



The Association of Educators of Gifted, Talented and Creative Children in BC

"The Leading Edge"

Special points of interest:

- **Gifted Ed 2013 Conference report**
- **AEGTCCBC Grant available to support innovative curriculum**
- **Part II of our interview with Dr. Marion Porath, Professor Emerita, Faculty of Education, UBC**
- **Gifted Ed 2014**

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A Message from Your President

Welcome to the 2014 Leading Edge Spring Journal. My name is Shera Niewenhuizen and this is my second year in the role of President for the AEGTCCBC specialist association. It has been such a privilege to work in this capacity, as it has brought me incredible fortune in so many ways.

Our PSA executive comes with decades of experience with gifted education and the friendships and mentoring that I have received from this team is remarkable. At this point, I would like to extend my thanks to

our executive for all they do for gifted education across British Columbia.

Our PSA had an excellent start to the 2013 school year. We hosted our annual fall conference and had the pleasure of spending a productive and engaging day with Dr. Shelagh Gallagher. Special thanks go out to Elizabeth Ensing for her fantastic work as our conference chair.

Looking ahead, our PSA is currently preparing for next year's fall conference that promises to be as

practical and inspiring as this year's. As a PSA we are currently building an exciting new platform for our website. Special thanks go out to Becca Ferguson for all of her work on this front. This year our PSA will be attempting to utilize social media to communicate with our members and to advocate for the gifted, talented and creative children in our midst.

I hope your year continues to be wonderful!

Shera Niewenhuizen

AEGTCCBC President

Gifted Ed 2014 Conference

Holiday Inn, 711 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C.

Friday, October 24th, 2014

Presenter: *Dr. Marcia Imbeau, Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Arkansas*

Topic: *Designing High Quality Differentiated Units of Study: A Look at the Parallel Curriculum Model*

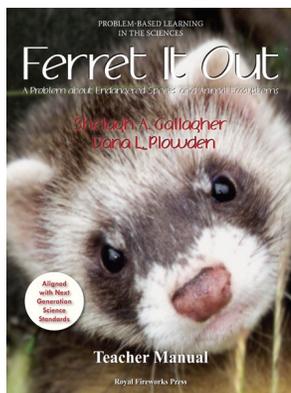
This workshop will explore the key ingredients teachers will find helpful in designing learning experiences and units of study that will challenge our most advanced learners.

To learn more, and to register, please visit our website at www.aegtccbc.ca



Dr. Shelagh Gallagher, internationally recognized expert in Problem-Based Learning.

“...each of us became a stakeholder who was invested and engaged in the issues affecting the black-footed ferret”



AEGTCCBC 2013 Conference Report:

Engaging Gifted Students through Problem-Based Learning/The Problem-Based Learning Approach and What do Gifted Students Really Want?

By Becca Ferguson, District Gifted Resource Teacher, SD #45

On October 25th, the AEGTCCBC had the pleasure of hearing **Dr. Shelagh Gallagher** speak about the power of incorporating problem-based learning into schools, classrooms, and many other educational settings. Dr. Gallagher is an authority in gifted education and she has presented about problem-based learning to educators throughout Canada and the US. She has developed a number of award-winning curricular materials for gifted students from Kindergarten to Grade 12, and her social studies units were recognized four times by the National Association for Gifted Children.

Throughout the day, Shelagh spoke passionately about the value of creating rich and authentic experiences that allow students to think critically about their learning. She stressed the importance of cultivating a learning space where children can become problem-finders, rather than just problem-solvers. The workshop flowed in an organic and conversational manner, as Dr. Gallagher allowed the audience to participate in a problem-based learning scenario involving the endangered black-footed ferret. This allowed us to experience the excitement that comes with deconstructing a problem, generating our own questions, and discov-

ering the avenues for learning that we would like to delve into and open up.

