

# Newsletter

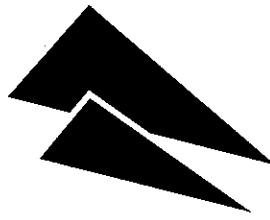
Volume 26

The Leading Edge

FOR GIFTED EDUCATION IN B.C.

The Association of the  
Educators for the Gifted,  
Talented and Creative  
Children of B.C.

B.C.T.F.



Spring/Summer 2009

## EDITOR'S MESSAGE

The content of this newsletter has seemed to flow together, like rivulets finding their common stream. It flows from contributions from teachers, parents and researchers with a common passion for finding quality educational opportunities for the gifted. It has a distinctly British Columbian focus while providing information and ideas from outside the province, keeping us in touch with issues and successes in gifted education.

We share with you a position paper from the NAGC (National Association for Gifted Children) on grouping options for gifted education. Those of you at our conference last October will remember the dynamic Susan Winebrenner who offered practical ways to enrich education of gifted students in the regular classroom. As a reminder of some of the many ideas Susan presented, we share with you a paper she co-authored on Cluster Grouping of the Gifted.

Parents of B.C. gifted students have contributed two articles. Each of these parents have two gifted children so these provide us with additional insights. Each reminds us that there are many ways to support gifted learners, if

adults and students choose to search for them. Each also gives some practical suggestions for teachers of the gifted. Macleans and Newsweek articles that reflect similar issues are referenced. A retired teacher of the gifted, with 25 years experience working with these special learners, reiterates the message of parents, that gifted children are a challenge and a joy with which to work.

The voices of gifted students are also presented by Keighley in this newsletter, with further information on strategies to deal with these issues upcoming in our next edition.

We will introduce a few of the new executive members to the AEGTCCBC. The BCTF Website connection suggests ways to support ProD for teachers of the gifted while we provide other details associated with the AEGTCCBC for your information. Thank you for your interest in providing quality education for gifted students in British Columbia.

*Shirlene Peters, BSc, M.Ed. and teacher of the gifted.*

The Leading Edge for Gifted Education  
The Association of  
Educators of Gifted, Talented  
and Creative Children of B.C.

### REMEMBER OUR WEBSITE

Visit our Web Page at:  
[www.bctf.bc.ca/PSAs/AEGTCCBC](http://www.bctf.bc.ca/PSAs/AEGTCCBC)

# Grouping

From: NAGC Position Statements at

<http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=4450&terms=Position+Paper+Grouping%3e>

Grouping gifted children is one of the foundations of exemplary gifted education practice. The research on the many grouping strategies available to educators of these children is long, consistent, and overwhelmingly positive (Rogers, 2006; Tieso, 2003). Nonetheless, the “press” from general educators, both teachers and administrators, has been consistently less supportive. Myths abound that grouping these children damages the self-esteem of struggling learners, creates an “elite” group who may think too highly of themselves, and is actually undemocratic and, at times, racist. None of these statements have any founding in actual research, but the arguments continue decade after decade (Fiedler, Lange, & Winebrenner, 2002). This position paper is intended for school board members, school administrators, teachers, parents of gifted children, and other community members with an interest in education.

## Purposes of Grouping

The purposes of grouping are fourfold: (1) to ease the delivery of appropriately differentiated curriculum to learners with similar educational needs; (2) to facilitate the use of appropriately differentiated instructional strategies to learners with similar educational needs; (3) to facilitate addressing the differential affective needs of these children in the most conducive manner; and (4) to allow for learners of similar abilities or performance levels to learn from each other. In general, grouping gifted learners tends to be the “least restrictive environment” in which their learning can take place, and the most effective and efficient means for schools to provide more challenging coursework, thereby giving these children access to advanced content and providing them with a peer group (Brody, 2004).

## Grouping Practices

Grouping practices fall into two general categories: those strategies that gather children of similar potential or ability together (“ability grouping options”) and those strategies that gather children of similar performance or achievement levels together (“performance grouping options”). Placement in ability grouped options is usually accomplished through the use of tests of intelligence, ability, or aptitude. Ability grouping options that are full-time include:

- *Full-time gifted program* – a program of services offered to a group of gifted children of the same or multiple grade levels, usually housed in a single school, in which all curriculum areas are appropriately challenging and complex
- *Self-contained gifted classroom* – full-time homogeneous classrooms, usually one homogeneous classroom distinct from several general classrooms at each grade level in the school in which all curriculum areas are appropriately challenging and complex
- *Special or magnet school for the gifted* – an entire building dedicated to addressing the needs of the gifted children who are housed there
- *Cluster grouping* – the top 5-8 gifted students at a grade level placed in a mixed ability classroom as a small group and are provided proportionate differentiated curriculum and instruction by a teacher with gifted training (e.g., 8 children in a class of 24 would receive 1/3rd of the teacher’s time and instruction)

All of these options involve systematic, comprehensive, and articulated differentiation in all academic domains full-time and on a daily basis. For full-time ability grouped options, the research shows substantial academic effects (anywhere from 1 1/3 to 2 years’ growth per year), and small, positive gains in social maturity, social cognition, and participation in extracurricular activities; small gains are also found in self-efficacy, self-esteem, and motivation for learning when gifted children are grouped together full-time (Rogers, 2002).

