

Gifted and Talented Bulletin

Director's Note

Kelly A. Hedrick, Ed.D., Director of the Office of Gifted Education

This issue of the *Gifted and Talented Bulletin* focuses on the Parent Institute held on August 23, 2008. An overwhelming success, our first conference for parents of gifted and talented students enabled parents and guardians to learn about and discuss issues of importance to anyone raising a gifted child. The Institute featured well-known writer and clinical psychologist, Dr. Sylvia Rimm. Her keynote presentation was heart-warming and honest, and her messages about raising a gifted child helped a great number of parents. One parent told me, "I felt like Dr. Rimm has been in my house."

Following the keynote presentation, parents and guardians participated in break-out ses-

sions on a variety of topics from perfectionism to raising a highly sensitive child and even one on creative play. One topic, organizational skills and time management, was so popular that we had to add sessions. The presenters did a wonderful job of engaging and educating those in attendance.

While we know there are many parents and guardians for whom the date and time were inconvenient and because Institute participants consistently voiced the desire to "hear all of the presentations," we have dedicated this issue of the "Gifted and Talented Bulletin" to providing an overview of many of the sessions from the event. I am certain that each article will provide you with valuable information.

Our plan is to host a parent institute every two to three years. In the meantime, parents are encouraged to participate in workshops offered at their home schools on a range of topics. Contact your school's gifted resource teacher or guidance counselors at Old Donation Center and Kemps Landing Magnet School for information on parent workshop topics, dates, and times. In addition to school-based opportunities, citywide parent seminars are planned.

I do hope you will take advantage of all of our parent education events where networking and gaining insights from educators and other parents may support you in raising your gifted and talented child.

Office of Gifted Education

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Gifted Education

Community

Advisory

Committee

If you are interested in serving on the Gifted Education Community Advisory Committee, please call the Office of Gifted Education at 263-1405. The committee needs representation from the Tallwood attendance zone.

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Get Involved: Five-Year Plan and Parent Seminars

Legislation enacted by the Virginia General Assembly in 1998 and 1999 requires school divisions to submit a comprehensive, detailed, strategic five-year plan for gifted education to include a yearly update and review. The Office of Gifted Education is beginning the preparation of its Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted 2010-2015. In January, sub-committees will form in the following areas:

- Identification
- Delivery of Services

- Curriculum and Instruction
- Professional Development
- Parent and Community Involvement

Parent(s) are invited to serve on a subcommittee. If you are interested in being a member of any of the subcommittees, please call the Office of Gifted Education at 263-1405.

Parents of students in the gifted program are invited to attend seminars presented by the Office of Psychological Services. The parent seminars will be

held from 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. at the Advanced Technology Center (ATC) in the forum. This year's dates and topics are:

February 4, 2009
Tools That Work for Changing the Behavior of Children

March 31, 2009
Developing and Promoting Resiliency in Children

Encouraging Talented Readers

by Anita Parker, Teacher, and Camille Grabb, Reading Resource Teacher, Old Donation Center

Talented readers, those voracious readers who learned to read early and continue to read beyond their years, offer both delight and challenge to parents. Of course it's thrilling to have a child who reads well, since it is the gateway for all learning, and it's satisfying to know your child finds pleasure in books. One challenge, however, is locating texts for precocious readers. Books at the child's reading level may contain language or content inappropri-

ate for the age and maturity level. Teachers, librarians, respected Web sites, and other children may be helpful in suggesting books. Like many adults, young readers may find a series or an author they like and then read everything in the series or by that author. Stories that are open to interpretation and that have ambiguity are particularly suitable for advanced readers. Parents may wish to read the same books their children are reading in or-

der to facilitate discussion. If possible, parents may help their children form "book clubs" so that they can meet and share their thoughts about what they've read. Parents who nurture young children's love of books will send them on the path of lifelong reading.



