

# Gifted and Talented Bulletin

## Director's Note

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

There was a period of time in gifted education when the program operated in isolation from all other areas of education. This issue of the *Gifted and Talented Bulletin* focuses on collaboration and highlights the varied measures educators of the gifted in Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) are taking to collaborate with one another and with other programs that can benefit gifted and talented students.

Staff development is one of the priorities for the Office of Gifted Education and Curriculum Development and this year, gifted resource teachers (GRTs) have the opportunity to work collaboratively to increase their personal and professional knowledge through Collaborative Learning Cultures (CLCs). Just as we want our gifted students to engage in inquiry based upon interests, GRTs are spending time this

school year deepening their knowledge about a topic through collaborative inquiry. The products that emerge from the CLCs will be used to benefit the gifted program as a whole. Some of the CLC topics include: sustainability, underachievement of gifted students, service learning for gifted, and under-represented populations.

As you will see in this issue of the *Bulletin*, gifted staff is working collaboratively with instructional technology, career and technical education, special education, curriculum staff, and guidance. In each collaboration, the goal is to improve the quality of gifted services. We have a range of gifted learners with myriad needs. For the sake of our students, educators of the gifted have to work in collaboration, not isolation.

One of the most important areas of collaboration for educators of the gifted is with parents. It is highly encouraged that parents take full advantage of the

parent education opportunities made available citywide and at each school site. Gifted resource teachers and staff at Old Donation Center and Kemps Landing Magnet School offer opportunities for parents to be informed, supported, and engaged in the education of their gifted child(ren). Workshops, seminars, and informational meetings are designed to help parents/guardians as partners in collaboration with educators. Several upcoming workshops are highlighted in this issue. Parents are reminded that the Virginia Association for the Gifted (vagifted.org) and the National Association for Gifted Children (nagc.org) both encourage parent participation.

A special thanks to all of the contributing authors included in this issue. It is a pleasure to showcase the many talents of our students and staff.

## Parent Seminar & Workshop Resources

The Office of Gifted Education and Curriculum Development has focused on executive functioning in our meetings with parents this year. In the fall, each gifted resource teacher (GRT) offered a session to parents that provided a broad understanding of this topic and how it relates both to decision making and success. Each GRT also has resources available to share with interested parents.

The Office of Psychological Services has been instrumental in educating parents on executive functioning. In December, a workshop facilitated by Shannon Cray and Emma Cole, predoctoral residents in clinical psychology, Virginia Beach City Public Schools, discussed the executive functioning cluster of impulse control, shifting

from one task to another, and regulating emotions.

The fall of 2011 GRT presentation on executive functioning can be viewed by going to: <http://blogs.vbschools.com/giftededucationworkshops>

The residents' presentation can be viewed by going to: <http://vbparentgiftinst.wikispaces.com/Parent+Institute+2010>

The next workshop is tentatively scheduled for March 2012 and will focus on the executive functioning cluster of task initiation, sustained attention, and goal directed persistence. Stay tuned!

Office of Gifted Education and Curriculum Development

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### Gifted Education Community Advisory Committee

If you are interested in serving on the Gifted Education Community Advisory Committee (CAC), please call the Office of Gifted Education and Curriculum Development at 263-1405. The committee needs representation from the First Colonial, and Ocean Lakes attendance zone and one at-large seat. See page seven for additional information about the CAC.

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## *Hurwitz and Greene Receive Honors from the Virginia Association for the Gifted*

Mrs. Judith Hurwitz, fourth grade teacher at Old Donation Center, and Mr. Hugh Greene, Gifted Education Community Advisory Committee Chairperson, were honored by the Virginia Association for the Gifted (VAG) in Williamsburg, Virginia, on October 21, 2011, as the 2011 Outstanding Teacher of the Gifted for Region II and the 2011 Parent of the Year, respectively.