Ability grouping options that are part-time include:

- *Pull-out/send-out/withdrawal/resource room enrichment groups* – gifted children are removed from their regular classrooms for a specified period of time each week to work on differentiated activities, such as critical thinking, creative problem solving, or extensions of the general curriculum for more complexity and depth
- *Like-ability cooperative groups within classrooms* – when a teacher decides to use cooperative learning groups in a mixed ability classroom, the highest ability 3-4 students are grouped together for a differentiated cooperative task or learning experience and given differentiated expectations or assessments for the experience

Small, positive academic, social, and self-esteem effects are found for the part-time ability grouped options. Academically, if the learning in these options incorporates extensions of the general curriculum in a specific area or spends the greater part of the year in critical thinking or creative production, then more than a year’s growth in the focus area of the group will be accomplished (Rogers, 2002).

*(Grouping Continued)*

Performance grouping options include two daily (but subject-specific) options:

- *Cluster performance grouping* – the top performing 5-8 students in a specific core area, such as mathematics or reading/language arts are placed in an otherwise mixed ability class and are provided with differentiated curriculum and instruction in their single area of high performance
- *Regrouping for specific instruction* – the top performing students in a specific subject area, such as mathematics or English or science are placed in a high performance classroom and provided with accelerated and enriched content and skills in that area

For both of these daily performance group options, the academic effects are substantial (depending upon the actual amount of compacting and differentiation that do occur for learners), and social and self-esteem effects are small but positive. Academically, students in these classes can gain from 1 ½ years' to 1 ¾ years' growth in the subject specific area for which they are grouped (Rogers, 2002).

Performance grouping options also include options that do not meet daily:

- *Within-class/flexible grouping* – a teacher of a mixed ability class subdivides the class into groups according to their “readiness” for the curriculum to be taught
- *Like-performing cooperative learning* – when a teacher decides to use cooperative learning groups, the highest performing 3-4 students are placed in their own group and provided with a cooperative task or assignment and assessments of performance are differentiated
- *Performance-based pull-out/send-out/withdrawal/resource room enrichment classes* – the top performing students at a grade level in a specific subject are removed from their regular class for a determined number of hours per week to work on more challenging and complex content and skills in that high performance area (e.g., a Writer's Workshop, Junior Great Books, etc.)

For these options the academic effects are small to moderate (ranging from 1¼ to 1 2/5's years' growth, depending upon the subject area (mathematics and science produce higher effects than do other subject areas), while the social and self-esteem effects are small but positive.

### Recommendations

Grouping options should be available at each stage of development in a gifted child's school program, from primary through secondary. It is important for schools to select those grouping options that will be most successful considering the school context (its teachers, community values, special needs of the school population, etc.). In general, the more full-time options (full-time ability grouping, regrouping for specific instruction, cluster grouping) require little more than additional professional development, differentiated curriculum materials, and a reorganization of teacher responsibilities in order to be implemented appropriately. The part-time options vary in their cost efficiency and effectiveness. Varieties of the pull-out program may cost more in the employment of a specialized teacher to provide direct instruction to the gifted children involved, while within-class grouping and cooperative grouping involve additional planning and materials development by individual teachers who may also receive special training to prepare them for this development.

Grouping is a vehicle educators can use to allow gifted children access to learning at the level and complexity they need (Lawless, 1998; Rogers, 2006; Tieso, 2003). More importantly, it allows gifted children to learn with and make social connections with same aged peers who think and learn in the same ways they do. Grouping can also help to simplify already overburdened teachers' lives by allowing them to focus more on the specific talent development needs they encounter in this potentially more homogeneous clustering. What educators must keep in mind, however, is that what these children will do once they are grouped is probably more important than which form of grouping has been selected (Kulik, 1992).

