

Spring 2016

Challenging Gifted Learners

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Qoice



The Future Looks Bright for Gifted Children

By M. René Islas, Executive Director of the National Association for Gifted Children

These are exciting times at the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). Our members—parents, leaders in the field of education, individuals in the academic and research communities, and policymakers—are making a difference for all children with gifts and talents as they develop, grow, and achieve their full potential.



When I joined the NAGC team nearly 10 months ago, my initial focus was to meet, listen and get to know the dedicated individuals who make up our organization and those we serve. I quickly identified our greatest asset: The NAGC network of caring, smart people who offer a rich diversity of viewpoints and strive to understand and advocate for the needs of children and youth with gifts and talents.

I am encouraged that the future looks bright for gifted children. For the first time, federal education law calls attention to the specialized learning needs of gifted and talented students. The newly reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, now known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), requires that:

- states and districts track the progress of the highest achieving students,
- allows them to utilize Title I funds to support the identification and service of gifted students in schools with significant populations of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and

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MATTERS

GRAY

Lisa Worden
MEGT President



It was great to see so many of you at our winter conference. I hope you have remained inspired and continue to use the experience to improve your practice.

This time of year, I start to think assessments. It is not something that comes to mind naturally. It is forced to the forefront with an hour of required videos in which a monotone (and if it was a word, monospeed) computer voice rattles off regulations and directions concerning our statewide assessments. If you don't know what I'm talking about, speak to a teacher who administers MCAs. I don't take the tests; I am neither anxious about my students' progress or how their results will reflect my teaching. So why do I get a sinking feeling at their mention?

I know what these tests mean for my students and my classroom. I recall the dance I will have to perform in the days before testing. I want with all of my heart to avoid test prep. Teaching in a full-time gifted program, you might think I could do so. I teach creative, intense children, and both are character traits that upset the apple cart when it comes to standardized testing.

Creative thinkers can struggle when limited with choices. My students were recently asked to fill out an evaluation. They were to answer questions using a scale of 1-4, circling the appropriate number. I was confused when the data came back incomplete. After investigating, I found that some students chose to make their own "5" category, and others used decimals (creating numbers like "2.5"). On each account of noncompliance/creativity, nothing was scored. When I gave the survey again, I said, "No matter what else you put on the paper, please also circle a 1, 2, 3, or 4 for each question." The whole time, it nagged at me that I was stifling their creativity and enthusiasm. Their original results would have been more accurate and more interesting! Even a scaled scoring-sheet did not have all of the possible answers for my creative students.

All year, teachers challenge students to think critically, come up with creative solutions, ask questions to clarify, and research to build knowledge. Then the state assesses students: Read, understand, and answer this question in the very same way as the adults who wrote it. Do not collaborate, do not ask questions, do not use resources to access information, and do not elaborate on the story/problem. *Sigh*. Some days I understand the need for this kind of assessment; other days I am not so optimistic. Needed or

not, standardized tests can be complicated for our most creative students.

Similarly, such assessments can be hard for our gifted students with intensities. Many intensities lend themselves to a lack of self-regulation. Think test anxiety behaviors in some, and psychomotor intensity in others. There is a dance all teachers must perform in order to put each child at ease, but for teachers of the gifted, the dance is much more exaggerated on each end. While there is some middle ground, the rest of my students need one of two opposite pieces of advice. For some, "The test you will take is just a test that shows what you've learned. Do your best, like you always do, and all will be well. Remember your strategies if you begin to worry or stress." For others, "You've learned a lot this year. You will want to take your time, check your answers, and try to ignore the urge to hurry. If you need a break to move, please let me know."

I believe that in many cases, students' test scores come down to their ability to self regulate. That's where the dance gets easier. The more that students (and teachers) understand self regulation, the less of a dance the teacher needs to perform. Instead of teachers doling out advice, reflective and aware students (upon prompting) are more able to identify their own specific needs.

Because I love bright spots, I am optimistic that the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) will have a positive impact on our gifted students, in assessments and beyond. Another bright spot: What promises to be a great resource for self regulation education becomes available in March; make sure you use the MEGT Conference discount when you purchase Rich Cash's latest book, *Self Regulation in the Classroom*.



MEGT *Voice*

Published Fall, Winter and Spring by
Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented, Inc.
...a nonprofit advocacy network
Member of The National Association for Gifted Children
<http://www.mnegt.org>

Please send all articles and announcements for
the next issue by October 1, 2016 to:

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Note: E-mail submissions are preferred

Newsletter design created by West Central Printing, Willmar, MN



The Future Looks Bright , continued from cover

- requires support for teachers in serving gifted students with professional learning funded by Title II, Part A funds.

Additionally, the law opens up the possibility for our nation's schools to recognize the mastery of content above grade level through computer adaptive assessments. These new signals are promising, but it will take leadership at the state, district, school, and community levels to improve the quality of learning opportunities for gifted students.

Our nation's education leaders and hard-working teachers can leverage the law as a fuel to improve services for the gifted. One of the first areas to tackle is the lack of uniformity in gifted programming across states, districts, and schools. According to a recent study conducted jointly by NAGC and the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, nineteen do not monitor gifted programs at the local level, only seven states require districts to report on gifted student achievement, and less than half of the states report on the race and ethnicity of gifted students. Secondly, the latest data from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights shows wide variation in the

participation of children from minority backgrounds in gifted programs as opposed to white peers.

While our country has much to accomplish, the road ahead is a bright one. NAGC will continue to develop high-quality resources. We will lead the conversation on the latest research published in our critically-acclaimed Gifted Child Quarterly (GCQ), and we will engage members through an enhanced set of communications tools that include:

- E-mail communications connected to a specific staff member who directly responds;
- *NewsSource*, a weekly news digest; and
- *NAGC Insider*, a monthly member-only benefit.

As a parent of gifted children, with a career focused on improving educational outcomes for all students, I am honored to stand with you to bring hope for our nation's gifted children. Fostering the NAGC community will help us connect, share, and strengthen our common passion for helping children achieve their greatest potential and happiness.

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Renewing Your MEGT Membership

You can renew your MEGT membership two ways!

Attend the annual Mid-Winter MEGT Conference from January 31 – February 2, 2015; your annual membership is included in the cost of the conference!

Or, complete the membership form at <http://www.mnegt.org/about-me/megt-membership> and pay the annual \$40 membership fee. Send both the form and fee to Pam Pearson, MEGT Membership Chair, 7624 Terrance Dr. NW, Alexandria, MN 56308.



Nurturing Everyday Creativity:

Reflections on E. Paul Torrance's Creative Manifesto

by Susan Daniels, Ph.D.

Speaking at the Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented annual conference last month, I gave a talk on the importance of engaging in *everyday creativity*. Incorporating E. Paul Torrance's "Manifesto for Children" in the talk was a delight and particularly meaningful as the man known as the 'Father of Creativity' wrote much of his early – and seminal – work while in Minnesota. Torrance later relocated to Athens, Georgia where he was the director of the Torrance Creativity Center at the University of Georgia.



The Torrance Manifesto is as follows:

Manifesto for Children

1. Don't be afraid to fall in love with something and pursue it with great intensity.
2. Know, understand, take pride in, practice, develop, exploit, and enjoy your greatest strengths.
3. Learn to free yourself from the expectations of others and to walk away from the games they impose on you.
4. Find a great teacher or mentor who will help you.
5. Don't waste energy trying to be well rounded.
6. Do what you love and can do well.
7. Learn the skill of interdependence.

Torrance's manifesto is appropriate for all ages, but I approach it as it applies to children – who are naturally creative until about fourth grade (Research consistently documents a 4th grade slump in creativity.) – And to the teachers whose mission it is to help their students develop and expand their natural creativity. So, let's look at the seven statements of the manifesto in closer detail.

Don't be afraid to fall in love with something and pursue it with great intensity.

Children need opportunities to explore – as my friend Sue Winebrenner says "to browse" – a variety of topics and activities of their choosing and to work in the modes that

they love. Young children tend to be in love with the world – or at least aspects of it that appeal to their interests and passion. Allowing young children to find, pursue, and sustain their passion/s will serve them for life.

Know, understand, take pride in, practice, develop, exploit, and enjoy your greatest strengths.

Young children are ever in the process of learning about themselves – what they are good at and what they enjoy. And, they need to hear more about what they are good at than what they struggle with. Ask, "What do you like best about your: picture, project, poem, invention...?" and "What would you like to do next?" Encourage their self-reflection and self-understanding and encourage them to find joy in what they do!

Learn to free yourself from the expectations of others and to walk away from the games they impose on you.