One of the central pillars of problem-based learning is the ‘ill-structured problem, which is carefully designed to generate questions that prompt further exploration. After Shelagh presented us with the black-footed ferret case, she used a brainstorming exercise to elicit our questions. We then shared our thoughts about the information and skills we felt we needed to acquire in order to approach the problem in a thoughtful and intentional manner. When we collectively examined the problem, each of us became a stakeholder who was invested and engaged in the issues affecting the black-

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You Can Do the Cube!

by Jocelyn Bystrom, District Gifted Education Teacher, Comox Valley, SD #71

I teach our district's gifted education program, called "Challenge", for students in grades 4-7 and also provide in-school support to district teachers who have designated gifted learners in their classrooms.

Last year at this time I was extremely excited to teach high-ability students the explicit skills required to master the Rubik's cube. They would need initiative, patience and perseverance to be successful. I came across a kit at:

www.youcandothecube.com called: You Can Do the Rubik's Cube and together with a successful mini-grant application through AE-GTCCBC I was poised to be a successful facilitator.

Initially I taught the explicit skills and algorithms that students would need for mastery in my Challenge classes. I provided much-sought-after practice time in class, and then backed off and put the resources and website into the students' most capable hands.

Motivation to solve the cube was high. It was exciting to be able to facilitate student responsibility for their learning and to see students achieve mastery and celebrate their successes as they achieved the various steps, progressions and prerequisite skills to master the cube.

I then took the show on the road, and with the kit and a class set of Rubik's cubes I headed out to work with school groups. Low and behold, on my first classroom visit one of the students solved the cube using the required algorithms in just 45 minutes on her first try. We have photographic evidence of the beaming student and her classmates as they challenged themselves to master the cube step by step and at an individual pace that was just right for each student.

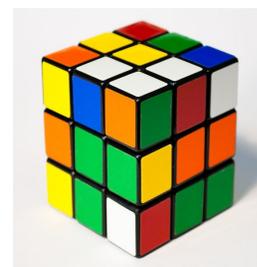
I'll even admit that I was inspired to take the cube home one night shortly thereafter and although I

didn't solve the cube in under a minute, forty-five minutes or even an hour, I celebrated by doing the happy dance around my living room with my proud accomplishment in hand 3 hours later. There's nothing quite like the satisfaction of persevering through a difficult challenge and finally achieving what you've set out to master.

Did every student who set out to solve the cube achieve mastery? No. Did every student get the opportunity to take initiative and experience the joy in learning the explicit steps required to achieve mastery; absolutely. Can several of my students solve the cube in under a minute? Yes, our class record is 12 seconds. Imagine that!

As I reflect on this experience, I ask: In whose hands was the learning? Who took responsibility and ownership for their learning? Was assessment-for-learning built in?

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Interview with Dr. Marion Porath, Professor Emerita

By Becca Ferguson, District Gifted Resource Teacher, SD #45

Editors's note: It is an exciting time to be an educator. As with all areas of education, gifted education is undergoing a deep transformation. In this interview that continues from the fall of 2013, Dr. Porath speaks to the shifting paradigms that are reshaping our field.

Becca: *What are your thoughts about the trend towards personalizing learning and how this will impact gifted education?*

Marion:

I think it's an important trend with a lot of potential to change how education happens. However, the same misperceptions that have historically impacted highly able learners may be brought into personalized learning. There is vital foundational knowledge that needs to be in place, such as understanding the nature of intelligence, learning, and what it means to be educated. If we personalize drill and practice, what's the point, although I see the place for drill and practice when they're embedded in a rich approach that values how students learn and the understandings and questions they bring to school.

I love Jerome Bruner's work on models of mind. The model of mind we hold influences how we teach. That is, if a teacher thinks of minds as blank slates, he/she will want to "deliver" knowledge. If a teacher thinks of minds as dynamic and of students as actively involved in their learning, there's a much better chance of meaningful personalized learning. Similarly, teachers need to understand their ideas about intelligence and engage their

students in discussion about intelligence. Carol Dweck's work on entity vs. incremental views of intelligence is helpful. If intelligence is viewed as a fixed entity, effort doesn't matter – one is smart or not and nothing is going to change that. If intelligence is viewed as incremental, effort matters a great deal. Students can be engaged in understanding how effort makes a difference and which efforts are most productive.