### Selected References

- Brody, L. E. (ed.). (2004). Grouping and acceleration practices in gifted education. In S. M. Reis (Series Ed.), *Essential readings in gifted education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. This article, among many in this book of articles on grouping and acceleration from previous *Gifted Child Quarterly* journals over 25 years, takes a solid, well supported look at grouping options and the role these play in the full education of gifted and talented learners.
- Fiedler, E. D., Lange, R. E., & Winebrenner, S. (2002). In search of reality: Unraveling the myths about tracking, ability grouping, and the gifted. *Roeper Review*, 24, 108-111. The authors discuss the realities of six myths about ability grouping, citing appropriate research to support their arguments, and using illustrative words from researchers and from students to make their points.
- Kulik, J. A. (1992). An analysis of the research on ability grouping: Historical and contemporary perspectives (RBDM 9204). Storrs, CT: The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, University of Connecticut. This article provides one of the well-reasoned set of arguments in support of ability and performance grouping for gifted learners. While reporting the actual academic, social, and psychological effect sizes of various grouping options, it also makes the point that how grouped students are taught and what they are taught while grouped may be of even greater import than the act of grouping alone.
- Loveless, T. (1998). *The tracking and ability grouping debate*. Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation. The Fordham Foundation commissioned Professor Loveless to study the diverse opinions of various groups for and against ability grouping. In this very reasoned synopsis of what he found, Loveless argues that there are benefits to grouping for all ability levels when teacher quality and curriculum are taken into account, with the greatest gains being made for high ability learners.
- Rogers, K. B. (2006). *A menu of options for grouping gifted students*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press. As part of Karnes and Stephens' *Practical strategies series in gifted education*, this book outlines the research support or the variety of ability and performance groups schools can implement and helps readers determine how to select the best options when teacher roles, administrator stance, and curriculum demands are part of the decision making process.
- Rogers, K. B. (2002). *Re-forming gifted education: Matching the program to the child*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press. This book is intended for both educators and parents and guides them through a process of analyzing individual gifted student's learning needs, strengths, and styles so as to develop a personalized learning plan for them using research based, best practices in gifted education. The author presents the components, steps and structure of the plan as well as the research on various fundamental educational practices, including grouping and acceleration.
- Tieso, C. (2003). Ability grouping is not just tracking anymore. *Roeper Review*, 26, 29-36. This article is a clearly written summary of the many forms both full-time and part-time grouping options can take. More importantly, the author makes clear the important role curriculum differentiation must have in evaluating the impact of grouping high ability learners in school.

# Cluster Grouping

## *An Inexpensive and Easy Differentiation Strategy for Gifted Learners in the Regular Classroom*

*Adapted from Cluster Grouping of Gifted Students:*

*How to Provide Full-time Services on a Part-time Budget*

*ERIC EC Digest #E538*

*Authors: Susan Winebrenner and Barbara Devlin, August 1996*

Cluster grouping can be achieved by purposefully planning to put three or more identified gifted learners in their regular classroom. There is no cost associated with this strategy and it is relatively easy to implement when staffs are class building.

The goals and benefits of clustering gifted students include:

1. Providing gifted students with an accepting classroom environment where the teacher acknowledges and plans for the unique needs of gifted learners

Teachers are more likely to actively address the learning needs of gifted learners (complexity, choice, open-endedness) if more than one student will benefit. When teachers try to meet the diverse needs within their classroom there is a tendency to attend more to students who are having difficulty with the regular curriculum rather than to the student that already understands the concept and is ready to learn more. There is more motivation to provide a specific strategy if classrooms have more advanced learners in them.

2. Providing a setting which is conducive to implementation of academic and intellectual challenges at the student's ability  
Students are more likely to choose a challenging opportunity if it is offered to more than one. It may also reduce the amount of 'doing just enough to get by' so they can fit in.

3. Supporting the socio-emotional development of gifted learners

Teachers will better understand and recognize the characteristics of gifted learners that can be detrimental to learning (intensity, perfectionism, anxiety, extreme feelings, strong sense of fairness) as well as their strengths and can provide appropriate support.

4. Providing opportunities to have interactions with intellectual peers

Daily communication with their intellectual peers promotes a sense of belonging rather than the isolation that can develop if seen as the only 'smart kid'. Conversations and discussions can be more in-depth and thought provoking. Students are more likely to understand each other's thought process and ideas when clustered with like-minded individuals.

By facilitating the implementation of this strategy the school administrator is recognizing the special needs of our advanced learners in a cost effective way. It also opens the door for staffs to engage in learning about best practices in gifted education. Topics to explore might include:

- Recognition and supporting behaviors typical of gifted learners
- Ways to create situations to stretch all students thinking and learning (adding complexity; open-endedness)
- Ways to increase the pace of learning (compacting curriculum; acceleration)
- In-depth investigations in areas of passion
- Ways to facilitate sophisticated research investigations (independent projects; problem-based learning; mentorships)
- Ways to provide choice to their program (autonomous learner)

Gifted students need exactly what other students need – consistent opportunities to learn new material and to develop social skills that allow them to cope with the struggle of 'new' learning.

