges at work.

Question: In what ways does this translate to our kids?

Skate park example with a group of gifted kids

These are real life skills! All kids need them, not just gifted kids!

One of the biggest challenges for teachers is to teach the communication skills to go along with the critical thinking

- Need to explain the nuances of the topic
- Also need to know what questions need to be asked

When your child asks a simple question, use it as an opportunity to develop critical thinking

- Start with helping them process (so you want a snack? How long until dinner? What did you have for lunch? What would you choose to eat? Etc.)
- Get to the point that you can ask "What do you think?"

The real answer is What Do You Think!

You are looking for developing interpretation, analysis, explanation (verbal and written) and decision making skills

Opportunities to develop these skills at home:

1. Book Club – read aloud or books on tape are options for little ones
2. Brain Games
3. Logic Puzzles
4. Board Games
5. Journaling – giving kids prompts, blogging

There are hundreds of other activities you could do...

Cooperative Activities (examples included plan a meal, make a meal, etc.)

See Critical Thinking Handout

See Handout on How To Ask Questions

Understanding is different from knowing

Soft skills/social and emotional skills are as important to development (for those skills like sharing, cooperation, etc. that we thought were not important in the kindergarten years, research now shows these are better predictors of college success than other school tests and skill development)

Mindset (see talk by Anne Tyler) is also shown to be very important

Critical thinking skills are hard work but also shown to be very important

How you talk to your kids has to do with how they develop their critical thinking skills. Remember to ask the right questions!