Becca: *If you could create your own idyllic educational system, what components would it have, and how would you structure it?*

Marion: Take the previous question and put it in a system that values spaces for learning that aren't limited by school buildings. Student input is vital here, as designers and owners of learning. Use outdoor spaces, galleries, stores - wherever learning can be given meaning through context.

Give teachers the authority and respect to design learning experiences appropriate for each child they teach. Value teachers' creativity and feed it back into the system. This requires "grass roots" professional development that is supported with time and funding for innovation.

Provide space and time for teachers to engage in learning with and from students, reflect on their own learning and how it informs their teaching and collaborate with each other in developing their practice.

Guiding principles for the system would be curiosity, imagination, respect, and an ethic of care.

Becca: *Where do you feel the field of gifted education should go next? Is there a particular issue or area that should receive more attention, or that should continue to be explored?*

We are moving away from the "find the gifted learner" model that puts considerable energy into trying to pin down a definition of giftedness and determining optimal measures for identifying giftedness. This model has been criticized for focusing only on "what is in the heads of" gifted learners. Frameworks that take into account the complexity of giftedness; the variety of exceptional human gifts valued in different cultures; the critical roles of rich, supportive environments, mentors, and sensitive teaching in helping individuals reach their potential ["smart contexts" instead of "smart people" (Barab & Plucker, 2002)]; and the variety of pathways to excellence (Ziegler, 2005) now constitute the research agenda.

"Gift creation" (Hymer, 2009) is another focus. This idea recognizes that not all children arrive at school with well-developed academic and social skills.

These children may be highly intelligent nonetheless and respond to innovative learning opportunities. Taking this approach opens up the possibility of creating rather than finding gifts. This is not to say that academically advanced students will be ignored. Rather, it opens up the possibility of recognizing more students as highly intelligent – something many teachers have been concerned about for a long time.

Albert Ziegler, a well-known European researcher, has written that the most creative thinking occurs in research labs.

He suggests that instead of thinking about gifted individuals we think about how to foster “gifted groups” that optimize capability to think intelligently and creatively in collaboration with others to solve important real-world problems.

Another direction that needs more attention is what we presently frame as “dual exceptionality” or “2E.” Remarkable intelligence can co-occur with learning disabilities and Asperger’s Syndrome, for example.

We need to further develop educational strategies that focus on learning strengths and passions and think about how learning challenges may, in fact, be instrumental in certain innovative ways of thinking. For example, many astrophysicists are dyslexic but their remarkable peripheral vision allows them to do groundbreaking work on star fields.

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"I'd love to create a Reggio-Emilia-style classroom—a place that's aesthetically beautiful, honours all students' competence, and offers rich opportunities to expand and deepen thinking based on an integration of students' interests and questions about the curriculum."

—Marion Porath, June, 2013

Gifted with Learning Difficulties: A Unique Profile with Unique Needs

By Barbara Bishop, District Psychologist, SD #23

Who is the GLD or twice exceptional student?

A gifted student with learning disabilities (GLD) student is a student of superior intellectual ability who demonstrates a significant discrepancy between his or her level of performance in a particular academic area and the expected level of performance based on intellectual ability (Alberta Education, 2006b; Clarke 2002; McCoach, Kehle, Bray & Siegle, 2001). Current best practice suggests that this discrepancy, combined with a processing weakness is possibly indicative of a GLD student.

How do GLD students present in the classroom?

The literature refers to three different types of gifted students with learning disabilities: mild learning disability, severe learning disability, and masked abilities and disabilities. Those GLD students with mild learning disabilities normally do well in elementary school and may be identified as gifted. When they first encounter higher level work in the area of their disability they may go through periods of underachievement. Because they have not previously been identified as GLD, they may be looked at as if they are being lazy or unmotivated.

GLD students with severe learning disabilities are often recognized for their learning difficulties, but their giftedness may be ignored. Those GLD students with masked abilities and disabilities often appear average in the classroom and therefore are not identified as either learning disabled or gifted. It is important that teachers recognize these profiles and refer these students for psychoeducational assessment.