### References:

Susan Winebrenner and Barbara Devlin, August 1996 Cluster Grouping of Gifted Students: How to Provide Full-time Services on a Part-time Budget ERIC EC Digest #E538

Diana Heacox Differentiating Instruction in the Regular Classroom How to Reach and Teach All Learners, Grades 3-12 Minneapolis, MN Free Spirit Publishing 2002

Susan Winebrenner Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Program Minneapolis, MN Free Spirit Publishing 1992

# Letters from Parents and Teachers

## Gifted Kids – A Parent's Perspective

by Barb Pryce, Mother of Gifted Twin Boys

Gifted kids have an image problem. The widespread perception is that they are exceedingly intelligent so they don't need any support – they can figure it out on their own. They look like every other kid, but underneath their normal exteriors, there is more than can be imagined going on in their world. Giftedness can manifest itself as inappropriate behaviour, social ineptness, defiance, shutting down and even failing or very poor grades. They are not like normal kids – they have special needs.

These kids need adults in particular (and hopefully even peers) to come alongside them with eagerness to understand and cherish these complex and wonderful minds. A lack of judgement about their idiosyncrasies is critical. Traditional teaching methods and rote exercises on sheets of white paper do not work well. Innovation and creativity is required to “get at” the problems of curriculum delivery to these children. They need to be consulted in determining ways to enable their learning; the lessons and methods need to “have a point” or resonate with the student so he or she engages and embraces the challenge.

One of my sons had severe anxiety about projects that had a ‘public presentation’ aspect to them. He was simply unable to present in front of an audience. Instead of being on stage at the Christmas Concert, he would have enthusiastically undertaken technical and logistical behind-the-scenes tasks to support his class. Unfortunately, he was not allowed to participate in any way. As an example of cooperative accommodation by a teacher, my son was encouraged to do PowerPoint instead of verbal presentations. This was a creative solution that allowed him to complete the assignment, master new forms of communication and to gently expand his comfort zone. The class thoroughly enjoyed it as well! It is important to find alternate ways for these kids to show mastery of the concepts, while protecting their sensitivities and not put them in an untenable position.

One of my son's teachers worked with him to develop a decision tree. He could invoke the tree when he felt the assignment would trigger his anxieties. The decision tree was designed to accommodate his needs and to find alternate ways of proving mastery while ensuring he met curriculum. It worked so well that after a while he stopped using the tree and undertook assignments head on! I was truly grateful to that teacher.

Gifted kids need a different kind of education – one that is hands on, requires a challenge, goes deeper into subject material and engages their critical thinking skills. Parents need to find teachers, support staff and administrators with empathy for these square pegs that won't be forced into round holes. They need advocates who actually like these young people and their unique and amazing characteristics.

## Gifted Children are Different

by Rick and Sandra Gagne

As parents of two gifted children, we can vouch for the statement that gifted kids, just like all kids, are all different. We have confirmed this in many conversations with other parents of gifted children as well as witnessing our own two children. We have one child who every teacher loves, as she sets an example for other students to follow. She works hard, completes assignments on time and when she finishes her work in class, gets a book to quietly read. Our other child is often a challenge to the teacher. He can put in minimal effort on assignments that do not interest him, “forget” to complete homework and seemingly not pay attention in class. He is of course redeemed when an assignment interests him and he submits work well beyond the requirements and aced his tests. Most of our experience with schools and district methods of dealing with gifted kids comes through our advocating for our more challenging gifted learner, our son.

While many of the Challenge and pullout programs put on by the school and district are helpful for gifted learners, we realized early that the most important person in a gifted student's education is their classroom teacher. Our son, who has been a challenge for some teachers, benefited greatly when he had a teacher who connected with him. We are eternally grateful to one teacher, who arranged for a UBC Professor to teach advanced math to the gifted children in her grade five class. And further she arranged for a high school math teacher to work on advanced math concepts with our son. Many other teachers and administrators have been wonderful as well. We have felt fortunate that most years our children had committed and professional teachers who made the personal connection with them. A good strategy for the teacher is to engage the student with a project that enriches their understanding on a topic. A poor strategy is to give the student more of the same work when they finish early or even worse to use them as a teaching assistant.

The schools and District have offered many programs including in-school and pull-out Challenge programs. These are great opportunities for gifted kids to be with others who may learn more like them. These opportunities have often been very positive for our children, especially our daughter. On the other hand, our son often finds the pace or projects being offered to be geared toward the lowest end of the gifted learners in the group, so it becomes more busy work for him rather than enrichment. We would appreciate the opportunity for our children to learn at their own pace, even if that takes them past the next grade level or curriculum outline. As we stated earlier gifted children learn at their own pace, so what takes some children a month to learn may only take a week or less for a gifted child. Is it fair for that child to then sit and do busy work until the rest of the class “catches up”?

The idea of gifted clustering also intrigued us when our children were first put into classes with other gifted children, but often this means there are 2 or 3 children in the class whose curriculum is slightly changed and again it may not address the needs of the individual learner, usually it's geared toward the lowest common denominator. We know, and appreciate that this creates more work for the teacher who takes on the challenge of having a gifted cluster in their class, but we would sooner have our children be allowed to become independent learners who have some control over their learning.