Another concept I've been considering is that of 'personal creativity.' When I was planning my talk I came upon a number of photos of entire prom outfits – dresses and suits – that were made from duct tape. Each was detailed, unique, and beautiful. One young man I taught had his room set up as a Rube Goldberg device that he constantly tinkered with to achieve different goals. He also frequently came to school dressed as Beethoven or Darwin or Dahli. Fortunately, he wasn't teased. We had an open environment that allowed for personal creative expression.

Find a great teacher or mentor who will help you.

You do not need to be a creative wizard yourself to nurture the creativity of your students. One of the foremost qualities of creative individuals is that they have 'creative awareness.' Creative people tend to look for and seek out the creativity that surrounds them. Teachers can nurture creativity by helping students to become aware of creativity in the environment and by modeling everyday creative activities themselves. Nurturing teachers allow students to pursue passion projects and help students to identify their needs and available resources. Teachers can also serve as creative catalysts by finding others with specific talents and interests to mentor their students.



Nurturing Everyday Creativity, continued from page 4

Don't waste energy trying to be well rounded.

The most significant example of this that occurs to me is the experience of high school students who are striving to get into the best colleges – working hard to be well-rounded by joining every club and sport they can accommodate within their schedules. Not only is this an exhausting pursuit, it doesn't serve them. It is better to have a clear passion and the ability to articulate the love of a topic, field, or talent than to be spread thin and lacking in personal distinction. The college application process at a number of top universities is in the process of changing to reflect this shift in direction. They are no longer looking for several AP classes and as many extracurricular pursuits as evidence of academic promise, but instead the application process highlights special interests and an evidence of caring and community involvement.

Do what you love and can do well.

Doing what we love fulfills a deep need for human connection and creativity. It gives us energy and enthusiasm and contributes to positive development throughout the lifespan. Now, in terms of nurturing creativity in our children, this may require some adaptations in teaching and parenting. For example, if a child loves to take things apart, including your toaster, hairdryer, and other small household objects, it would be worthwhile to set up a "lab area" for this type of exploration. This might be outfitted with a small table – a space to hold the parts and the process, an assortment of kid-friendly tools, and small appliances purchased at a thrift shop to take apart, explore, and perhaps – even – to put back together.

Learn the skill of interdependence.

Creativity is often viewed as a solitary pursuit – da Vinci's work in multiple domains, O'Keefe's paintings, etc. – however creativity does not occur in a vacuum. And, in terms of real-world applications, creative invention and problem solving involves collaboration. Think of the crew of the Apollo Thirteen (similarly the scenario in the highly acclaimed fictional movie, "The Martian"), project teams at any of our large tech companies that are most known for their innovation, and project teams for school enrichment programs such as Odyssey of the Mind and Destination Imagination. The interplay of individual insight and group innovation is a powerful collaboration. Often, we need the contributions of others to move our own thinking forward. It is now common for adults to collaborate in professional teams and with colleagues from around the world – many of whom they will never meet face-to-face. Children can readily

learn this skill while engaging in group brainstorming, project planning, and while piggy-backing on each other's ideas.

E. Paul Torrance was a true visionary. He wrote this manifesto in 1983, and it continues to be as relevant, and perhaps increasingly more so, now as it was then. Nurturing creativity in our youth will benefit their growth and development, the quality of their lives, and the prospects for a better future for all.



MEGT FOUNDATION
Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented Foundation

The MEGT Foundation has an updated look to its website. Watch for updates and announcements at <http://www.megtfoundation.com>. Consider logging in and making your donation.

Our board has expanded. Our newest member is Kelly Jenson. She has joined the board bringing with her enthusiasm to build a stronger board.

We recently finished the current year's current fundraiser. We generated over \$1800 through the silent auction and donations. This past year we awarded \$4000 in grants to teachers across the state to attend conferences, establish innovative ideas for the gifted kids in their classrooms or to pursue additional coursework. Some recipients attended the MEGT Annual Conference at Craguns' in February.

We continue to explore fundraising ideas. We are looking for corporations who match their employees' donations. If you and your significant other are looking for a place to see your donated dollars doing good things, please consider the MEGT Foundation in your giving. Please remember because we are a 501(3) C, donations may be deducted.

Bill Keilty,
MEGT Foundation President



Nine Critical and Creative Thinking Strategies To Build Better Thinkers

By Carol Horn

With the current focus on 21st Century Skills, educators of the gifted have a unique opportunity to engage in dialogue that supports critical and creative thinking, an important hallmark of gifted education. Thinking, reasoning, reflecting, analyzing, discussing, and applying new ideas are essential characteristics of a climate of learning that encourages students to think on a higher level, challenge existing ideas, and entertain new possibilities for the future. Critical and creative thinking strategies encourage students to move beyond a focus on getting the right answer for a test and instead encourage them to question the answers, formulate their own ideas, and seek solutions that are not ordinarily considered.



In an effort to strengthen gifted services and provide engaging and challenging learning experiences to a broader range of students, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) identified nine critical and creative thinking strategies that are introduced to all students in grades kindergarten through grade twelve. These strategies may be used in all content areas and provide myriad opportunities for students to explore knowledge, gain understanding, and acquire skills in work that stimulates minds and develops unique talents.

A focus on critical and creative thinking also helps educators find and nurture gifted potential in students who have historically been underrepresented in gifted programs. When students are challenged through learning experiences that require advanced applications of knowledge, they are motivated to reach new heights and move beyond existing limitations. Equity of opportunity becomes a reality when every student is encouraged to raise and exceed their own expectations through learning experiences that challenge them to discover and develop their highest potential.

In the early grades, the nine critical and creative thinking strategies are used to identify and nurture gifted potential among young learners. Thinking processes and student products provide observable evidence of a student's ability to think and reason on advanced levels. Gifted and Talented Resource teachers collaborate with grade level teams to schedule class visits in order to model the strategies and discuss ways they can be integrated into classroom learning experiences.

Each thinking strategy can be used at any grade level and in any curriculum area. Students are taught the name of the strategy and how it can help them become better thinkers. Next, they are given opportunities to apply the thinking strategies in different content areas. Icons provide a visual representation that helps students identify and remember the thinking strategy.

Guiding the development of thinking skills allows children to become actively engaged in their learning, increases their independence, and helps them develop their talents and potential.

NINE CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING STRATEGIES

QUESTIONING

Active learners are always questioning. Learning to write and respond to good questions is an important skill that nurtures inquiring minds. The process of learning to write open-ended questions as well as respond to them, helps students move beyond a traditional, fact-based coverage of content to a more dynamic approach that stimulates reflection and inquiry. Students who take responsibility for asking their own questions become more productive and engaged in their learning processes. Questions may also be used to guide instruction. These are often called essential questions and they lead to a consideration of big ideas and deeper understandings. Examples of essential questions include: How are things, events, or people connected? When is the "correct" answer not the best solution? Was mathematics discovered or invented? What is the evidence and how reliable is it?

Another important aspect of questioning is metacognition, or thinking about thinking. Metacognition involves questioning our individual learning processes and helps children solve problems by developing, implementing, and evaluating plans of action as they question and explore their own ideas. Questioning is an important strategy that teaches students to clarify, explore, challenge, and assess their understanding of content and ideas.



FLUENCY, ORIGINALITY, FLEXIBILITY, AND ELABORATION

Fluency and flexibility open up the thinking of students to consider many possibilities; originality and elaboration stretch the uniqueness of their thinking. This is an excellent strategy that generates creative solutions to problems and provides multiple ideas for consideration. A fun way to introduce the power of this thinking is a strategy called





SCAMPER. SCAMPER helps students generate new ideas by thinking about how to change and combine existing ideas. It also engages them in the creative processes of fluency, flexibility, elaboration, and originality.

Each letter of the word SCAMPER is accompanied by questions and a thought process that encourages creative thinking.