How do we test for G/LD?

The psychoeducational assessment of GLD children ideally should be conducted by an examiner familiar with these types of students. These children will have more scatter in their profile than the average gifted student, and therefore it is important that the examiner look closely at the strengths and weaknesses. A score above the 95th percentile should be examined as a potential indicator of giftedness. Low scores for these students often fall in the Average range. These scores should be viewed as real weaknesses and not "relative" weaknesses for these students. For example, a highly gifted child may have a scaled score of 18 on one subtest such as Similarities, and a 7 on another such as Coding which is a discrepancy of four standard deviations. A child of average intelligence who was performing academically four standard deviations below average would certainly be considered learning disabled!

What are other causes of underachievement among gifted students?

Not all students who show superior cognitive ability and average achievement are GLD students. Cognitive ability accounts for approximately 50% of the variance in academic achievement which makes it an imperfect predictor of achievement (N. Brody, 1992). There are many non-cognitive factors that contribute to achievement that need to be examined such as motivation level, interest, self-efficacy, culture, mental health issues, and self-regulation skills.

How do we support GLD students?

Intervention for GLD students will likely look different than for other students with learning disabilities. Because they often work within the average range, differentiated classroom support may meet their needs. However, these students may have unique social and emotional needs and require counseling support by someone who understands the GLD profile.

Researchers are becoming increasingly interested in the identification and support of students with dual exceptionalities. It is essential that we understand these students and allow their significant gifts to shine.

Editor's note:

On Dr. Marion Porath's retirement from the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education at UBC in June of 2013, she recommended that her position be expanded to include dual exceptionalities.

On July 1st, the Education Faculty will welcome Dr. Owen Lo as Assistant Professor for High Ability and Dual Exceptionality. Dr. Lo completed his Ph.D. in Special Education in 2013 at UBC. Dr. Porath was his research supervisor. Dr. Lo's research interests focus on ADHD and giftedness and the social-emotional impact of dual labels. He also is interested in cultural influences on education and creativity.



ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS OF GIFTED,
TALENTED AND CREATIVE CHILDREN IN B.C.
YOUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

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Ferguson

Business Tagline or Motto

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footed ferret and we wanted to become informed and learn the necessary skills in order to fully examine the case.

Shelagh facilitated this using a very student-centered approach which places the teacher in the role of a 'metacognitive guide' and allows gifted students - and all students alike - to feel empowered to direct their own learning in a collaborative manner. Students can explore real world problems, such as marketing solar toys, and this interdisciplinary approach embeds research skills, group work, and appropriate curricular areas into the learning journey. As apprentices in the process, students gain expertise through experiencing messy, open-ended problems. After the day came to a close, the idea of the messy problem really resonated with me, as these problems are provocations for further thought and inquiry that allow all of us to consider the multiple approaches to real world problems. Here's to those messy problems!

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I urge you to consider applying for a mini-grant this year through AEGTCCBC and exploring an innovative idea that benefits gifted learners and beyond. Although your students may not thank you for your initiative and passionate professionalism, the look on each face (you know the look) will indeed be ten-fold payment when they achieve mastery!

To download a mini-grant application,
please visit our website at:

www.aegtccbc.ca

ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS OF THE GIFTED, Y630
 TALENTED AND CREATIVE CHILDREN IN BC

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS (Note 1)
 FOR THE YEAR ENDED June 30, 2013

Balance, July 1, 2012 \$ 15,786.31

Receipts

Conference surplus outside account		
BCTF grant	5,000.00	
Membership/subscription fees	5,757.40	
Interest	204.62	
Other	1,154.70	
		12,116.72

Disbursements

Meeting-executive	3,145.92	
Meeting-subcommittee	325.50	
Meeting-annual general meeting	1,370.88	
Publication-newsletter	510.15	
Publication-other	1,318.21	
Operating	199.71	
Curriculum development	650.00	
Miscellaneous	277.52	
Conference-promotions	659.13	
Conference-committee costs	250.00	
		-8,707.02

Balance, June 30, 2013 \$ 19,196.01

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.