According to Mrs. Hurwitz's application, "As a writer of award-winning curriculum, world traveler, and teacher of fourth grade gifted students at Old Donation Center, Judith Hurwitz has the unique ability to make curriculum come alive for her students while keeping their social and emotional needs in mind. Always looking for ways to inspire and challenge her students, she collaborates with teachers to discover new ideas, invites guest speakers, and integrates technology in her assignments. Mrs. Hurwitz emphasizes real-world connections, accesses community resources, and uses current events with her students to support their studies throughout the year. It is her ability to both understand and challenge gifted students that makes Mrs. Hurwitz an exemplary teacher of the gifted." Congratulations, Ms. Hurwitz!

Mr. Hugh Greene has served gifted children as the chair of the Gifted Education Community Advisory Committee (CAC) in Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) since 2007. According to his application, "Mr. Greene's proactive work has refined the work of the CAC during his service as both member and chairman. He initiated site visits requiring all CAC members to visit annually a minimum of two schools so they can observe the gifted program in action, talk with students and gifted staff, and glean information on four key areas: program communication, collaboration, advocacy, and curriculum and instruction. Mr. Greene organizes the CAC's annual report to the School Board detailing a full update on the status of all activities and accomplishments related to the VBCPS Local Plan for the Gifted.

At CAC meetings, Mr. Greene schedules presentations on various program topics to educate members on the various programs and initiatives that are part of the VBCPS gifted program.

Mr. Greene is masterful at cul-

tivating productive relationships. He seeks out those individuals who can and should make a positive impact on gifted programs.

Mr. Hugh Greene exemplifies the goals of the Virginia Association for the Gifted (VAG) in his work on the VBCPS advisory committee. He is a staunch advocate who promotes a positive image of parent leadership on behalf of gifted education. He truly is a role model for all parents of the gifted across the Commonwealth of Virginia." Congratulations, Mr. Greene!



*Judith Hurwitz (left) and Hugh Greene pose with their awards presented at the VAG conference in October.*

## *Communication and Collaboration at Centerville Elementary*

by Kim Vaughan, gifted resource teacher, Centerville Elementary

Centerville Elementary students and teachers are passionate about communication and collaboration. In fact, one of Centerville Elementary School's SMART goals is to have 90% of the students show a proficiency level of 3 (using a 4-point rubric) in communication and collaboration as measured by grade level performance-based tasks in accordance with the curriculum (PCI 2011). With this goal in mind, every student at Centerville is participating in a communication and collaboration (C&C) project.

This project engages the students through cooperative learning strategies, teamwork, technology, and good old-fashioned conversation. Mrs.

Arnold's fifth grade class used the gifted resource, *Hidden in Rocks*, for their C&C project. This class "spiced" up the unit with technology that enhanced their communication and collaboration. The students assumed the role of a paleontologist.

Using their research and knowledge of rock formation and rock types, the students communicated and collaborated with their teams through the use of a shared OneNote notebook and group discussions to determine the best site to dig for fossils. Daily self-reflections on their group's communication and collaboration

drove the students' progress and led to successful collaborations throughout the project. As each grade level works through their project, it seems that collaboration and communication have become the norm here at Centerville. It's just what we do!



## The Parent Connection Conference

Landstown High School, January 28, 2012, 8:00 AM—1:00 PM

The Office of Gifted Education and Curriculum Development is providing seven breakout sessions for the Parent Connection Conference on January 28, 2012. Each breakout is a response to a recurring concern expressed by parents. We are now using the Parent Connection Conference instead of organizing a separate Parent Institute every other summer. This format will allow us to provide parent workshops on a wide range of topics each year instead of once every other year.

At previous workshops, we had presentations that were rated highly overall, but parents requested more time for interaction and questions. In response, we have established a presentation review system to assure that parents have the opportunity to participate in the workshops. Our expectation is that you will find each of the workshops we deliver to be highly interactive.

Each workshop will be presented twice so you can select your top two choices. Workshops that are not a part of the gifted strand will also be offered at the Parent Connection for your consideration.