In closing we do very much appreciate the work that all of our children's teachers have put in with them in preparing them for the future, and we hope that they continue to challenge and prepare them for the real world as we are trying to do as well.

## Gifted Rewards

“Oh, you were the teacher of the gifted program! You must have had the most rewarding job working with such good students!”

This is the point where I inwardly sigh and think, if only they knew. Of course they had never met Susan (not real name) who wouldn't come out from under her desk because she steadfastly maintained she was a cat and threatened to scratch you if you tried to convince her otherwise. Nor had they met Sam who would only write his assignments in code or Billy who had to be pried off the computer nor Sally who cried every time you looked at her or Fred who felt he was an expert in everything and was always far too willing to share his expertise. I smile and then try to provide some gifted in-service. I say that my classes had a few academically talented students but because they were designated using a cognitive test I had many more that were in the gifted range but were definitely underachieving in school terms. I try to explain the nature of the creative gifted child, the gifted underachieving child and the gifted child with serious emotional and learning disabilities but most of this falls on deaf ears.

I am not looking for sympathy because frankly no one is sympathetic because they have all bought into a generalization that all gifted children are eager learners, academically adept and easily managed. Part of this is due to the success of academically talented students who may or may not be gifted. The overachieving B+ student often outshines the potentially A+ student who never opts into the demands of the school or parents. Gifted students want to choose their own road and often resent the artificial boundaries imposed on them. They find school a place where they aren't allowed to delve into a subject in any depth nor are they allowed to exclusively study those subjects that interest them. There is an assumption that gifted students are eager to learn anything because they are quick learners. In my many years as a teacher of the gifted I can easily say that this is simply not true. I have had many students who knew every detail of a particular role playing computer game or favorite novel but were hard pressed to name the provinces of Canada.

However, throughout my teaching experience and even in retirement I have never given up trying to get parents, teachers and friends closer to understanding the true multi-faceted nature of the gifted child because I will always remain an advocate and I would never turn my back on my 'rewards' and yes it was a rewarding experience.

by **Carollyne Lansel**

Teacher of the Gifted Program in Penticton for 25 years.

### Introducing some new Executive faces:

**Lynn Chartres**, member at large, feels fortunate to have taught gifted students for most of her teaching career. Since 1992, she has held the position of District Challenge Resource Teacher for West Vancouver with responsibility for students K to Grade 10. She is about to finish an M.Ed. degree at UBC.

**Ms. Joanne Howey**, Member at large.

This is my first year working with gifted students and I have to say that I love the challenge, diversity and reward of working with these wonderful young students. Some of my best interactions happen during the time we spend together once a week. I only hope that I'm able to continue this process of teaching and learning and growing with them as time goes by. I'm also blessed with some pretty wonderful support here in District 43, with our amazing Coordinator, Louise Malfesi, and all the wisdom that she is happy to share from her years of experience.

**Shirlene Peters**, Editor

- B.Sc. in Biology from S.F.U.
- 5<sup>th</sup> year from S.F.U.
- M.Ed. from U. of Calgary, focus gifted education
- 10 years teaching the Gifted and Talented, Middle and Elementary teaching and Art Enrichment teaching
- 10 years Chair of Central Okanagan Regional Science Fair
- Experience in agricultural and pest management research with Agriculture Canada, B.C. Department of Agriculture, B.C. Tree Fruits and as independent consultant
- hobbies: horseback riding, canoeing, reading, gardening, hiking and painting

**Jocelyn Bystrom**, Vice President, has enjoyed teaching both elementary and middle school students since 1986. She's currently enrolled in a master's program in educational leadership completing research on teaching emotional and social intelligence strategies to gifted learners. She feels privileged to be the parent of two gifted children, which has given her a passion for advocacy of gifted students. Jocelyn currently teaches in the Comox Valley with S.D. #71.

## Brilliant but Bored

By Tacey Keighley, Resource teacher, Port Moody

“It is not that you’re smart but you have a willingness to learn, really interested in learning, want to know, always asking constantly. I deserve to know.” (Karen)

Like Karen, many students in our classrooms face a dilemma: their need and desire to learn has been thwarted by curricula and classrooms that lack choice, control, challenge or caring (the 4 Cs). Schooling is distinguished from learning. (Keighley 1996)

Gifted students are often identified as such because they are autonomous learners and producers in their areas of passion and talent. Sometimes these passions can be in the same school disciplines in which they choose to non-produce. If they find themselves bored and disenchanted with the system, the classroom, the teacher or the content, they often chose to disengage from any thinking, they choose other activities (being the class clown, skipping class) and they do not produce any product for evaluation.