- **S** is for Substitute and is accompanied by questions such as: What could you substitute? What might you do instead? What would work as well or better? If you ask a student to find examples of substitution in their everyday world, they will discover myriad inventions that have evolved from the idea of substitution. Scientists are continually brainstorming ideas and trying out new materials to improve efficiency (faster, lighter bicycles) or to make things safer (flame retardant material for pajamas).
- **C** is for Combine and students are asked: What could you combine? What might work well together? What could be brought together? Many of the tools and appliances that we use each day are examples of ideas that have been combined: the clock radio, the many capabilities of a cell phone, a pencil that converts to a pen, a watch with the calendar date, a printer that also serves as a copier and a scanner; the ideas are endless.
- **A** is for Adapt or Adjust, in other words, changing something to fit a new situation. Questions that accompany this letter include: What could be adjusted to suit a purpose or condition? How could you make it fit? Is there anything else like this? One innovative designer is bringing the convenience of a vending machine to pedal-powered transportation and has adapted the concept of a vending machine to create fully automated rental units that hold up to 100 bicycles. Electric car companies adapted the use of the rechargeable battery to store and supply energy for motor vehicles. Another innovator adapted the common straw and created the “life straw” that filters polluted water and makes it safe to drink.
- **M** is for Modify, Magnify, or Minify. This challenges students to think of ways to change physical characteristics such as size, color, or shape. Questions might include: Could you make it larger, greater, or stronger? Could you make it smaller, lighter, or slower? What would happen if you changed the color, sound, taste, smell? Children’s books provide numerous examples of the results of this type of thinking. There are mini books, books with cardboard pages for small children, “Big Books” for teachers to read aloud, pop-up books, books with large print, and many others. The children’s section of the library is a fun place to search for examples of modify, magnify, and minify.
- **P** stands for Put to Other Uses and asks students to think of how something could be used in another way. Questions include: How could you use it for a different purpose? What are some new ways to apply it? Where else could you use it? Planting seeds in an egg carton or hanging a tire from a tree for a swing are examples of how people put everyday objects to another use. In efforts to reduce waste, students are encouraged to think of other uses for items that otherwise would be discarded. Other examples may be found in the

industrial world where cargo ships are now using kites and ropes to capture wind energy in order to reduce annual fuel costs.

- **E** is for Elimination or taking away a part of something in order to simplify it or take out unnecessary parts to reduce waste, cost, time, or effort. Questions that accompany this letter include: What could you subtract or take away? What could you do without? Simplified packaging, online shopping, a cordless telephone, and organic foods without preservatives are just a few examples of how elimination has changed products and services.
- **R** stands for Rearrange or Reverse, in other words, consider how to put things in a different order. Questions that lead to this type of thinking include: What would you have if you reversed the order or turned it around? Could you change the parts, the layout, or the sequence? Reversible clothes are an example of this concept that is very familiar to students. In addition, schedules are often rearranged to accommodate conflicting events. Fast food restaurants are examples of rearranging the order of service in a typical restaurant in order to save time. Instead of waiting for a server to take the order, customers pay first and are served second. Another example that would be familiar to students when playing music on an electronic device is the shuffle mode which is a way to constantly rearrange the order in which the songs are played. And finally, Choose Your Own Adventure is a series of children’s books in which the story and its outcome can be manipulated by the reader.

Once students become familiar with the letters and the thinking that they represent, you can send them on a SCAMPER scavenger hunt. The rules are simple, they can work alone or in teams to search for examples of SCAMPER in their school, on a field trip, in advertisements, or other sites – the world is full of examples! SCAMPER teaches students that many new ideas and inventions evolved from existing ideas and, that as the world continues to evolve and change, people who have innovative ideas and solutions are needed more than ever.

VISUALIZATION

This strategy opens up student thinking by using words, images, and/or simulated experiences to stimulate the imagination. The process of visualization can also help students plan out an experience before execution. It allows students to set goals and decide how to handle potential roadblocks before encountering them in order to build resiliency and increase organization. Research studies have shown that visualization greatly increases the level and depth of comprehension of both spoken and written words. It can be a powerful strategy for helping students set goals, picture the steps that need to be taken, consider alternatives, and visualize a plan to achieve their goals. It can take students to places not yet seen in order to see from another’s point of view, rehearse steps in goal-setting and decision making, and reflect on past situations.





MINDMAPPING

Mind mapping is a strategy for visual note-taking that helps students organize information in unique and personal ways.

It allows students to see the whole picture at once and make connections among related ideas without interruption. Students begin by writing or drawing a main idea, subject, or concept in the center of the page. They then use lines to add symbols, words, colors, and/or images (subtopics) that connect to the main idea; as the map grows other ideas and details can branch out from these. This is a key thinking skill which is especially important for visual learners and for helping students make connections between and among ideas. It can also be used as a pre-assessment to determine what they already know and as a post-assessment to demonstrate what they have learned. Mind mapping gives students an understanding of the breadth of a topic and it can help them narrow down their questions or research to one or more specific areas. As they map out their thinking, they are better able to identify connections among related ideas. The process of creating a mind map helps them understand, retain, remember, and recall information. While the ideas and information illustrated may be similar, each mind map is an individual creation.



POINT OF VIEW

This thinking strategy allows students to explore an idea from multiple perspectives. It helps to broaden students' thinking and demonstrates that an idea should be examined from many points of view before an opinion is formed.

The discipline of examining an issue from many perspectives will provide students with a good model for open-ended receptive thinking and empathizing with the opinions of others. It is important for children to become comfortable sharing their own viewpoint as they listen to and learn from others. Teachers can help students recognize different viewpoints through books and stories or conversations that encourage a discussion of questions that have no definite answers, e.g., what makes a good friend?

The Socratic seminar is one example of a thoughtful dialogue that fosters critical thinking, serves as a catalyst for lively discussions, and leads to a consideration of multiple viewpoints on issues, themes, and ideas. Learning to examine various viewpoints increases students' willingness to consider the ideas of others and helps them understand that their own point of view may be biased and is subject to change. Gradually, with practice, they will be able to listen to and learn from others, think critically about their own ideas, and identify areas of agreement and disagreement.

Another method that promotes the consideration of multiple viewpoints is Edward DeBono's Six Thinking Hats. This thinking strategy provides a colorful structure to guide



students in the discussion of a topic or issue from six different perspectives. There are six colored hats and each color represents a different type of thinking: the white hat is used for facts and evidence, the red hat elicits feelings or emotions that are associated with the topic, the yellow hat focuses on the positive aspects, and the black hat focuses on the negative aspects. The green hat is reserved for creative ideas and the blue hat takes all ideas into consideration in order to formulate a plan. The colors provide an important visual that children associate with each type of thinking as they use it to solve problems, address issues, or make decisions. Each hat is equal in value and helps students focus on one type of thinking at a time. As children learn how to talk about each hat and the associated thinking, they begin to realize the difference between facts and emotions and how one can influence the other. They realize the importance of considering both the positive and negative aspects of an idea. The green hat encourages creativity as they formulate new ideas and solutions that may not have been considered initially. And finally, the blue hat helps them organize their thinking and design a plan to move forward. The six colors and the type of thinking that accompany each one raises student awareness of the complexity of the thinking process.

ANALOGIES

Innovative and creative thinking are valuable skills that are needed in today's workforce. Analogies are a powerful thinking tool because they build upon the brain's natural inclination to draw connections and make comparisons. Analogies not only stimulate the imagination, they also lead children to deeper understandings by connecting things that do not always appear connected. Once students understand how analogies work, there are numerous questions and sentence starters that may be used to stimulate the imagination and lead them to deeper understandings by connecting things that do not always appear connected. Examples include:

1. Which geometric shape is most like you? Explain.
2. Freedom of expression is like a garden because...
3. How are friendships like an electrical circuit?
4. How is solving a problem like riding a bike?
5. What would you describe as a calm explosion?

Analogies also enhance flexible thinking and encourage students to make connections at a more sophisticated level. A facility for working with analogies gives students a structure for generating creative ideas, seeing complex relationships, and making unusual comparisons. They also discover that many inventions and innovative ideas were sparked through a consideration of how a characteristic of a plant or animal might be used in an invention or to improve a product. For example, the invention of Velcro stemmed from burrs clinging to dog's fur. The power of analogies to capture and stimulate the imagination of a learner should never be underestimated.





ENCAPSULATION

Encapsulation is the process of stating ideas in a concise, precise form. It is not simply stating the main idea or restating information or opinions.

Encapsulation requires students to synthesize information and nuances in order to capture the essence of an idea, object, or activity, and then communicate their thoughts clearly. It is the art of sharing ideas or information as succinctly as possible in order to share “the bottom line” or the heart of a story, experience, or other information in a concise, precise form. Encapsulation requires that the student use as few words as possible and at the same time not lose the intention of the original idea. For example, a teacher might ask students to describe a novel, event, or situation in three words. Or students may be asked to create a tweet or a license plate that encapsulates their understanding of an issue or idea. Another example is to ask students to underline salient points as they read a scientific article or an historical document. They use these words to encapsulate the reading. As students learn to encapsulate what they learn, they strengthen their confidence to express ideas in their own words.

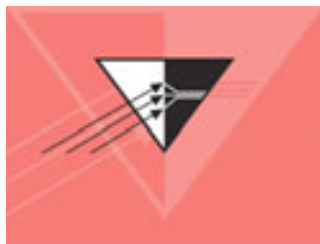


DECISIONS AND OUTCOMES

Decision-making is integral to everything we do. Helping students learn and understand the thinking processes that lead to good decisions is an important skill that will serve them well now and in the future.