The following workshops will be offered by the Office of Gifted Education and Curriculum Development and are available for all participants at the conference:

- Of Mountains and Molehills: Parenting a Perfectionist
- Why Should I Do This? Making Education Valuable to Students
- Cultivating a Mindset that Promotes Growth and Achievement
- Navigating the Sometimes Turbulent Waters of Highly Sensitive and Emotionally Intense Kids
- Effective Communication Strategies

- Talking Your Way to Healthy Development: Effective Communication Strategies for Building Your Child's Self-Efficacy
- Adolescence: Survive and Thrive
- Ready or Not, Here We Are! Advanced Learners in the 21st Century

Please join us at the 2012 Parent Connection Conference at Landstown High School!

For more information, please call the Office of Community Relations at 263-1936 or visit <http://www.vbschools.com/parentconnection/content/pdfs/ParentConnectionConference4.pdf>

## Gifted Education and Collaboration

Barbara Kennedy, coordinator, Office of Gifted Education and Curriculum Development

*Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.*  
- Henry Ford

Henry Ford's quote is coming to life in the Virginia Beach City Public Schools' Office of Gifted Education and Curriculum Development. Let's take a look at the myriad of collaborative efforts in which the office is involved.

Instructional Technology Services,  
Department of Technology

Over the past four years, and in a variety of combinations, elementary gifted resource teachers (GRT), cluster teachers, library media specialists, and computer resource specialists have participated in training sessions where they designed performance tasks for students. These yearly sessions provided all participants with breakout sessions to increase their knowledge both in the area of technology and in best

practices in gifted education. These sessions have resulted in increased collaboration in the schools and have made clear the importance of technology as a tool for meaningful production within the classrooms.

The Office of Guidance Services  
and Student Records

Collaboration with the Office of Guidance Services and Student Records is a natural fit with the Office of Gifted Education and Curriculum Development. Over the past several years, GRTs have received updates from guidance staff designed to improve and delineate course selection for gifted and high-ability learners. As diploma options have changed over the years, this collaboration is crucial when considering the needs of gifted learners. Work in the schools includes the GRT attending parent conferences, presenting to guidance staff on gifted characteristics, and considering the GRT/guidance

counselor relationship as an integral part of student success. In October 2011, guidance staff joined principals and GRTs in a workshop presented by Dr. Edwin Javius on Collaborative Efforts Toward Equity: Culturally Conscious Instruction designed to meet the needs of students and bridge the achievement gap through instructional strategies and differentiation.

Office of Technical and Career  
Education

Our collaborative work with the Office of Technical and Career Education (TCE) has provided gifted resource teachers at the middle and high school levels with a wide variety of experiences designed to educate them on ways to assist and advocate for gifted learners enrolled in the programs offered, as well as provide students with information to meet their needs. Some examples: High school (HS) and middle

## *Collaboration Leads to Connections*

by Dana Hand, gifted resource teacher, Thalia Elementary

Across the city, gifted resource teachers (GRT), computer resource specialists (CRS), and library media specialists (LMS) are encouraged to collaborate. At Thalia Elementary, we collaborate weekly about upcoming activities and units of study.

During a recent collaboration, I briefly described our *I Feel the Earth Move* fifth grade gifted science unit. I explained how students would take on the role of a researcher for a website in which they debunk questionable emails and provide TRUE/FALSE ratings. Excitement was evident, but the best part of our collaboration was yet to come.

While we planned and collaborated, the CRS interjected her connection

to the creator of a website called Politifacts.com, a website where researchers uncover what politicians say publicly and give them a true or false rating. If it's completely false, they get the rating, "Pants on Fire," a reference to the childhood rhyme that begins, "Liar, Liar..."

The editor of Politifacts.com was contacted, and within a few days fifth grade students had a Skype date with an editor of this Pulitzer Prize winning site. As our fifth graders listened to the editor, they gained a better understanding of how to go about their research and the importance of the truth.

