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In The Disciplined Mind, Howard Gardner explores what are, in his view, key components of what education should comprise. These components can be viewed through the lenses of what is *good*, *beautiful*, and *true*. In the documentary *Spellbound*, elements of Gardner's views can be found in the experiences of the spellers profiled. In particular, the journeys of Neil Kadakia and Angela Arenivar highlight some of Gardner's assertions from The Disciplined Mind. The Scripps National Spelling Bee is the epitome of the "decontextualized setting" that Gardner describes most schools as being. Students study and regurgitate hundreds of words from often archaic or obscure origins in an attempt to be the last person standing. Yet, even in such a prescribed and narrow setting, we see students exhibiting many of the skills Gardner stress that education should promote.

First, an overview of some of Gardner's key assertions is necessary to understand the connections to the students in *Spellbound*. Content, or the "meat and potatoes" of what is taught, is the most crucial aspect of education and what Gardner sees lacking in many educational institutions. To focus on the ideals of the good, the beautiful, and the true is to also teach students the necessary inverse of these values. Through this triple focus, education has the power to fashion a certain kind of individual or in Gardner's words, "human beings who understand the world, who gain sustenance from such understanding, and who want--ardently, perennially--to alter it for the better."

It is probably accurate to state that students who participate in spelling bees such as the Scripps National Bee have many of the qualities Gardner hopes a quality education can instill in young people. Many exhibit curiosity, determination, and a high degree of motivation. The father of speller Neil Kadakia states about his son in the film, "The process of going through something that complex, that hard, and he still put in energy with a passion; if they can do that in everything else that they take in, those very qualities will make them successful and happy in what they do."

In terms of cognition, Gardner makes many useful points. He describes the "cognitive revolution" of the 1950s in which the new idea emerges that "individuals have ideas, images, and various 'languages' in their mind-brain." The belief is that these "mental representations" can be studied by scientists and changed by educators. In reference to students participating in a spelling bee, Gardner makes the analogy that no longer would researchers be interested in how many words a student missed, but instead might seek to identify the rules, strategies, and other influences that determined whether a word is misspelled.

It is interesting to note the different methods of preparation the eight spellers profiled took to make it to the national contest. Angela Arenivar shares with the film-maker her flashcards and giant crossword poster she uses for studying. She mentions that when she looks at the word "allegory" she imagines her friend cheering her on because of her signature on the card. The emotional connection helps her learning process. Gardner calls emotion one of the traits that is "beyond cognition." In The Disciplined Mind he states, "students are more likely to learn, remember, and make subsequent use of those experiences with respect to which they had strong -- and, one hopes positive -- emotional reactions."

In contrast, Neil Kadakia uses a rigorous and highly structured process for learning his words. Coming from an affluent background, his parents provide tutors to help him learn French and Spanish cognates and a spelling coach to work with him four times per week. In addition to this intensive tutoring schedule, his father coaches him on a systematic approach to spelling that involves listening, visualizing, mentally spelling, then slowly verbally spelling each word. Although he praises his son frequently in the film, when Neil struggles his father encourages him to "take a deep breath and use your technique again." For Neil, learning comes through the process of applying the same technique to each word he attempts to master.

Although there is a wide range of ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic variables at play in the

experiences of the spellers, there are also some constants. Many of the the students exhibit a high degree of motivation for the activity, again another area that Gardner terms "beyond cognition." Many describe the long hours they spend studying their word lists, often to the puzzlement of their friends. For some, going to the mall, sight-seeing, and participating in other activities take a backseat to learning more words. That being said, many seem to also have struck a balance between spelling and other interests. Neil Kadakia is athletic and enjoys sports and playing with his friends. Although the families of the students play varying roles in their efforts to help their children succeed, most of the students demonstrate motivation that is indeed intrinsic and their participation is not meant purely to satisfy their parents' wishes. Certainly, Angela Arenivar, whose parents speak only Spanish, could not help her study, but their belief in the value of education to better their children's lives became a motivating force. In the closing scenes of the film, she states simply, "Maybe it's because of my background that I worked so hard."

Indeed, although *Spellbound* depicts a cultural phenomena that is intriguing, it also serves as an example of some of Howard Gardner's views of what our education goals should be. Whether someone can spell "logorrhea" may not be an indicator of long-term success, but the skills and mental processes the spellers in *Spellbound* utilized in learning these words is something that certainly will prepare them to be dedicated, critically-thinking, and articulate adults.