This thinking strategy provides a framework in which students can assess and evaluate a variety of decisions and possible outcomes. Understanding cause and effect relationships helps students recognize the importance of examining the outcomes of multiple decision options before embarking on a course of action. The concept of examining outcomes is relevant for all students as they learn to consider both short-term and long-range consequences in the decision making process. These are important considerations for students to think about as they realize that all decisions have outcomes that must be considered.

A focus on decisions and outcomes has broad applications to subjects taught in school. History is replete with examples of leaders and nations that made decisions with serious implications for the world in which we live today e.g., some colonists made a decision to revolt against British tyranny which led to the American Revolution while others (Loyalists) made a decision to remain loyal to the king of England and consequently many returned to England; President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation which had critical short term (freedom for thousands of slaves) and long term (the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States which guaranteed the permanent abolition of slavery) consequences. Literature is another excellent source for examples of decisions made and the outcomes that characters in stories and novels



face as a result of their decisions. Students have an opportunity to think about the decisions that authors make as they write each story, knowing that each decision will lead to an outcome that will impact the plot and the story’s end. In mathematics and science new discoveries are based on the work of experts in the field who make decisions, evaluate outcomes, and seek to learn more in a wide variety of specialized areas. In all of these examples, a consideration of the decisions made and the consequences of those decisions (both long and short term) helps students gain a deeper understanding of the importance of decisions and the impact of their outcomes.

PLUS, MINUS, INTERESTING (PMI)

The PMI strategy encourages students to think about many possibilities, and to explore the positive and negative aspects of ideas or activities. PMI encourages students to develop the habit of looking beyond the polarity of “yes or no,” “wrong or right,” “my answer or your answer.” The goal of PMI is to develop independent thinkers who consider a range of ideas and/or possibilities and see beyond the obvious. The PLUS category is for positive aspects, or “pros” that could be considered; the “minus” category is for negative aspects or “cons” to be considered. The INTERESTING category may include neutral thoughts and ideas, additional considerations, and questions. This strategy works well when discussing books, articles, events, field trips, musical instruments or any other ideas that can be considered through the lens of plus, minus, and interesting aspects. Often the Interesting column leads to deeper insights and an understanding of the nuances inherent in each situation, event, or decision-making process.



FINAL THOUGHTS

All students can be taught to sharpen their critical and creative thinking skills and to become more independent and effective learners. Teachers who embed the nine thinking strategies into instruction will lay the foundation for developing better thinkers. They will also recognize potential in students who may not otherwise have the opportunity to demonstrate their advanced thinking. In a time when new information and research are challenging experts in each field to be flexible, work collaboratively, and think creatively, educators of gifted learners have an important contribution to make to this dialogue.





MEGT Foundation Grant Recipients

Cyre Beaumont, Buffalo, fund for a School Wide Maker Space

“The grant money I received from MEGT has had a huge impact on my students by bringing a technological aspect to our newly established makerspace. This has had the biggest impact on my students who are not especially inspired artistically and are craving a technological outlet for their creativity.”

Rick Halley, West St. Paul, funds for District Professional Development

“The generous professional development grant from MEGT, allowed District 197 to provide high-quality training to staff in the areas of instruction and social and emotional development as it implemented a new Total Schoolwide Cluster Model. ...It also allows District 197 to stay focused on consistent implementation of a co-teaching model, and ensure curriculum is taught with fidelity. District 197 has made the commitment to not only have a cluster teacher in each classroom, a gifted teacher is also present.”

Brian House, Austin, funds for Lego Walls in the Play Centers

“Thank you to the MEGT Foundation for the grant, the funding helped us to refurbish our Legos and complete our “Lego Wall” projects. These Lego stations motivate our gifted learners, along with all learners in our building, to showcase their creativity; perhaps developing skills that they may one day use as an artist, architect, or engineer!”

Robert Nosbush, Buffalo, funds for District Professional Development

“The money provided from MEGT allowed me to invite and expert speaker on the emotional needs of gifted students. This speaker was able to share knowledge with teachers, counselors and principals of the buildings where our Quest program is located. Fortunately it doesn’t just stop there! These educators then pass it on to all of the students.”

Julie Pink, Osseo, funds to attend the MEGT Conference

“The foundation grant afforded me an opportunity to attend the MEGT winter conference. After learning from the keynote speakers, pullout sessions and other conference participants, I left inspired and have already started to implement and share what I learned with my GE students and colleagues.”**Natalie Polaschek, Buffalo, funds for Chromebooks to create portfolios**

“The MEGT Foundation grant has allowed my students to have more access to technology in the classroom with the two new Chromebooks we have. They are able to collaborate better with each other, as well as experts in the fields we are studying. Students will continue to use this technology to add to their electronic portfolio throughout the year, to show their learning.”

Jackie Sliver, Brainerd, funds to attend the MEGT Conference

“...I took back to my school and classroom many strategies to help children with self-regulation and getting them ready to learn. I gained insight into helping children with test anxiety, not only for myself, but as a school what we should and should not do...It has definitely enriched me as a teacher and equipped me with strategies and tools to put in my teacher tool box.”



Images courtesy of House



MEGT Friend of the Gifted

Two esteemed colleagues in the gifted community were recipients of this year's "MEGT Friend of the Gifted" award. Author and director of NRich Consulting, Dr. Richard W. Cash and educational leader, Pam McDonald join the ranks of many gifted colleagues that have been recognized starting in 1997. Both recipients were honored at this year's MEGT state conference, receiving a plaque and a lifetime membership in the MEGT organization. A brief overview of the recipients' accomplishments and contributions for the advancement of gifted services in the state are outline below.



districts who seek to duplicate District 196's Young Scholar success. Pam also shares her wealth of knowledge through presentations at the MEGT conference, MCGT conference and the Minnesota Department of Education. Pam continually works to answer the question, "What is best for kids?" In addition to her leadership role she continues to spend part of her time teaching in the classroom, simply to stay in contact with children, and to ensure her perspective remains connected to her work on behalf of students.

Dr. Richard Cash

Richard Cash has worked in the field of education for over 25 years. His range of experience includes teaching, curriculum coordination, and program administration. He is an internationally recognized educational consultant, traveling throughout the United States as well as Europe, Asia and Canada. His areas of expertise are educational programming, rigorous and challenging curriculum design, differentiated instruction, 21st century skills, brain compatible classrooms, and self-regulated learning. Dr. Cash is the author of: **Advancing Differentiation: Thinking and Learning for the 21st Century** and winner of the Legacy Book Award for Outstanding Educators Publication, **Differentiation for Gifted Learners: Going Beyond the basics.** (co-author Diane Heacox) His newest book, **Self-Regulation in the Classroom: Teaching Students How to Learn** will be released in March 2016.

Image courtesy of MEGT

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

by Bill Keilty, Ed. D., MEGT Legislative Liaison

Revenue outdistances expenditures at the state level. Effort for a special session is no longer of interest to the governor or the legislature. Projections are down to a \$900M as a surplus and early childhood education is a priority for Governor Dayton. It will be an uphill challenge to convince schools across the state to embrace that policy. Talk of a mandate for gifted programming is not gaining any traction in St. Paul. But a determined group of parents, business leaders and

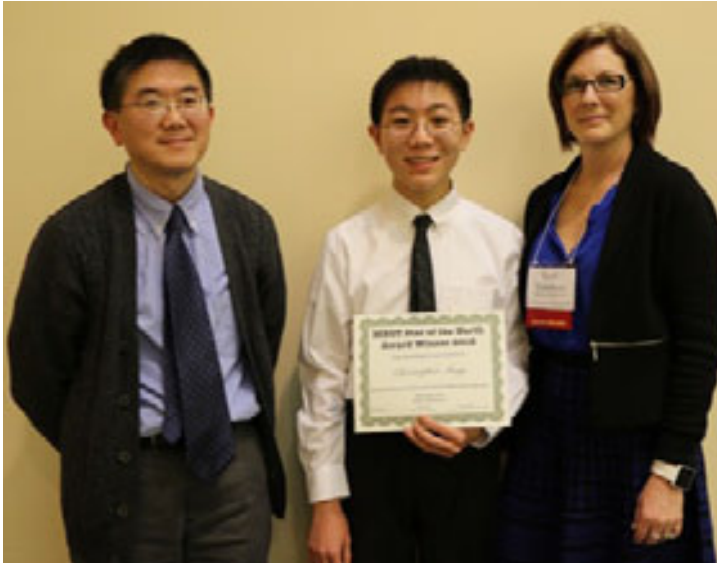
educators is working to develop such support. MEGT, MCGT and community leaders are working together to bring interested legislators together to begin the discussion surrounding the question of a mandate. There are over 80,000 gifted students in the Pre-K-12 Minnesota schools and a great majority of those students are underserved and unengaged. Watch for more updates and calls for action.