Helping Gifted Students Thrive

by Suzanne M. Buhner, Specialist, Office of Organizational Development

Got gifted? Have you ever wondered how you can support your gifted child's academic achievement beyond just making sure his or her homework is complete? Have you ever wondered how to support your child's emotional well-being when he or she may be struggling with perfectionism or possible isolation due to being gifted? During this session parents were encouraged to network with other parents of gifted children. Parents received a comprehensive list of expert resources, and discussed strategies such as goal setting, developing organization and time management skills, and using biblio-therapy to encourage healthy discussions on com-

mon issues related to being gifted.

Parents who participated in this session indicated they wanted to be able to network with each other after the Parent Institute so we started a "Ning." The Ning is called the VB Family Ning and it is a private Web site where parents can share dialogue of questions and answers, link helpful resources, and upload videos and photographs. If you are interested in joining or want more information on the VB Family Ning please click the following link and ask to join:

<http://vbfamily.ning.com/>.



Ms. Buhner discusses opportunities to network.

Problem-Solving Styles

By Robin Schumaker, Coordinator, Office of Gifted Education

Problem-solving styles are consistent, individual differences in the ways people prefer to deal with new ideas, manage change, and respond effectively to complex, open-ended opportunities and challenges. In this session parents examined three problem-solving style dimensions: orientation to change, manner of processing, and ways of deciding. Information presented in the Problem-Solving Styles Parent Institute session is based on the work of Donald J. Treffinger, Edwin C. Selby, Scott G. Isaksen, and James H. Crumel. During the session, parents were actively engaged in group discussions in an effort to learn more about individual problem-solving style preferences and the implications for individuals, teams, or groups

of individuals who need to work together successfully in an effort to solve problems and build constructive working relationships. Following a discussion about the characteristics of each problem-solving style dimension, parents were provided with an opportunity to work collaboratively as they analyzed the benefits and challenges of each style. Participants discovered that whether an individual's problem-solving style preference was to be an explorer or developer; task-focused or person-focused; an external or internal processor, or somewhere along the continuum there is no "one best" way to be since problem styles are "value neutral." Ultimately, parents came away with valuable information that would

help them enable their own children to recognize, appreciate, and use their own strengths and the strengths and talents of others to solve problems and manage change effectively.



Ms. Schumaker (standing) facilitates an activity.

Underachievement in Gifted Learners

by Jessica Grell, Gifted Resource Teacher, Seatack Elementary School, and Camille Grabb, Reading Resource Teacher, Old Donation

“Although gifted students are not normally considered at risk for academic failure, the seeming lack of motivation of many academically gifted students is a continuing area of concern and frustration” (Siegle & McCoach, 2005). Del Siegle and Betsy McCoach’s Achievement Orientation Model describes four factors essential to academic success. Parents and teachers who understand these factors can help motivate gifted students to achieve.

In order for students to possess mo-

tivation, they must *value the task* and believe that it is beneficial and serves an authentic purpose. They need *self-efficacy*, which is confidence in their own ability to perform the task. Students should *expect to succeed*, feeling safe in the school environment when taking academic risks. Students who value the task, are confident in their abilities, and secure in the school environment are more likely to utilize *self-management behaviors* so that achievement occurs.

“All individuals have the ability to learn and attain self-fulfillment; however, many children are at risk of failing to achieve their academic potential” (Siegle & McCoach, 2005). Parents and teachers, working together, determine the most effective strategies to encourage achievement in each individual child.

Siegle, D., & McCoach, B. (2005). *Motivating Gifted Students*. Waco: Prufrock Press, Inc.

Multiple Intelligences Revisited

by Mary Ann McCammon, Teacher, Old Donation Center

Twenty-five years ago Howard Gardner proposed a theory of multiple intelligences — “kinds” of intelligence instead of a single general ability. As one title read, “It’s Not How Smart You Are – It’s How You are Smart!”

Keep in mind these ideas as you consider the theory of multiple intelligences:

- ~Each person processes all intelligences, but in differing amounts, making each unique.
- ~Most people can develop each intelligence to an adequate level of competency.
- ~All intelligences are equal.
- ~Most everything you do involves different intelligences working together.

