***The Heart of the Matter***

**Part One**

Knowing and honoring what gifts our students bring with them to the school community is the first step. Listen to the following story:

Does your resume include the fact that you are cranky when you get up in the morning? Does it admit that, when you are under pressure, you don’t perform as well as you do at other times? Of course not! But don’t we do this to young people all the time? At times, human service agencies or schools create resumes that only focus on child and youth weaknesses! That’s not very fair, is it?

When Karl first met Brenda, she had a very low sense of self-esteem. She did not think she was a good person, that she was likeable or that she could do anything. She had failed as a student and as a responsible citizen. The only thing she was good at was hurting herself (suicide attempts) or hurting others. That’s how she had been labeled and treated and that’s how she had come to accept herself.

Karl refused to see her that way. He insisted on seeing her as a girl – a girl with competencies. He knew that, unless she began to see herself in a more positive light, she would be doomed to always seeing hurting herself as an answer. Karl’s aim was to find some things about Brenda that she could be proud of and that could be used to change her self-image from negative to positive. Karl’s discovery about Brenda was that she was a good and likeable person; that she could do something well and that she had positive personal characteristics of which she could take advantage.

* *Adapted from Everything is Normal Until Proven Otherwise*

Think about the student or students for which you will be planning Intensive supports. Consider the questions below and write down your responses. (5 minutes)

–What makes this child happy? (What does this child love to do? What is this child curious about?)

Note one (or more) of the child’s gifts.

–Does anyone in the school (adults or students) recognize or acknowledge this child’s gifts?

- Name 3 things you can do to help others recognize this student’s gifts.