The new requirements in ESEA provide advocates opportunities to educate and advocate so that states and districts are able to implement these provisions as effectively as possible. The

new data requirement on the state report cards, asking that district staff report on all four quartiles will help us make the case that we are leaving many high-ability students behind; the Jacob Javits research (at \$11M) will continue to inform us about best classroom practices; and the Title II requirements will help move the needs of gifted students onto the agenda in all districts, many of which have not before offered professional learning on the topic. Thank Al Franken for his support of the Talent Act when your paths cross.



2015 MEGT Star of the North



Christopher Meng is pictured here with his father TC and MEGT Board member Lori Habben after receiving the 2015 MEGT Star of the North award.

Christopher Meng is the son of TC and Grace Meng. He attends 8th grade at Centennial Middle School in Lino Lakes, MN.

Christopher was nominated by his Gifted Resource teacher Mrs. Stephanie Roloff. Academic strengths for Christopher include participation in University of Minnesota Talented Youth Math Program (UMTYMP), Continental Math League, Word Masters and Future Problem Solving Program. (FPSP). Academic accomplishments along with participation in Student Council, the Arts and Music have helped to shape Christopher into the honorable, humble and caring person he is. During the MEGT Conference at Cragun's Resort in Brainerd, Christopher treated the conference attendees to a beautiful piano performance before accepting his MEGT Star of the North award. Christopher received a check from MEGT for \$500 along with a certificate for his achievements.

Congratulations Christopher!



2015 Star of the North Nominees:

Lauren Ehlers

Grade 8 from Buffalo Community Middle School. Buffalo, MN. Lauren was nominated by her teacher Kiz Gorham who wrote; "Lauren is all around, an impressive individual. Smart, involved, hard-working, humble, kind and respectful."

Riley Haugen

Grade 7 from Ellis Middle School, Austin, MN. Riley was nominated by David Wolff and Kaylene Jensen who wrote; "As a student Riley, regularly demonstrated 21st Century Skills of critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration."

Luke McGorry

Grade 8 from Buffalo Community Middle School, Buffalo, MN. Luke was nominated by; Natalie Polascheck, Wendy Whoitmore, Terri Svec, Eric Cagle, Teresa Kastendieck and Kiz Gorham. The team wrote: "Luke is a student who has not let the limitations of a school program prevent him from challenging himself academically". "He is a hard working student that has challenged all of his teachers to be the best they can be, and he always expects the best for himself."

Sydney Nute

Grade 7 from Buffalo Community Middle School, Buffalo, MN. Sydney was nominated by: Teresa Kastendieck, Wendy Whitmore, Natalie Polaschek, Eric Cagle, and Brandon Aldrich. Nomination Team Wrote: "Sydney is a hard working student that thrives academically and enjoys a wide variety of interests in her community. She has demonstrated her ability to continue to excel academically while participating in a variety of activities."

Olivia Thomes

Grade 6 from Buffalo Community Middle School, Buffalo, MN. Olivia was nominated by Marna McMurry who wrote: "Throughout the school year, each day Olivia would bound through our classroom door with a smile on her face, ready for each day with an excitement to learn, and intrinsic motivation to be challenged, a willingness and kind heart in helping others, and always asking me if there is anything she can do to help me."

Avery Thompson

Grade 5 from Parkside elementary School, Buffalo, MN. Avery was nominated by Melanie Olson who wrote: "As a teacher you always hope that your students will be inspired to take an idea and go further. Avery has gone above and beyond our expectations and is seen as an inspirational leader to the entire Quest program, her fellow students at Parkside Elementary School, and to our community."



News from Minnesota Department of Education

MDE Update 3/2/2016

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and Gifted Learners



The year 2015 ended with historic passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the legislation that revised and reauthorized the federal K-12 education law known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). For the first time, this law includes several provisions supporting gifted and talented students. ESSA/ESEA is the source for most federal K-12 education initiatives, such as Title I schools, accountability for student achievement, programs for English language learners, math-science partnerships and Title II professional development. Approximately \$21 billion in federal funds under ESEA are distributed to states and school districts each year through complex formulas based on student population and poverty and through individual grant programs. This reauthorization clearly articulates the availability of Title 1 funds to identify and serve gifted students and requires districts to define how they will use training dollars to prepare teachers for identifying and meeting the academic needs of

high-potential learners and performers. More importantly, the law requires school districts receiving the funds to address the unique needs of gifted learners. In the coming months information about how the new legislation is to be operationalized will be created by the federal government and the state of Minnesota. In the meantime, resources to help schools and advocates prepare for the new provisions related to gifted and talented learners are available through the [National Association for Gifted Children](#).

Hormel Foundation Gifted and Talented Education Symposium: June 13-16, 2016

The eighth annual Hormel Foundation Gifted and Talented Education Symposium will be held in Austin, Minnesota. Sessions will address best practices on the assessment of students for services, program models, social and emotional needs, instructional strategies, under-represented populations, under-achievement, integration of STEM and technology, and specific content in the areas of science, mathematics, language arts and social studies.

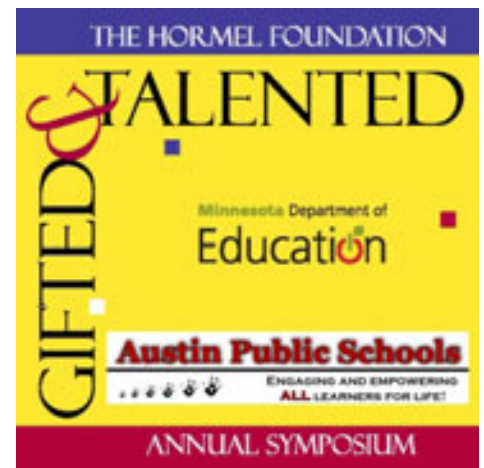
Symposium Keynoters are: Eric Karpinski; *Positive Psychologist on The Science of Happiness*, Maria Asp; *Children's Theater on Igniting Student Agency with Critical Thinking and Creativity in Classrooms*, M. RENÉ ISLA; *Executive Director of the National Association for Gifted Children on the Power of Policy and Advocacy*, and Anton Treuer; *Professor of Ojibwe at Bemidji State University and author on Equity, Culture & the "Achievement Gap"*

Pre-conference: *Executive Function: How It Affects Learning and Behavior inside the Classroom and at Home* will be presented by Patti Drapeau.

Leadership Academy (formerly Administrator Day): *The Science of Happiness Training and Leading with Positive Psychology* will be presented by Eric Karpinski.

[Visit Symposium web page](#) to learn about the General Symposium, Pre-Conference, Leadership Academy and much more.

Schools with calendars that limit full participation should contact Wendy Behrens to explore registration options. wendy.behrens@state.mn.us





Project North Star



In 2015 the US Department of Education made 3 5-year demonstration grant awards to develop and expand models serving students who are underrepresented in gifted and talented programs. Eight states also received state grants that will support schools and teachers in the identification of, and provision of services to, gifted and talented students (including economically disadvantaged individuals, individuals with limited English proficiency, and individuals with disabilities) who may not be identified and served through traditional assessment methods.

The Minnesota Department of Education was awarded a grant to implement *Project North Star* designed to elevate the identification and programming approaches provided for disadvantaged and underserved rural populations by preparing their teachers, school administrators, and communities with the knowledge and skills their gifted students need to be successful in the greater world. Selected treatment schools represent state poverty centers as well as locations of American Indian Reservation Schools or schools with high populations of American Indians. The project design includes developing two-year professional development training modules and supporting materials for teachers, school leaders, and parent/community.

A field tested Educator Growth Indicator system will be developed to determine the effectiveness of the professional development modules as well as to document application of learning in respective schools or districts. Project North Star's research design is quasi-experimental with some elements of pre-experimental design. Evaluation data and analysis will measure and examine: (1) teacher growth, (2) school/district leader growth; (3) parent/community growth; and (4) student growth. *Project North Star* will disseminate project results locally and nationally. Schools selected for treatment will be announced later this spring.

Contact Project Manager Cori Paulet at cori@quasma.com or Project Director Wendy Behrens at wendy.behrens@state.mn.us for more information.