Experts bring opportunities of enhanced learning into classrooms which, in turn, generate excitement. Our collaborative planning and the integration of tech-

nology led to a real-life connection that made all the difference for our young researchers.



## *From PLC to SLC: A Kemps Landing Magnet School Case Study*

by Mary Perry and Lisa Kilczewski, teachers, Advanced English 8, Kemps Landing Magnet School

A leading trend in education is the Professional Learning Community (PLC). One of its goals is getting teachers to collaborate and learn from each other. The PLC utilizes research-based strategies to provide professional learning opportunities for teachers through communication and collaboration.

At Kemps Landing Magnet School (KLMS), the PLC work is becoming a Student Learning Community (SLC) designed to foster communication and collaboration skills with students. Similar strategies of the PLC are being implemented in classrooms to foster 21st century skills where students between grade level teams regroup and are given the opportunity to col-

laborate, communicate, and problem solve among their peers, regardless of assigned teams or teachers.

At KLMS, teachers Mary Perry and Lisa Kilczewski have designed collaborative SLC experiences across eighth grade advanced English classes. To create communities, share resources, build problem-solving skills and facilitate communication, eighth graders have learned together, rather than in isolated teams. Successful examples include recent Socratic Seminars mixing students from separate teams. As a result, participants were even more respectful and open to listening and learning from one another. Last quarter, all eighth graders used technology as they contributed to a research wiki which allowed

them to share research links and ask and answer research questions. The next collaborative opportunity will ask students to join together across teams in literature circles. The SLC has resulted in a true community of learners.



*Eighth grade students collaborate on the research wiki.*

## *Gifted Advocacy for Parents: Resources Available*

Each school's gifted resource teacher has books and materials on a wide variety of topics to share with parents. If you are interested in issues regarding advocacy, gifted girls, the twice-exceptional learner, underachievement, gifted characteristics, or another area of interest, contact your

school's gifted resource teacher. Old Donation Center and Kemps Landing Magnet School have a parent resource library available, as well.

Information about gifted identification, placement, and on programs offered through the Office of Gifted Education

and Curriculum Development is available on the VBCPS website: <http://www.vbschools.com/curriculum/gifted/index.asp>

## Green Grows the Community Garden: Planting the Seeds of Discovery

by Lisa Walker, gifted resource teacher, Tallwood High School

Last spring, thanks to an Innovative Idea Grant from the Virginia Association for the Gifted (VAG), Green Grows the Community Garden, our ninth grade gifted cluster students at Tallwood High School (THS) were not only able to make meaningful connections among language arts, social studies, geometry, and biology, but they were also able to make a meaningful connection with the third grade gifted cluster class of our feeder school, Tallwood Elementary School (TES). Indeed, the students and teachers discovered that we had planted more than just vegetable seeds in this project-based learning experience!

### The Essential Question

Students were asked to consider the question: How can a community garden benefit the larger community? Right from the start, students were given ownership of the project and encouraged to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information and ideas across a wide range of sources in order to plan the garden from the ground up. Using such strategies as Sandra Kaplan's Depth and Complexity and Paul's Reasoning Model, each teacher designed lessons and activities that asked students to consider how their garden project also affected sustainability, interdependence, and the health literacy of our stakeholders.

Throughout the year, connecting the garden project to course content and SOLs was a priority for the cluster teachers.

### Creating Connections

As the year progressed, students were able to see how they could use the skills from each of their core academic classes to assist them in developing their own garden on the grounds of Tallwood High School. Cluster students not only decided on the type of crops they grew, but also the methods to be used and the means for marketing the project to the community and home school.

### Discoveries, New and Unexpected

As a culminating activity our students decided that they wanted to share the Community Garden experience and their abundant crop of squash, five varieties of lettuce, red and white radishes, and green onions with our elementary feeder school's gifted students during a visit to the THS Community Garden. Gifted cluster students were so excited about the real-life connections they were able to make with their core classes that they decided to have a lesson planning competition and voted on the four best lessons to use with our young visitors.

