

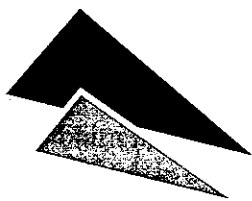
Newsletter

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.



Volume 28

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2010

For publications, conference
information, and links:

www.aegtccbc.org

Happy Spring to you all!

Here in the North, spring is still something we have to look forward to but I know many of you are breathing in the fragrance of a bounty of blossoms basking in glorious rays.

During this time of magnificent seasonal changes outside most of us are facing the gloom and doom of educational funding! The bleak school district budget debates speak to the even bleaker picture of public education in the province. However, no one except those of us passionate about the gifted, talented and creative children in this school system is speaking up for those in the bleakest circumstances of all! We must continue to advocate for our gifted students.

Parents are our allies in this desperate struggle to meet the needs of gifted kids as they sit in our classes without services to address their unique special needs.

I'd like to update you on the Middle School Initiative that was spawned at the "Our Kids" conference with Joanne Foster in October, 2009. Amazingly, in a short period of time, a Coquitlam parent group pulled together as a result of Joanne's advocacy workshop. They were front and centre when Coquitlam announced that there would be a 3 year pilot (starting Sept 2010!) with 4 classes

President's Message

at the middle school level. Unbelievable! Such a major accomplishment in less than six months!

Congratulations to those Coquitlam parents and kids! Details are at: <http://public.sd43.bc.ca/district/StudentServices/giftededucation/default.aspx>

Other parents who are planning to form a group to advocate for their students can access Joanne Foster's contact information at our website aegtccbc.org.

Gifted Ed 2010 is coming! This year our conference is Friday, October 22, 2010 at the Holiday Inn on Broadway in Vancouver, which is easily accessible by sky train and transit.

We are pleased to announce that middle school teacher, author and neurologist Dr. Judy Willis will ignite the conference with her keynote. She will engage us with brain friendly strategies for gifted learners and will go beyond differentiation to providing challenges for all students.

Parents, teachers, student teachers and administrators are encouraged to attend.

By Charlene Watts

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An excerpt from **Unwrapping Gifts of Secondary School Students**

By Dr. Judy Willis: *Gifted Ed 2010 Conference Presenter*

Discovering and developing gifted students in middle school is critical for them and vital for society. There are an estimated three million children in America who could be classified as gifted but are not recognized as such and 5% to 20% of students who drop out are gifted (Clarenbach 2007). Many of these underrepresented children fall through the cracks due to limited English language skills, physical disabilities, learning differences, cultural differences, societal influences, or socioeconomic limitations that can limit access to or awareness of testing and acceleration options. Some gifted children from underrepresented groups may not seek out opportunities to unwrap their gifted potentials because they don't see evidence that they will achieve ultimate benefits from hard years of schooling or practice. In addition, the prefrontal cortex of the brain, where executive functions such as judgment and emotional stability are directed, is the last part of the brain to mature. This maturation is incomplete during adolescence making middle school gifted students not yet fully equipped for the challenges and opportunities associated with their gifts.

Every child is special, but only a very few are gifted with unusually high talents and abilities. If giftedness is not carefully nurtured it may not blossom. The consequences of neglecting gifts are significant for children who may never develop the background knowledge to enjoy future careers in scientific, artistic, or other academic pursuits that could give them great joy. In addition, when children from societal, economic, or cultural groups are underrepresented in gifted programs, the loss to society is profound. If a child who is extraordinarily gifted in math decides against math, the loss of a new theorem that can be applied to manipulating planetary gravity or cellular metabolism is immeasurable.

We can make a difference by considering what changes are needed to increase access to gifted education and motivation for these gifted middle school children to exert the effort required to reach their potentials.

Clarenbach, J. The School Administrator. February 2007 website:
www.aasa.org/publications/saarticle/detail.cfm?ItemNumber=8204&snItemNumber=950].

For more on this topic: We invite you to attend Gifted Ed 2010, Oct. 22 at the Holiday Inn, Vancouver

Gifted PSA an Excellent Resource

By Elizabeth Ensing, Langley Christian, Enrichment Coordinator

For the past several years I have attended the annual Gifted Conference (AEGTCCBC) in October, and have enjoyed hearing various speakers. Each year the topic has been relevant, informative, and engaging. It is very inspiring to be with people including teachers, administrators, and parents, who are all interested in nurturing the gifts and talents of bright, eager students. Participants come from all areas of the province, and share what is happening in their particular schools and districts over lunch and breakout sessions. Last year the at-

spent the last half-hour in small groups, and charted responses to various questions and topics that had been brought up during the day.

As a teacher in an Independent school, I have appreciated the opportunity to have an associate membership, and the ability to attend such conferences. I would encourage anyone who has an interest in inspiring and encouraging the bright and gifted students in their classes and schools, to attend the conference in October, hear an inspiring speaker, discover valuable resources, and dialogue with others who have a similar interest.

For Teacher Suggested Strategies and Conference Info for Gifted09 go to www.aegtccbc.org, documents, newsletters, 2009

Blogging with Grant

Submitted by Brenda O'Dell

Earlier this year, **Ranchero Elementary School** received a grant from the AEGTCCBC to assist identified gifted students in the regular classroom. An interest had been expressed in publishing a school newspaper by some of these students who have an interest and gift in writing. In consultation with the classroom teacher and a third year student of Journalism at Carleton University, it was decided to instead introduce these students to blogging technology, as it may be the way of the future in print Journalism.

Alyssa O'Dell, the journalism student, spent a morning with these students. She introduced them to the

concept of a blog, showed them how to publish on the website WordPress, instructed them on the construction of a newspaper article and on how to choose interesting story ideas as well as inserting photos into these articles. She had them cover a story in the school and apply all of the above skills. Alyssa has been monitoring their blog and will be revisiting the students in May to talk to them about their progress, answer any questions and instruct them on way they can expand on the types of stories they have been writing. The blog will continue into the next year. The support of the Gifted PSA has been much appreciated in this endeavour.