Student Opportunities

Scholars of Distinction Award Program

New quality standards, rules and regulations for the project submission were adopted last summer to address eligibility/limitations; collaboration/team projects; project submission format requirements; and procedures. Applicable to all applications the new requirements clarify program expectations and help verify the authenticity of student work. Students for the current award cycle submitted their applications by March 7th. Applications will be read and scored by teams of experts during the month of April and awardees recognized on May 14th. The Scholars of Distinction Award Ceremony is open to the public and will be held at 1:00 p.m. in the auditorium at the Perpich Center for Arts Education. [Learn more](#) about the Scholars of Distinction Award program.

Jack Lent Cooke Young Scholars Program

The Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Young Scholars Program offers a unique pre-college scholarship and advising program to high-achieving, low-income students. Young Scholars receive high school and college counseling, funding for summer and extracurricular academic programs, access to internships and study abroad opportunities, and other educational resources including books and technology. The Cooke Foundation also provides comprehensive support to help them gain admission to the top colleges and universities in the country with merit- and need-based aid. The application is be open through April 14, 2016. www.jkcf.org/ctd



Materials Camp at University of Minnesota: June 14-17

A four day commuter camp located on the University of Minnesota campus, Department of Chemical Engineering and Materials Science (CEMS) is intended for high school students entering their junior or senior year in the fall. Students must be inquisitive learners with strong math and science aptitude interested in a hands-on learning experience on the principles of materials engineering. Students receive FREE meals, tuition, knowledge and entertainment. The two part application process includes a student application and a teacher endorsement via online forms prior to March 31st. Forms are available at:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/camp-student>

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/camp-teacher>

Applications will be reviewed by practicing engineers. Criteria for selection includes motivation, basic knowledge of algebra, chemistry, and a personal statement.

For more information visit: <http://www.mnasm.org/camp>



Program Spotlight: Shakopee Public Schools

Erin Heilman, High Potential and Innovative Programs Coordinator, Shakopee Public Schools

The Shakopee High Potential Services program exists to ensure that our gifted and talented students are properly identified and appropriately challenged in order to maximize their potential. Shakopee Public Schools seeks to value and respect the uniqueness of each student and attempts to meet each individual's educational needs on an ongoing basis. We are in the process of currently expanding our program and partnerships to better meet the needs of our students, families and staff. Currently our program personalizes learning for students whose academic needs fit into various categories, including:

- Gifted & Talented
- High Performing
- Young Scholars (joint partnership with our office of Excellence With Equity)

Our priority is to recognize and identify these students, commit to meeting their needs, and try to maximize their academic performance and future opportunities. We service a variety of students in a number of ways from kindergarten through twelfth grade and are constantly seeking to hone our craft and do more to help our students and staff better meet the needs of all learners.

Our newest program, Young Scholars, was launched this fall to service our kindergarten through second grade students from populations that are typically underserved in the field of gifted education. We have adopted a push in and pull out model for Young Scholars programming so all students can benefit from creative and critical thinking opportunities. Our kindergarten through second grade staff has been so positive about the addition of Young Scholars programming. It is exciting to see the partnership that has formed with our Young Scholars staff. We also offer pull out services for identified Young Scholars in first and second grade. Our students and their families have been so excited and positive about the new learning opportunities.

High Potential Services have continued this year for qualifying second through fifth graders. Our second and third grade groups meet every other day with an enrichment focus to enhance the reading and math general curriculum. Our fourth and fifth grade students receive daily reading and math instruction instead of being in their typical classroom grade level setting. Our reading program for upper elementary utilizes literature circles, Socratic Seminar, critical questioning and fosters deeper thinking with higher-level texts appropriate for these students. Our fourth and

fifth grade math students are taught in a compacted fourth-sixth grade curriculum, so that students leave fifth grade ready to take pre-algebra and, in some cases, students also test out and double accelerate into algebra as sixth graders. Our families and staff love working as the full-replacement reading and math teachers for these qualifying students and the depth and complexity they can accomplish.

With our High School addition set to open in 2018 with an academies focus, this is an exciting time as we rethink and reimagine what school can look like. We are in the process of creating truly accelerated English sixth and English ninth grade courses next school year, as well as offering AP Physics to all ninth graders. We are continuing to look at what further programming we can put into place for our gifted middle school students in addition to the accelerated courses we offer.

Another exciting new focus and program Shakopee will be offering is a full day, full week, gifted focused summer course. Shakopee S.T.E.E.L. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Enrichment, and Language) has been designed with our gifted students in mind, but will be open to all students who are passionate about pursuing these areas of focus. Students have the option to enroll for a morning and/or afternoon session and can bring a bag lunch to spend a full day engaged in exciting programming. We will have courses including:

- Summer Robotics Challenge using VEX IQ robotics and our Shakopee Robotics team will facilitate
- Hardware Engineering—get wired with Makey Makey
- Beats Poetry: poetry writing and Taiko drumming
- Interactive Creative Writing and Mask Making
- Introduction to Spanish Language and Culture
- Aeronautics with Drones

Although many changes are occurring, it is exciting to be in a district where the philosophy has become one where students will have a guaranteed floor of content but no ceiling, and we remove the barriers and allow students to accelerate and personalize their learning. Keep an eye on the things yet to come, it is an exciting time for students in Shakopee.



Developing Talents through Authentic Experiences

By Erin Broviak, Assistant Principal on Special Assignment
CTE, CTECH, College and Career Readiness
Rochester Public Schools

Rochester Public Schools is excited to announce the opening of The Career and Technical Education Center at Heintz (CTECH) in the fall of 2016. CTECH will be a place for students to engage in hands-on learning experiences that are aligned to academic and industry standards. CTECH will meet the needs of an individual learner's interest area to provide coursework that aligns with a student's personalized learning plan. Seven career and academic pathways have been identified with the help of our community. The pathways that have been chosen through collaborative work with our supportive community partners, Rochester Public Schools and Rochester Community and Technical College are aligned with the current gap and foreseeable workforce needs of our local employers. Students pursuing education and training in one of the pathways would have many opportunities for employment upon completion of high school, certification, or post-secondary education.



Within each of these career fields there is room for a broad range of employment. There are opportunities for students at an entry level, completion of an Associate's or Bachelor's degree, as well as for students that wish to pursue a professional degree. The employment opportunities in these career fields have been identified by our region as well as our state and the nation.

CTECH is a place for all students. We have designed our coursework and pathways to meet the needs of three types of learners. First, CTECH will engage learners that have identified an interest and an area they wish to pursue in the future. While at CTECH, students will have the opportunity to specialize in an area and get

to a deeper level of understanding and learning. Within most pathways, there is a capstone course where students will design their final project that culminates their learning throughout the pathway. CTECH will also be a place for students that wish to explore their options while in high school. By exploring coursework within a variety of pathways, students may be able to identify their likes, dislikes and what they hope to pursue in their post-secondary education or training. Last, CTECH hopes to engage students that wish to go from high school directly to the workforce. Students will have gained necessary, entry level skills to gain employment in one of the pathways. Students would participate in further on-the-job training directly with their employer.

CTECH will provide a unique learning experience for many students. We continue to plan and prepare for the opening of a new school facility and are very excited for the opportunities it will afford our students and region.

To learn more about CTECH, please check out our website: <http://www.ctech.rochester.k12.mn.us/>

Students will have the option to explore coursework in the following seven academic and career pathways:

- **Agriculture:** Plant and animal science, biotechnology, food and natural resources
- **Construction:** Residential construction and exploration of the industry trades
- **Engineering:** Principles of engineering, design, and robotics
- **Health and Biomedical Science:** Medical careers and PLTW Biomedical Science Pathway
- **Hospitality:** Tourism, hotel and restaurant management, culinary arts
- **Information Technology:** Fundamentals of programming, security, networking and coding, and software engineering
- **Manufacturing:** Computer integrated manufacturing, welding, and machining

Image courtesy of E. Broviak



MEGT Conference Reflections: From Two Different Lenses

By Rachael Schweigert, K-2 Young Scholar Teacher, Shakopee Public Schools &
Erin Heilman, High Potential and Innovative Programs Coordinator, Shakopee Public Schools

Rachael: Attending the MEGT conference in Brainerd this year, proved to be a valuable experience both in professional development and in networking with other educators. As a Young Scholars educator, and first time attendee of the MEGT conference, I gained valuable insight not only from the pre-conference sessions about creativity, but the informative guest speakers and the breakout sessions as well.

The pre-conference session was hands-on and entertaining. The session titled "Creativity is Contagious, Pass It On," introduced several engaging activities teachers can implement with students. As an educator, I always appreciate attending an engaging session that doesn't consist of a lecture and note-taking, and this definitely was engaging. My co-workers and I were challenged to cut a piece of paper in a way that we could fit inside of it, and we were successful. We also successfully used paper cups and cardboard and made a platform strong enough for us to stand on without toppling over. Overall, we walked away with several creative low cost activities, which we could use in the classroom "tomorrow."