Despite this non-production, gifted students understand and empathize with the challenges and constraints that their teachers face, but they do believe teachers could do more: “A good teacher is one who is not afraid to get in there and help out. Doesn’t sit there behind a desk all the time like a barrier between him and the kids.” (Karen)

These students crave powerful learning experiences involving higher level thinking, hands on activities with authentic materials, a faster pace on a flexible schedule, and working with self-selected groups of like-minded peers. Society needs brilliant minds for survival, but more importantly our brightest minds need all the opportunities possible in our classroom for their emotional and academic survival.

The hope is that caring teachers “will notice you as a person, not just another student.” (Andrea), that they will listen to the gifted students’ words, and in the end transform schooling into learning. Gifted students too, deserve equality of opportunity to learn, to produce passionately and to thrive in the classroom.

This brief introductory piece will be followed by a second one which will focus more on the students’ voices, and provide teachers with more strategies for encouraging the brilliant but bored.

Reference:

Keighley, T. (1996). The Odyssey: Reaching an understanding of academically underachieving gifted students’ perception of boredom. Masters of Arts Thesis. SFU Collection, SFU

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### Check It Out!

For another revealing article by a parent, Stephanie Lindsley, who has an autistic son and a gifted daughter, check out “Autism and Education, Who should we focus on—my disabled son or my gifted girl?” in Newsweek, March 9, 2009, page 18. In her article Lindsley, from Ohio, laments the lack of educational funding and support for the gifted. She states, “If she were given even a fraction of the customized education that my son receives, she could learn the skills needed to prevent the next worldwide flu pandemic . . . Perhaps she could even discover a cure for autism” (p.18).

### Check It Out!

Another parent story, this one about Jenn Marshall, from Ontario, in Macleans, March 2, 2009, “No Room For Gifted Kids” has header: “As parents fight for scarce resources, young minds are left to languish.”

<http://www/mewsweel.cp/id/186960>

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## ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS FOR GIFTED, TALENTED AND CREATIVE CHILDREN OF B.C. EXECUTIVE 2009

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## Visit the BCTF Website

### Contributed by David Halme.

The BCTF website contains comprehensive professional support for all teachers. Start off by hitting the PD Daisy and scroll down to Resources and see for yourself. This is not to say you would not be interested in Quality Teaching or Self-directed PD but leave that for another time. Taking the time to explore the various links such as [Online Journals for Professional Reading and Research](#) or the [Teacher Professional Development Source Book](#) will lead you through a library of ideas, links and research that will complement your teaching. My last visit to the BCTF PD site through the site; [Teacher Professional Development Source Book](#) led me to an article by Tamara Fisher:

### **Staff Development That Sticks; A gifted education specialist explains how to energize professional development while minding your budget.**

About five years ago, two national-level gifted education experts were visiting my district to interview my students for some research they were doing. It so happened that we had a system-wide professional development day while they were here and, since the day's topic was relevant to their research, they attended along with me.

"Your teachers here are so good," one of them said to me halfway through the day.

"What do you mean, 'good'?" I asked.

"Well, they actually listen and pay attention. They participate and ask questions. They're all so respectful and curious!"

I was a bit baffled. "Well, that's why we're here today—to learn. Isn't it like that everywhere?"

"Oh, no, I've seen many staff development sessions in other places where the teachers sit in the back—or even in the front row—and carry on conversations, text one another across the room, get up and walk out, sleep, eat, and are flat-out rude to the presenters."

I was horrified. First of all, you can bet your next paycheck that those very same teachers would be as steamed as Old Faithful if their students were behaving that way in their classrooms. Secondly, our topic that day was interesting, relevant, and timely for everyone in attendance. The teachers' curiosity and respectfulness was a natural outcome. "Don't all teachers get professional development that's interesting, relevant, and timely for them?" I wondered.

I guess not. And speaking as someone who has been involved in professional development on multiple levels, both as a presenter and an attendee, I know that making the experience successful can be tricky.

Effective professional development walks that fine line between satisfying the teachers and satisfying building-level, district-level, state-level, or national-level expectations of what teachers need to be learning. If we focus solely on what teachers request, some important topics could be overlooked. But if we focus solely on fulfilling bureaucratic expectations, the teachers can become a less-than-receptive audience.

As budgets grow tighter, districts are also tightening the reins on how far teachers can travel for conferences and how much schools can spend on professional development and resources. So how can we walk that fine line of satisfaction and keep the budget in mind, too? My district has implemented a few strategies in recent years that have proven to be very effective. Perhaps some of these ideas could work in your location as well.

#### **• Give teachers a role in planning**

Include teachers on the building-level or district-level team that sets the professional development agenda for the year. This way, teachers feel like they have a voice in the process. Plus, it helps to break down barriers that might be perceived between administration and staff.

#### **• Get feedback**

Survey the staff to find out what needs and interests they have that could be nurtured with a great professional development opportunity. We know what we want to learn, what we need to learn, and what those burning questions are that a little training could help us explore and answer. Give us a chance to speak up for our own learning needs.