The nine intelligences are described below, along with how a person with that ability learns best:

- ~Bodily/Kinesthetic – through interaction with one’s environment
- ~Existential – through seeing the big picture and making connections
- ~Intrapersonal – through an understanding of self
- ~Interpersonal – through interaction with others
- ~Mathematical/logical – through reasoning and problem solving
- ~Musical/rhythmic – through patterns
- ~Naturalist – through discrimination and classification
- ~Verbal linguistic – through communication with words

~Visual/spatial – through visually and organizing ideas spatially.

Gardner’s theory includes the use of a strong intelligence to be productive as well as to remediate a weakness. It is important to understand that each child is “smart” in different ways and to create a climate free from comparison and pressure.

Howard Gardner defines intelligence as “the ability to find and solve problems and to create products of value in one’s own culture.” It allows all people to contribute to society through their own strengths.

Strategies for Teaching the Twice-Exceptional Student

by Frances Hatzopoulos, Ed.D., and Pamela Knecht, Teachers, Old Donation Center

The unique socio-emotional, behavioral, and academic needs of the twice-exceptional learner create special challenges to parents and practitioners. How can we address these student needs in a way that is compatible with the existing programs? The combination of high intelligence, a wide range of strengths and challenges, and extreme social and emotional sensitivity requires refined approaches. One method is appropriate scaffolding to help students access the curriculum while responding to learner’s needs.

According to Baum and Owen (2004), there are some general, re-

search-based ideas for supporting these types of learners. It is important to emphasize student progress and attribute progress to effort rather than ability, to encourage student discovery of information, principles, and concepts, to model problem-solving approaches to challenging tasks, and to provide guided choice in process and product. It is important to provide defined strategies for accessing the curriculum to include the use of critical thinking strategies, the use of problem-based learning, and the use of deep and complex questioning and visual prompts (Baum, 2004). It can be noted that best practices such as learning strategies,

scaffolding, and curriculum modification guide these students to focus on their strengths rather than on their disabilities. As practitioners and parents, it is critical to understand and have the tools to respond to the twice-exceptional learner. These learners are a heterogeneous group that have special needs and teaching to their strengths is paramount.

Baum, S., & Owen, S. (2004). *To Be Gifted and Learning Disabled: Strategies for Helping Bright Students With LD, ADHD, and More*. Mansfield Center, CT: Creative Learning Press.

Organization Skills and Time Management

by Michelle D. Wright, Psy.D., and Suzanne E. Farley, Ph.D., Office of Psychological Services

The issue of planning, organizing, and managing time is one that affects many students. Time management is not an innate skill; instead, it is one that we teach kids from an early age. Although it is impossible to create a “one size fits all” plan to manage students’ time and organize their supplies and environment, this presentation touched on several common pitfalls for students who struggle with organization and time management and provided parents with hands-on tools to take home so they can find a place to start and make changes.

The seminar began by discussing the issue of procrastination, which is a topic that is often closely linked to difficulties with managing one’s time. It is important for parents to talk with their student and help them to see how or where their current time and energies

are spent. Are they really spending two hours on homework or are they forgetting to count the time it takes them to set up their supplies, organize their assignments, take a few breaks, and then actually finish the work? It’s difficult to make changes if we don’t know where the changes need to be made. Common time traps can include the television, telephone, video games, and, of course, text messaging. Once you know how time is spent, then it’s time to get started! Find a calendar (daily, weekly, monthly) or agenda that works for your child and then start by prioritizing their “have-to’s” and “want-to’s.” Then, it’s important to help your student “get real” with regard to what is expected and what the consequences are. What does your student think is reasonable? Once we give our students the tools they need to succeed and then

teach them how to use them, it’s important that they see how their choices lead to the outcome (e.g., if they choose to wait until the last minute to study for a test and do poorly, their action led to the consequence of not going to the ball game Friday night). It is also very important for students to remain flexible and be willing to reorganize their priorities as the need arises. Finally, finding a consistent space for your child to work at home that is away from possible time-traps will benefit them greatly.