Watching our ninth grade students

researching third grade SOLs, discussing depth and complexity, problem-solving skills, learning styles, hands-on activities, best practices, and student engagement was a joy. The brochure they designed for the day guided the third graders through a journey of engaging observation, prediction and data analysis from pre-assessment to post test.

On a beautiful sunny morning in June, Tallwood Elementary gifted resource teacher (GRT), Caitlin Kaminski, arrived with 25 third grade gifted students who were given a "Big Buddy" to help lead them through the day's activities. As we all sat down to a lunch of fresh salad vegetables with lots of ranch dressing, I was so proud of what our students and teachers had accomplished and so thankful to the VAG for the funds that allowed us to buy the seeds, soil, and equipment needed to grow the garden. As our visitors got ready to leave, one little boy raised his hand and said, "Can you be our Big Buddies forever?" I bet you can guess the answer to that question.

This year we will most definitely be planting more seeds.

*A more detailed version of this article was submitted to and published in the Fall 2011 VAG newsletter and is available at [www.vagifted.org](http://www.vagifted.org)*

## Gifted Education and Collaboration, continued



*Linda Spruill (left) presents TCE information to a small group including GRT Allison Graves (right)*

school (MS) teachers were provided an overview of the programs offered; they participated in a learning walk at both the Career and Technical Education

Center (CTE) and the Advanced Technology Center (ATC); and, most recently, observed TCE classes in their buildings as they work to support and collaborate with the TCE teachers in their schools. They then met with the coordinators from TCE in order to ask questions and learn more about the programs, industry certifications, and opportunities for gifted learners in this area.

Other collaborative efforts involve work at the Renaissance Academy, the Office of Programs for Exceptional Children, the Office of Instructional Services and Academy Programs, and curriculum development coordinators.

A resource which may be of interest for those interested in twice exceptional (2e) students can be found at <http://www.2enewsletter.com/>.

Taking advantage of opportunities to collaborate with other stakeholders who care about and serve gifted learners has become an integral part of the work of the Office of Gifted Education and Curriculum Development. For more information, please see the Five-Year Plan for the Education of the Gifted (see left menu bar on <http://www.vbschools.com/curriculum/gifted/index.asp>).

## Featured Article: “This Middle School Life”

by Adrian Hayes, gifted resource teacher, Kempsville Middle School

At Kempsville Middle School (KMS), Mary Sutterluety’s gifted cluster advanced English students explore the “Art of Storytelling” in the first unit of eighth grade. For the last few years, Mrs. Sutterluety has worked with the gifted resource teacher, Adrian Hayes, to refine a high-interest storytelling and podcasting project in which students create oral narratives of their personal reflections on middle school life. Students use equipment purchased with the help of a \$1000 Building Futures grant to record podcasts of their middle school experiences.

Mrs. Hayes and Mrs. Sutterluety rely heavily on stories from the public radio show “This American Life” to teach the students how to write compelling nonfiction narratives. They also use YouTube clips of the show’s host, Ira Glass, discussing the essential elements of storytelling. In his videos, Ira Glass explains that a memorable story contains two essential elements – a powerful anecdote and a moment of reflection. Students enjoy the unique and engaging “This American Life” podcasts and are inspired to narrate their own stories for radio.

In early October, Mrs. Hayes contacted Ira Glass and told him about the students’ podcasting projects, which she and Mrs. Sutterluety call “This Middle School Life.” Ira responded enthusiastically, and he recorded a radio show introduction for the students’ projects modeled after the intro he uses on “This American Life.” Upon receiving Ira’s recording, students used it to introduce their own stories, adding their own personal stamp by mixing in background audio and sound effects. Their narratives sounded like authentically produced episodes of “This American Life,” and students were thrilled with the results.