Erin: From a program coordinator's perspective, this is the third year in a row that I have attended the preconference. I was impressed yet again at all the great content that they fit into a short amount of time and how I always walk away with new ideas that I could apply right away. You get a lot of "bang for your buck" for the preconference and I always plan to bring my staff to this part of the conference in the future.

Rachael: The keynote speakers, Richard Cash and Susan Daniels, had very informative presentations. One of Cash's presentations highlighted how to help students be successful in the classroom, and focused on mindfulness and presented ways to incorporate that into the classroom. Daniels focused on creativity, and ways to implement divergent thinking into the classroom. Both speakers presented useful strategies to promote mindfulness and creativity.

Erin: I have to say that our whole team especially loved Dr. Cash's presentation that discussed different learning/personality styles like "paperclips, magnifying glasses, Slinkys, and teddy bears." It became a valuable talking point for all of us and helped us as a team know our strengths and styles even more. We also now refer to each other by these titles at times and get a good laugh out of that.

Rachael: I really enjoyed the breakout sessions. One breakout session that proved valuable was titled "Promoting Understanding and Supporting the Mental Health Needs of Gifted Students" presented by Andrea Johnson. She discussed

ways in which the gifted students are misdiagnosed, and misunderstood, and ways to support them. Johnson suggested teaching mindfulness to students to help them cope with stress, anxiety, and perfectionism. Breathing strategies, as simple as taking deep breaths during testing, can help. Teachers could even earn a mental health credit for attending the session.

Another opportunity for professional development was offered through Hamline University. Participants had the opportunity to complete a journal throughout the conference, and earn 2 graduate credits. Those two credits could also be applied toward the 12 credit Gifted Education Certificate offered through the university.

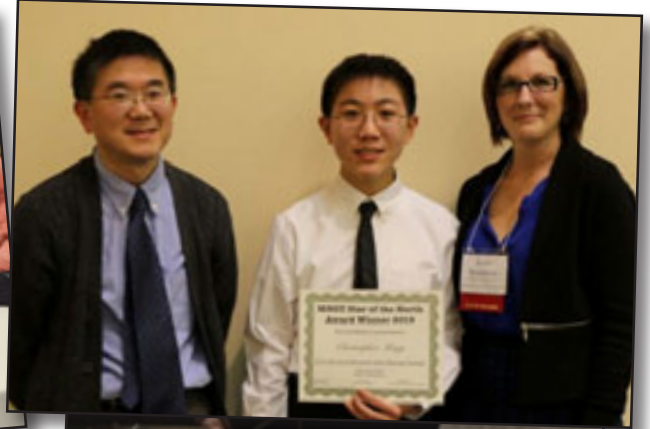
Erin: I love that there is always such a great variety of breakout sessions to meet different needs. There is always a mental health component with a gifted lens that is so helpful, especially for staff newer to the field. There are also great technology integration sessions, sessions on current legislation that impacts us (especially with the new ESSA legislation), and wonderful opportunities for staff and coordinators to learn from each other and network as well.

Rachael: Along with all the valuable knowledge gained in the sessions, was the opportunity to connect with other educators

continued on page 19



MEGT Conference





MEGT Conference Reflections *continued from page 18*

throughout the state. There were also opportunities to learn more from each other during the less formal social hours. After all, who better knows the gifted students like the teachers who teach them. It was fascinating to learn about all the various programs, services, and creative funding used throughout the state to support our gifted students. Some Gifted and Young Scholars programs are brand new in districts, while others have been long established. Either end of the spectrum, we all had so much to learn from one another. It is comforting to know we are all in this together, finding ways to continually strive for excellence in the field of gifted education. Not only is the conference a great way to reflect, renew, and recharge as an educator, but a great learning experience for teachers who are

newly entering the gifted teaching world. I would recommend the MEGT conference to any gifted educator.

Erin: As a staff member I always enjoyed speaking to other gifted educators in similar roles, building connections and resources. As a new program coordinator this year I also really appreciated the welcome I received from fellow program coordinators and all the people reaching out to be resources.

Another take-away is the team building that occurs at an event like the MEGT Conference. Being able to attend keynotes and certain breakout sessions together, discuss and think about future planning together is such a powerful opportunity for a team.

Coding, Computer Science and Kindergarten

By Jessica Cabeen, Principal Woodson Kindergarten Center, Austin Minnesota

Introducing computer science at the kindergarten level gives students the foundational skills that will help nurture creativity and problem-solving skills, and prepare students for any future career. Knowing this information we have started a Coding Club at the Woodson Kindergarten Center.



This class helps support learning occurring in the classrooms through high interest materials and subject areas. Students in coding club learn to: create solutions for problems, collaborate with others, read and interpret visual information, reflect on learning while students use critical thinking skills to plan and conduct research, manage projects, solve problems, and make informed decisions using appropriate digital tools and resources.



Teachers and family members can access our blog to see the weekly lesson plans and pictures to see what kinds of learning is occurring during the class and how they can help support and encourage this learning throughout the week. We also use Twitter and

the hashtag #PackInTrain to post pictures of the cool things kids are doing in our class and as a way to collaborate and network with other elementary school kids using this technology. So far students have been exposed to BeeBot, Coding Apps, and Sphero. During the spring we will also explore Kodable, Hopscotch and Lightbot via code.org as other resources.

So how has it been going? Excellent! Students are so excited each week for their class to start. During conferences parents were able to come in and 'try out' the robots for themselves. Parents reported that their child is excited about what they are learning at school and extending some of that learning to their home setting. One student has even created her own robot at home using pop cans and other materials around the house.

Our goal in creating these opportunities is to give our children the permission to be in the driver's seat of their own learning. This approach to learning allows educators to not have all the answers-but instead to have deep questions to extend, expand, and inspire learning. If you are interested in learning more about what we are doing please check out our blog at <https://packersintraining.wordpress.com/category/woodson-coding-club/>

Keep Dreaming BIG for our Littlest Learners!

Images courtesy of Cabeen and Bing Images



Coaching: Serving Athletes and Teachers

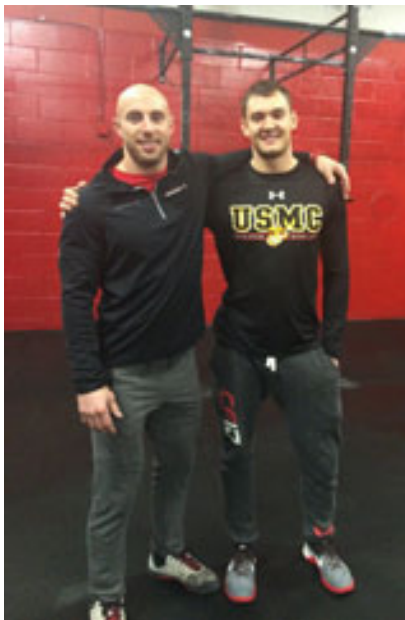
By David Wolff, District Coordinator of Gifted & Talented Services, Austin, MN

A year ago, I found myself at a crossroads in my journey to improve my fitness wellbeing. For years I had been running but grew bored of the isolation and less motivated to push myself. That is when I found CrossFit Innerdrive. For the past nine months CrossFit Innerdrive has not only improved my physical wellbeing but also my emotional, spiritual, and occupational wellbeing.



You read that correctly. CrossFit - a "varied high-intensity functional fitness" that requires its athletes to develop strength, flexibility, and endurance through a numerous movements - has helped me a better educator and Instructional Coach too! On the eve of one of my coaches departing for basic training for the Marines, I reflect on the lessons my coaches, Bryce Becker and Will Kozelsky [pictured to the right], have taught me about coaching teachers.

- Modeling – before each WOD [Workout of the Day] my CrossFit coaches model the moves that will be used throughout the WOD to reinforce the neurological movements patterns our brains and muscles make [muscle memory]. In the same fashion, Instructional Coaches must model best practices in instruction whenever we consult, collaborate, or coach our teaching staff. Practice makes Permanent!



- Collaboration – throughout the WOD, no one works in isolation. Although the focus is on individual growth, success is only accomplished when you fully rely on the expertise and experience of others. In our schools, we must ensure our teachers have opportunities to observe each other and have time to productively

work together toward a common goal.