Overall, we can’t expect our children to turn things around on their own, and it is by our modeling and assistance that they can eventually become more effective students.

Adolescence Amplified

by Barbara Kennedy, Instructional Specialist, Office of Gifted Education

The two most challenging phases a parent encounters may be toddlerhood and the teenage years. At first glance these stages are unique, but upon further examination, one may find they are very closely related. Think about the toddler’s favorite word, “No!”

Consider the mood swings, independence issues, friendship or sharing struggles, and stubbornness about freedoms, mealtime, and bedtime. Perhaps these two stages are more alike than not! Getting along with a teenager may require even more patience and consistency than dealing with a toddler, and gifted characteristics may play a bigger role than you might imagine. The session *Adolescence Amplified* ex-

amined the theory that the adolescent characteristics all children eventually exhibit may be even more emphasized if the child is gifted.

Gifted students are identified based on recognizable traits that sound a lot like what defines the adolescent: sensitivity, empathy, mood swings, argumentativeness, passion for an area of interest, independence, and concerns about others and the world. This is not an easy time for them, as I am sure you remember from your youth! My advice: Look at the gifted characteristics your child possesses and target the area you feel is being amplified. Provide whatever outlet you deem appropriate and feasible.



Ms. Kennedy discusses gifted adolescents.

Our students/children are best served if we work to understand the traits that define them, discover what makes them tick, and help them become their very best selves.

Unlocking the Secrets of the College Admission Process

by Terri McCallister, Gifted Resource Teacher, Kellam High School

Parents of middle through high school students attended this session. The importance of goal setting, course selection and sequence, as well as Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate courses, extracurricular activities, community service, leadership opportunities and standardized test scores were discussed. The discussion included answers to such questions as:

What do colleges want in prospective students? When should students begin preparation for college? What about Advanced Placement Courses, Dual Enrollment classes, or Early College Admission? How important are SAT scores? summer programs? sports? What are the most important factors in college admission and how can students use middle school and high school to their advantage?



Ms. McCallister shares information.

For further resources, contact the gifted resource teacher at your child’s school.

Introversion and the Highly Sensitive Child

by Kim Cabotaje, Gifted Resource Teacher, Landstown Elementary School

“She takes everything so personally!” “He cries about everything!” “All she ever wants to do is stay in her room.” “He’s very shy.” Have you heard these statements made about your child or even uttered them yourself? If you’re raising a gifted child, chances are this is normal behavior.

Though not all gifted children are highly sensitive and not all introverts are gifted, these traits do manifest in the gifted population more frequently than among non-gifted individuals. It is important for you and your child to understand these traits and to nurture them rather than see them as problems that need to be fixed.

People who are highly sensitive are believed to have a more highly developed central nervous system that leads to being more attuned to changes in one’s body, experiencing both pleasure and pain more intensely and having a greater capacity for empathy. These

individuals reach overstimulation more quickly than most people. What the non-sensitive person finds exciting may prove to be too much for the sensitive person after only a short while.

Introversion is the opposite of extroversion and can best be explained by talking about an individual’s energy. The extrovert gets energy by being around people, while the introvert spends energy in the same setting. This does not mean that introverts don’t enjoy people or that they are socially inept, it simply means that they need quiet time to recharge. Introverts may only need one or two close friends and likely enjoy spending time alone. Though only 25 percent of the general population would be defined as introverted, 50 percent of the gifted population are introverts.

While being gifted, sensitive, and introverted can each present challenges, they also result in great joys

such as the ability to find and appreciate beauty, to connect deeply with others, to carefully think through a situation, and to have rich inner lives. Perhaps the most important thing to know is that these traits are inherited and, though less common, completely normal.



Ms. Cabotaje leads parents in a discussion.