Ira Glass also asked about the possibility of using the students’ narratives in an episode of “This

American Life.” Mrs. Hayes spoke with a producer from the show, Lisa Pollak, to explore this possibility. They discussed many elements of middle school teaching, and the process of teaching writing to middle school students. Lisa explained that an upcoming episode of the show was themed “The Middle,” and they thought some of the students’ stories could work for one segment. She later followed up with Mrs. Hayes, saying, “I enjoyed our talk so much that I actually suggested to Ira this morning that we try to change the ‘Middle’ show to ‘Middle School,’ and he’s considering it! The catch is that we would be adding new stories on a very short deadline so we couldn’t be as comprehensive as I might like. But I’ll let you know what he says ... I’ve listened to all of [the students’ podcasts] — twice. And I have to say: you should definitely not be frustrated. In fact, I think you underestimate how incredibly special these are.”

On October 23rd, Ira Glass spoke at Chrysler Hall to talk about reinventing traditional radio and how they create “This American Life.” During the show, he discussed storytelling, and how effective a medium radio can be. He then turned his focus to the students of Kempsville Middle School and shared pieces of two students’ podcasts with the audience. Ira made the point that everyone has a story to tell, and everyone likes their story to be heard, and that you don’t need much to tell a great story — just a thirteen-year-old and a microphone. It was very powerful for the students to hear that their work had been shared with, and received enthusiastically, by almost 1000 adults at Chrysler Hall.

Mrs. Hayes then received another email from “This American Life” producer Lisa Pollak, who confirmed that they were moving forward with a show themed entirely on middle school, in part inspired by the students and stories of Kempsville Middle School.

This show aired on October 28th and can be downloaded from <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/449/middle-school>

While none of the KMS students’ stories made the final cut of the middle school episode of “This American Life,” the project and collaboration caught the attention of Virginian-Pilot reporter Mike Hixenbaugh, who decided to feature the students’ work in an upcoming story for the Daily Break Sunday Magazine. Several KMS students were interviewed about their work and their writing process. This feature should be printed in January.

In gifted education, we talk a lot about authenticity — about enabling our students to do authentic work, and about finding authentic audiences for the work our students produce. Mrs. Sutterluety and Mrs. Hayes are very proud of their students’ podcast narratives and happy to see their work recognized and appreciated by a wider audience.



*Pictured are Ira Glass, host of the National Public Radio program “This American Life,” with Kempsville Middle School gifted resource teacher Adrian Hayes.*

*This article is reprinted with permission from eKaleidoscope, a VBCP electronic publication.*

## Office of Gifted Education and Curriculum Development

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

### Gifted Education Community Advisory Committee

Lisa Burns	Salem
Elizabeth Albarado	Ex-officio, Arts
Tonia McCree	Ex-officio, Middle School Resource
Hugh Greene, Chair	Kellam
Kelly Hedrick	Ex-officio, Administration
Shekita Howard	Princess Anne
Matthew Wrocklage	Student Representative
MaryAnn Magnant	Landstown
Rose O'Neill	Ex-officio, High School Resource
Helen Pryor	Tallwood
Robert Rivera	Kempsville
Laurie Steentofte	Cox
Beth Schlossberg	Ex-officio, Elementary School Resource
Victoria Walker	Green Run
Pending	Bayside
Vacant	Ocean Lakes
Vacant	First Colonial

## *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
February 13, 2012	Advanced Technology Center Virginia Beach Forum 1800 College Crescent Virginia Beach, VA 23452
March 12, 2012	Plaza Middle School 3080 S. Lynnhaven Road Virginia Beach, VA 23452
April 16, 2012	School Administration Building Building #6 2512 George Mason Drive Virginia Beach, VA 23456
May 14, 2012	School Administration Building Building #6 (see address above)
June 11, 2012	School Administration Building Building #6 (see address above)

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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 and Curriculum Development, 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.

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