The school blog has been linked to the school website and can be viewed at <http://www.ran.sd83.bc.ca>

Gifted Educators in B.C. Focus on Gifted Education Issues

At the Gifted Ed09 Conference, Dr. Foster facilitated the formation of 5 interest-based groupings enabling participants to discuss issues in Gifted Education in B.C. Our Fall 09 newsletter featured a summary of the ideas presented by educators discussing *Specific Strategies* that work well with the gifted. To view these see the insert newsletter page, Fall 09 at www.aegtcabc.org.

The other groups discussed how to “*Up the Ante*” and gain support for gifted education, the natural fit of *technology in gifted education, becoming reflective practitioners*, and *practices for the identification of the gifted* in B.C.

This is a summary of ideas discussed:

“Up the Ante” Group

- Create a PSA blog/forum/chat line
- Communicate with the top – administrators, superintendents and ministers of education
- Use media to our advantage – positive stories as well as negative
- Include parents – they are the biggest allies of gifted education and their inclusion will make a program/education work
- Have students teach teachers about “Giftedness”
- Use technology
- Create Local Specialist Associations – LSA can get money from local union
- Use Gifted Alumni
- Enable parents to work with teachers of the gifted
- Get funding for distributive learning
- Use consultants – the district specialists

Becoming Reflective Practitioners

- Time is needed
- Collaborative interest and support groups
- Information/experiences to inspire reflection
- Observation of colleagues
- Questions from practitioners to consider
- Journaling, modeling practices

Technology Group – using computers and technology as “mind tools”

- Present learning via MP3 players
- Bring experts in to teach different technologies
- Use animation and online comic books
- Give ownership to students such as a choice of programs to present their work
- Power point presentations – by teacher and/or student(s)
- Smart boards and smart cube
- Pod casts as culminating activity
- Teacher training needs to be done with the technology
- Web Casts in classrooms
- Photography – digital cameras and associated processes
- Get beyond Google
- Blogs and wikis
- Peer mentoring on technology
- Interactive and collaborative learning using technology
- Web quests – we can make our own

Assessment of the Gifted

- Referral process needs to be in place for assessment to occur
- Checklist(s) of behaviours can be part of process at some point
- Different assessments, referrals, and evaluations are used throughout the province
- Parental referrals are often included as well as teachers’

PARENTS OF GIFTED GET RESULTS!

Contributed by Tasha Nathanson, parent of gifted

Collaboration between parents and School District 43 has brought about the new Middle School Age Cluster Class pilot. Four new grade 6, 7, or 6/7 classes begin in September 2010.

In the fall of 2009, a committee of parents of gifted children formed to advocate for homogenous gifted cluster classes in middle school. As we banded together, we decided to approach the school board with appreciation for how much was working well in the district but also to show evidence that these approaches were not sufficient for all gifted children and why. We wanted homogenous gifted classes established with a teacher well versed in gifted education. We came not just to represent our own children, but the wider community of gifted learners.

This positive, appreciative approach set a tone which the district, in turn, mirrored back to us. The district communicated clearly that any program

would have to be revenue neutral and fit within the district middle school philosophy of multi-class groupings and inclusion. Respect, clarity, good preparation, and listening were key on both sides.

The resulting program groups gifted students together in a full (28 pupil) class with a single teacher for the core academic courses but integrates students into their mixed level teams for their other courses. Learning within the program will be interdisciplinary and inquiry based, building towards an autonomous learner model. This structure provides opportunities to meet the unique needs of this segment of the school population and increase the range of services in the district.

*The AEGTCCBC congratulates
Coquitlam parents of the gifted on their
success!*

**GIFTED ED 2010
CONFERENCE**

**At the Holiday Inn
at 711 West Broadway, Vancouver
October 22, 2010**



Presenter: Author and Gifted Advocate Judy Willis

**Topics: Brain Friendly Strategies to Ignite Gifted Learners in
Middle Years
Beyond Differentiation to Individualization: Appropriate
Challenges for all Students**

Author of: **Inspiring Middle School Minds: Gifted, Creative, & Challenging**

Dr. Judy Willis, a board-certified neurologist and middle school teacher in Santa Barbara, California, has combined her training in neuroscience and neuro-imaging with her teacher education training and years of classroom experience. She has become an authority in the field of learning-centered brain research and classroom strategies derived from this research.

In addition to speaking nationally and internationally about the neuro-logical basis of learning, Dr. Willis' articles connecting neurology and education have been published in numerous education journals. Her books for educators include *Research-Based Strategies to Ignite Student Learning: Insights from a Neurologist and Classroom Teacher*; *Brain-Friendly Strategies for the Inclusion Classroom*, and *Teaching the Brain to Read: Strategies for Improving Fluency, Vocabulary and Comprehension Reading* all published by ASCD. In the fall of 2008 Sourcebooks published her first book for parents, *How Your Child Learns Best: Brain-Friendly Strategies You Can Use to Ignite Your Child's Learning and Increase School Success* with forward by Goldie Hawn.

She has taught in elementary, middle, college, and graduate schools, and as a professional development presenter. Dr. Willis is on the board of directors of the Hawn Foundation for mindfulness education programs organized by Goldie Hawn, and has traveled internationally with actress Goldie Hawn to make presentations about mindful teaching and learning. They were 2009 Featured Speaker Co-Presenters at the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) National Conference.

**Check out more information on Dr. Willis at
her website: <http://www.radteach.com/>**

Registration for Gifted Ed
2010 is on our website:
www.aegtccbc.org