Creative Play for a Rainy Day

by Kristen Fraley, Gifted Resource Teacher, Larkspur Middle School

Sitting in the auto shop waiting for my state inspection sticker with two rambunctious children is not my favorite way to spend a sunny afternoon. I knew it was going to be a long wait if I did not keep them occupied. In the corner of the waiting room I discovered a game called “Guess Who,” which, by the way, saved the day! I was amazed how enthralled my children were and I began to play with them. The more we played the more unique and creative the questions became. During this game I realized that I was having fun, my children were having fun, and we

were learning at the same time. It was this experience that led me to create the “Creative Play for a Rainy Day” session. Too often we miss quality interaction with our children because of



Ms. Fraley (far right) guides parent participation.

busy schedules and the ease of being entertained by video games and television. As a working mother, I, too, can get things accomplished faster if my children are busy doing their own thing. But, as you know, time goes by so fast, and it is imperative that we teach our children how to interact, create, and think flexibly. The session presented a collection of games and activities learned throughout my years in gifted education and, hopefully, expanded participant’s thinking and creativity for the benefit of their children.

Value and Purpose of the Arts

by Eva Melatti, Coordinator, and Chris Buhner, Teacher, Salem High School Visual and Performing Arts Academy

The goal of the presentation was two-fold: 1) be able to identify the value and purpose of the arts, and 2) provide ways in which parents could support their child’s arts endeavors. Research was shared linking students with arts backgrounds as being more adept at demonstrating 21st Century skills such as critical thinking, creative problem

solving, effective communication, and teamwork. It was also noted that students improved their overall academy performance and proved to be much more engaged in school as a whole. Parents were provided a list of the division’s arts programs and information about how students of the arts can enroll/apply.



Mr. Buhner and Ms. Mellatti present.

Characteristics of the Gifted Student: The Good and the Challenges

by Anna Spence, Gifted Resource Teacher, Princess Anne Elementary, and Sue Tobin, Gifted Resource Teacher, Red Mill Elementary

During this session, parents had the opportunity to look closely at the characteristics which are a part of their child's giftedness. By using four different case studies, parents identified gifted traits of specific children. They could easily see that all gifted children are not all alike and their needs, socially, emotionally, and academically need to be met differently from an average child. Parents had

time to ask questions and not only did an in-depth discussion begin, but the parents seemed relieved to meet other people like themselves. They began to dialogue with one another offering words of advice and/or successful stories about strategies they used with their own child. Gifted students come in all shapes and sizes and it was nice to see parents making connections to raise and support their children.



Ms. Tobin (left) and Ms. Spence share insights.

Self-Efficacy

by Anna Cassalia, Teacher, Old Donation Center

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's capabilities to organize and complete a task. It influences the choices we make, the effort we put forth, how long we persist, and how well. Self-efficacy beliefs help foster the outcomes one expects, ultimately the self-fulfilling prophecy. Unless young people believe that their actions can produce the results they desire, they have little incentive to persevere in the face of the difficulties they are sure to encounter. Students' self-efficacy beliefs develop primarily through actual successes on challenging academic tasks.

Challenging those predetermined self-

efficacy beliefs is a difficult task. Parents and teachers need to praise effort and persistence, not ability. We must help students see mistakes and errors as positive contributions that lead to subsequent achievement. We need to help children identify their self-handicapping strategies, the most common of which is to put forth little or no effort on a task in which the young person has little confidence of success. Students also need to learn how to set short-term, attainable goals which will provide students with evidence of their growing expertise. In conclusion, we have a responsibility to help students develop the habit of



Ms. Cassalia presents an idea.

excellence in scholarship and nurture the self-beliefs necessary to maintain that excellence throughout their lives.

Parenting the Gifted Child: Key Points in Rearing a Gifted Child

by Jo Hagerty, Teacher, Old Donation Center

During this session, parents reviewed the key points to rearing a gifted child.