#### **• Use your local resources**

Rather than always bringing in someone from the outside (and forking over the fees that entails), tap the wealth of knowledge and experience right in your own district. We can learn a great deal from each other. Those of us in the trenches have a lot of knowledge and expertise that we can impart to one another!



*(Visit the BCTF website continued)*

- **Make time**

Build in time for teachers to figure out how to use what they've learned. Rather than expecting everyone to implement the new ideas, strategies, or information on their own time, include time within the professional development offering for teachers to create a plan for how they will use what they've learned. I love coming away from professional development with a list of great ideas, but—like most teachers—I rarely have enough time to actually figure out how to implement all of them. It's OK to give teachers time during training for that purpose!

- **Practice what you preach**

If the day's topic is differentiated instruction but it's all presented in a lecture—a sit-and-spit form—then teachers aren't getting to experience what differentiated instruction is like from a student's perspective. We need to implement the same strategies we're learning about into our professional development, not just into our classrooms. Teachers are students, too.

- **Model good-learner strategies and protocol**

I think it's important for us as teachers to let our students know what we're learning about. When I go to a conference, I bring back the program to show my students. All dog-eared and marked-up, it gives them a peek into what I was curious about and what I learned. By letting them witness my learning process, I give them an opportunity to know a life-long learner, to see what strategies I utilize as a learner, and to make connections between what we do in class and where I learned that information or strategy

*Tamara Fisher is a K-12 gifted education specialist in northwestern Montana and president-elect of the Montana Association of Gifted and Talented Education. With Karen Isaacson, she is also co-author of Intelligent Life in the Classroom: Smart Kids and Their Teachers. In her blog Unwrapping the Gifted on [teachermagazine.org](http://teachermagazine.org), she writes about developments in the gifted education community.*

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## AEGTCCBC Founding Partner to Odyssey of the Mind

25 Years ago, the executive of AEGTCCBC was introduced to the program, then called Olympics of the Mind, got excited about it and in the spring of 1983 brought Joyce Lozito from Oregon to present a workshop on the program. At the conclusion of that meeting, members of the AEGTCCBC executive decided that this was a program they wanted to offer to gifted students. Thus the beginning of a twenty-five year commitment to this program leading to Odyssey of the Mind being officially recognized by the Ministry of Education as a Program Option for Gifted Students.

While Odyssey has gone on to be recognized as an activity that is also beneficial to many other kinds of learners, we are truly appreciative of the on-going support and encouragement of the AEGTCCBC in helping to make this program available to meet the needs of our gifted students. In this respect, we would like to present the AEGTCCBC with the designation of "Founding Partner" for the program in British Columbia.

Creative Problem Solving Society October 2008

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### Links to Resources:

Gifted Program Testing?Parents' Guide to IQ Testing and Gifted Education. Order Online![www.parentguidebooks.com](http://www.parentguidebooks.com)

Gifted Education ResourceExplore exciting ways to teach and parent gifted and talented children[www.prufrock.com](http://www.prufrock.com)

Teaching Gifted ChildrenOnline Courses in Teaching Gifted and Talented Students[www.icepe.eu/gifted.html](http://www.icepe.eu/gifted.html)

Gifted Children SupportPrintable eWorkbooks. Ages 3 - 8. Interactive learning. Buy online![www.popet.com.au](http://www.popet.com.au)

Math StepsInnovative program: regular weekly problems with step by step solution[www.mathsteps.com](http://www.mathsteps.com)

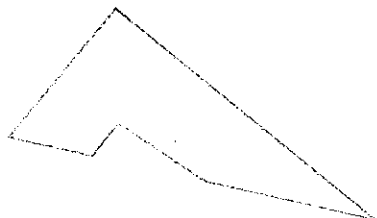
Teen Volunteer AbroadChange lives this summer in Africa, India or Latin America. 3 weeks.[www.GlobalLeadershipAdventures.com](http://www.GlobalLeadershipAdventures.com)

Gifted ChildrenTest Your IQ.The Time is Now Free.Fast & Accurate IQ Results[www-myiq.com](http://www-myiq.com)

Gifted And Talented ChildSearch multiple engines for gifted and talented child[www.webcrawler.com](http://www.webcrawler.com)

Kids & School StressStress can Affect your Health. Learn Simple Ways you can Manage it[www.MoreThanMedication.ca](http://www.MoreThanMedication.ca)

**THE LEADING EDGE**  
 FOR GIFTED EDUCATION IN BC  
**The Association of the**  
**Educators for the Gifted,**  
**Talented and Creative**  
**Children of B.C.**  
 B.C.T.F.



ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS OF THE GIFTED,  
 TALENTED AND CREATIVE CHILDREN IN BC

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS (Note 1)  
 FOR THE YEAR ENDED June 30, 2008

Balance, July 1, 2007 \$ 11,703.77

Receipts

BCTF Grant	4,750.00	
Membership/subscription fees	15,162.45	
Interest	369.51	
Other	(14,284.86)	
Conference fees	1,015.00	
		7,012.10

Disbursements

Executive meetings	2,786.16	
Meeting-table officers	1,272.32	
Meeting annual general meeting	2,281.89	
Publication Newsletter	2,215.26	
Publication Journal	82.06	
Publication-other	90.10	
Operating	100.01	
Chapter support	43.64	
Miscellaneous	25.00	
Conference - operating	584.70	
Conference - committee costs	1,000.00	
Conference - speakers	1,466.98	
		(11,948.12)

Balance, June 30, 2008 \$ 6,767.75

Notes:

1. This statement reflects only funds held by the BC Teachers' Federation on behalf of the Association of Educators of the Gifted, Talented and Creative Children in BC.

## MINI-GRANT APPLICATION

Again this year, the AEGTCCBC is providing up to six (6) mini-grants in the amount of \$200 or more to support innovative ideas that promote gifted education in schools and benefit gifted children.

The grants are intended to help fund projects that provide direct support for programs and/or materials for gifted children. However, ideas that indirectly benefit gifted children will also be considered. Applicants must be AEGTCCBC members.

Grant recipients will be announced at the annual Gifted Ed Conference in October, 2009. A one page "Show and Tell" recap of the project will be due at the conclusion of the project.

Applications must be postmarked by September 30, 2009.

### MINI-GRANT APPLICATION

#### Applicant Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone W \_\_\_\_\_ H \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Role (teacher, administrator, coordinator, other) \_\_\_\_\_

#### School Information

School District \_\_\_\_\_ School(s) \_\_\_\_\_

School Address \_\_\_\_\_

School Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Number of students who will benefit from this grant \_\_\_\_\_

#### Description (please be brief, but include necessary information)

1. Describe the innovative ideas you wish to implement. Be as specific as possible and include such details as the dates of activities and roles of any persons working on the project/activity.
2. Describe how the project/activity will promote gifted education and benefit gifted students.
3. Describe how you will evaluate whether or not you and/or the students achieved the goals of the project and benefited from the activity.
4. Include a budget. Presuming you receive \$200.00 from AEGTCCBC, list proposed expenditures. Please be specific.
5. I agree to submit a report at the conclusion of the project.

Signature of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail before September 30, 2009 to:**  
Patricia Clough or Leslie Lowe, North Okanagan Teachers' Association  
Box 187, Salmon Arm, B.C. V1E 4N3

**Gifted Ed Oct. 24, 2008**  
**Collected from Conference Evaluations**

The following are comments made by participants on our fall Conference 2008. The main presenter was Susan Winebrenner with workshops by Dr. Lannie Kanevsky and Sandra Webster-Worthy.

Overall reaction to the workshop/leader:

**Cory S.**

The workshop was very helpful for providing practical instructional methods, but I would have liked to have more emphasis on secondary-relevant methods. Ms. Winebrenner's delivery and levity complimented her expertise, making for a phenomenal presentation presence.

Puzzlement: What are the implications surrounding the instruction of "gifted" students by non-"gifted" teachers....

**Michel B.**

Very much enjoyed presentation style and humour. Content was good even though it was my first 'Gifted' presentation and some vocabulary was unfamiliar to me.

**Lauren O.**

Susan Winebrenner = a hoot!

Personal anecdotes made the very full day more meaning full!!

**Barbara K.**

Awesome speaker.

Awesome day!

**Dorothy S.**

She is inspiring! She took the perspective of what it is really like to be a gifted child.

**Katherine T.**

Great ideas. Clearly she has the same beliefs as I do. A paradigm shift in educational leadership evidently is still needed.

**Gayle S.**

Both Dr. Kanevsky and Susan Winebrenner were extremely knowledgeable. I came away with ideas for schools struggling with programming for gifted students.

**Carla R.**

I thought the conference was excellent. Both Sandra Webster-Worthy and Susan Winebrenner gave informative lectures and valuable resources (to buy and hand-out). I made many new connections!

Puzzlement: why are AP courses not offered at all high schools? It appears to open the doors to both gifted and high achievers, rather than a designated 'gifted class' at the secondary level?

**Adrienne S.**

I loved the keynote speech and workshop from Susan Winebrenner. So many invaluable ideas, strategies and methods presented with humour along with excellent hand-outs and visuals. I am definitely inspired to apply these ideas in my classroom!

**AEGTCCBC Fall Conference 2009**

Will be presenting:

**Dr. Joanne Foster**

Teacher of Gifted Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education  
at the University of Toronto

Co-author of Being Smart about Gifted Children: A Guidebook for Parents and  
Educators

**October 23, 2009 Provincial ProD Day**

Location: Vancouver, BC – exact location to be announced  
Registration information will be available through our PSA in September, 2009.