- ~ Envelope your child with unconditional love in a secure environment. *Give your child focused attention.* You may be a capable multi-tasker, but focus 100 percent attention when listening to your child. *Be present.* Inattentiveness during communication attacks the child's self-esteem, diminishes the child's sense of self-worth, and can permanently damage the relationship you are attempting to foster.
- ~ Defining boundaries and consequences provides your child with a sense of security. Engage your child in establishing rules when possible. But maintain your parental role; children may need to be reminded of the "line of authority."
- ~ Employ your child in becoming an academic explorer as you expose him or her to a plethora of learning opportunities. Accessible resources in-

clude the newspaper, telephone book, or Internet. Project learning should be seen as a fun, family affair and part of the family's everyday routine. This unified perspective naturally creates a sense of belonging; develops esteem (individually and collectively); builds overall confidence because everyone contributes; allows respect, trust, and communications to flow easily among the members of the family.

- ~ The parent provides that foundation on which a child's security and self-confidence dwell. *Words are powerful—especially those spoken by a parent.* Rearing a gifted child can be quite the challenge, and parents' top priority needs to be consistent encouragement to foster confidence and a sense of security. Gifted children are naturally sensitive. Harsh, quick-tempered words can break their spirits. Exchanging positive words nurtures both par-



Ms. Hagerty leads the discussion.

- ent and child. If, as a parent, you find yourself in the valley of emotional frustration, breathe, count to 100, and collect yourself emotionally. Your child is intellectually gifted. Nonetheless, your child is—first and foremost—a child.
- ~ The gifted childhood experience can be delightfully unique. Laugh often and journey in joy!

Office of Gifted Education

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**Check-out
 vbschools.com for
 more information!**

Cathy Peterson Named Virginia Association for the Gifted (VAG) 2008 Outstanding Teacher of the Gifted, Region II

The gifted resource teacher at Princess Anne Middle School, Cathy Peterson, was honored at the Virginia Association for the Gifted conference in Roanoke in October 2008, as the 2008 Outstanding Teacher of the Gifted for Region II. According to her application, Ms. Peterson “demonstrates her commitment to gifted education continuously as she interacts with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators. The gifted program at her school has developed into a community of learners enriched by meaningful learning partnerships established through her exceptional leadership. Mrs. Peterson’s commitment to her students is evidenced in her work with teachers to develop high quality curriculum and to differentiate instruction to meet the wide range of learner needs among her gifted and talented students. Her dedication, diligence, and pursuit of excellence make Cathy Peterson an exemplary teacher of the gifted.”



Ms. Peterson (right) accepts her award from VAG President, Pam Flaherty

Congratulations!

Gifted Education Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

The purpose of the Gifted Education Community Advisory Committee is to advise the School Board of the educational needs of all gifted students in the school division. The duties and responsibilities of the Gifted Education Community Advisory Committee are to

- review annually the local plan for the education of gifted students, including revisions.
- determine the extent to which the local plan for the previous year was implemented.
- develop annual goals and priorities.
- represent the community.
- encourage a collaborative relationship between school division staff and the community.
- become knowledgeable about current programs, research, and best practices in gifted education and its relationship with general education.
- focus attention on issues relative to improving the educational services for gifted students.
- submit recommendations of the advisory committee in writing to the Superintendent and the School Board.

Meeting Date	Site
January 12, 2009	Old Donation Center 1008 Ferry Plantation Road Virginia Beach, VA
February 9, 2009	School Administration Building Building #6 2512 George Mason Drive Virginia Beach, VA
March 9, 2009	North Landing Elementary School 2929 North Landing Road Virginia Beach, VA
April 20, 2009	School Administration Building Building #6
May 11, 2009	School Administration Building Building #6
June 8, 2009	School Administration Building Building #6

All CAC meetings begin at 6:30 PM

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Alternative formats of this publication which may include taped, Braille, or large print materials are available upon request for individuals with disabilities. Call or write The Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Director of the Office of Gifted Education, Virginia Beach City Public Schools, 2512 George Mason Drive, P.O. Box 6038, Virginia Beach, VA 23456-0038. Telephone (757) 263-1405; fax (757) 263-1424.



DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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