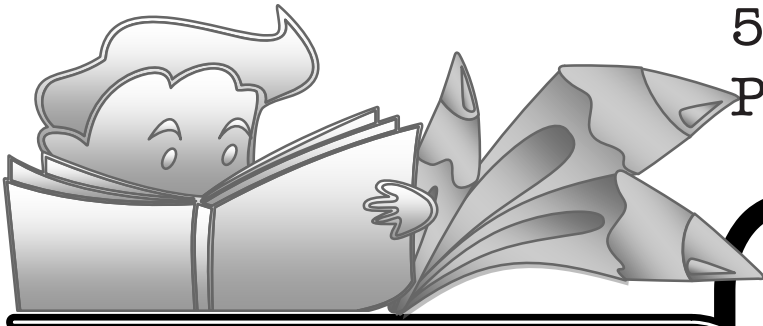
- Encouragement – CrossFit is hard, I will not lie. If I were given these challenges to complete on my own, I would give up. It is only when I hear one of my coaches encouraging me to push to and through the challenge can I walk away and say, "I did that!" As instructional coaches, we must remember that our teachers need our encouragement throughout the learning process. They need someone to say, "Job well done!" when they are second guessing themselves or nervous to try something new.
- Growth Mindset – Just as in teaching, there isn't an 'end point' in CrossFit. There is always something for everyone to learn – you just have to be willing to be teachable, learn new things, and refine mastered skills.
- Data-Driven – There is a great deal of research that is put into a well-crafted WOD. My coaches know how to properly build strength, flexibility, and endurance while keeping each athlete safe. Athletes track their progress so that we can use the data to inform our decisions about weight and frequency. Instructional coaches work in a similar fashion emphasizing that instructional decisions within the classroom, like flexible grouping and enrichment groups, or school-wide decisions like making clusters need to be based on data.
- Differentiation – just as instructional coaches differentiate our approaches with each teacher to meet their individual needs and teachers differentiate for individual student learning needs, my CrossFit coaches modify and individualize the WODs so that each person is successful no matter level of expertise or experience.
- Reflective – I've learned that recovery time, sleep, and nutrition are important so that my body can repair and take care of itself after a workout. Teachers need that same time to reflect on newly learned skills and concepts so the application process may begin.

If you are in Austin for fun or business, drop by the 'box' and find a similar experience at CrossFit Innerdrive. <http://app.crossfitterdrive.com/>
Image Courtesy of Wolff



5 – Minute Professional Development!

David Wolff, david.wolff@austin.k12.mn.us



Gifted 203: Complexity and Difficulty: What is the Difference???

Complexity and Difficulty are two different mental functions but often referred to synonymously.

Complexity

...describes the THOUGHT PROCESS that the brain uses to deal with information. Bloom's Taxonomy can be used to describe various levels of complexity.

Complexity allows students to complete the same task but the problems are more complex. The workload remains similar but the cognitive challenge is increased.

Difficulty

...describes the AMOUNT OF EFFORT that the learner uses within a level of complexity to complete the objective.

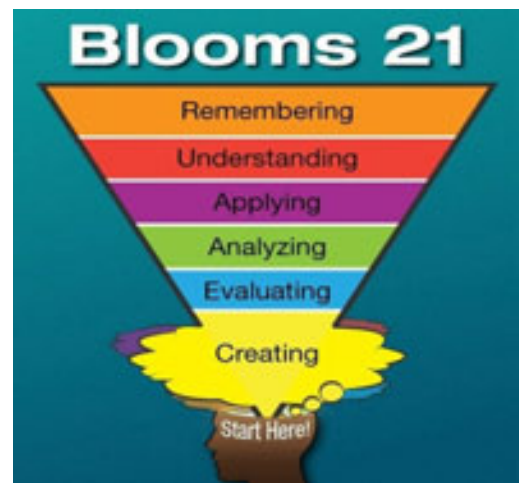
Difficulty requires students to complete more tasks. The workload is increased without the cognitive challenge.

Example:

"Name the states in the Midwest Region," is at the knowledge level of complexity. Changing the task to, "Name the states in the Midwest Region and their capital cities." Is also at the knowledge level but is more difficult because it involves for effort to recall more information.

Strategies to Increase Complexity to a task:

1. Manipulate information, don't just echo it
2. Extend the concept to other areas
3. Integrate more than one subject or skill
4. Increase the number of variables that must be considered; incorporate more facets
5. Demonstrate higher level thinking
6. Remove scaffolding
7. Use or apply content/skills in situations not yet experienced
8. Work with advanced resources
9. Add an unexpected element to the process or product
10. Work independently
11. Reframe a topic under a new theme
12. Identify misconceptions within something



Reference:
Sousa, D. Complexity and Difficulty from How the Brain Learns. Pg. 258-260.

Schroeder-Davis, S. (2012) Gifted Services presentation. Austin, MN.



"Of course kids these days are overweight. The backpack adds 30 pounds!"



Gifted Education Provisions in Final Version of ESEA – the Every Student Succeeds Act

(page #s refer to "[FINAL conference report](#)" dated Nov 30, 2015)

TITLE I – Improving Academic Achievement of Disadvantaged Students

Disaggregation of student achievement data at each achievement level on state & local report cards

Sec. 1111. State Plans (p 38)

(h)(1)(C) minimum requirements for state report cards (p 115)

(ii) **For all students and disaggregated by each subgroup of students** described in subsection (b)(2)(B)(xi), homeless status, status as a child in foster care, and status as a student with a parent who is a member of the Armed Forces (as defined in section 101(a)(4) of title 10, United States Code) on active duty (as defined in section 101(d)(5) of such title), information on student achievement on the academic assessments described in subsection (b)(2) **at each level of achievement**, as determined by the State under subsection (b)(1). (pp 117-118)

(h)(2)(C) Local Education Agency Report Cards Minimum requirements (same as required for state report cards) (p 125)

Local Education Agency Plans may include information specifically about identifying and serving gifted and talented students

Sec. 1112. Local Education Agency Plans (p 131)

(b) Plan Provisions (p 134)

(13) any other information on how the local educational agency proposes to use funds to meet the purposes of this part, and that the local educational agency determines appropriate to provide, **which may include** how the local educational agency will—

(A) assist schools in identifying and serving gifted and talented students;
(p138)

States using computer adaptive assessments

Sec. 1111(b) Challenging academic standards and academic assessments (p 47)

(b)(2) Academic assessments (p 52)

(b)(2)(J) Adaptive Assessments (pp 73-76)



(J) ADAPTIVE ASSESSMENTS.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—Subject to clause (ii), a State retains the right to develop and administer computer adaptive assessments as the assessments described in this paragraph, provided the computer adaptive assessments meet the requirements of this paragraph, except that—

(I) subparagraph (B)(i) shall not be interpreted to require that all students taking the computer adaptive assessment be administered the same assessment items; and

(II) such assessment—

(aa) shall measure, at a minimum, each student's academic proficiency based on the challenging State academic standards for the student's grade level and growth toward such standards; and

(bb) may measure the student's level of academic proficiency and growth using items above or below the student's grade level, including for use as part of a State's accountability system under subsection (c).

(ii) STUDENTS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT COGNITIVE DISABILITIES AND ENGLISH LEARNERS.—In developing and administering computer adaptive assessments—

(I) as the assessments allowed under subparagraph (D), a State shall ensure that such computer adaptive assessments—

(aa) meet the requirements of this paragraph, including subparagraph (D), except such assessments shall not be required to meet the requirements of clause (i)(II); and

(bb) assess the student's academic achievement to measure, in the subject being assessed, whether the student is performing at the student's grade level; and

(II) as the assessments required under subparagraph (G), a State shall ensure that such computer adaptive assessments—

(aa) meet the requirements of this paragraph, including sub-paragraph (G), except such assessment shall not be required to meet the requirements of clause (i)(II); and

(bb) assess the student's language proficiency, which may include growth towards such proficiency, in order to measure the student's acquisition of English.

Sec. 1201(a) State Assessment Grants authorized (p 206)

(L) Evaluating student academic achievement through the development of comprehensive academic assessment instruments (such as performance and technology-based academic assessments, computer adaptive assessments, projects, or extended performance task assessments) that emphasize the mastery of standards and aligned competencies in a competency-based education model.

(p 209)



Title II – Professional Development

Including needs of gifted learners required in state Title II plans

Sec. 2101 Formula Grants to States (p 308)

(d)(2) (p 326)) State Application Contents: Each application described under paragraph (1) **shall include** the following:

(J) A description of how the State educational agency will improve the skills of teachers, principals, or other school leaders in order to **enable them to identify** students with specific learning needs, particularly children with disabilities, English learners, **students who are gifted and talented**, and students with low literacy levels, **and provide instruction based on the needs of such students.**

(p 328)

Local education agencies including needs of gifted learners with Title II funds

Sec. 2103. Local Uses of Funds (p 335)

(b)(2) Types of **required** activities (p 336)

(b) TYPES OF ACTIVITIES.—The programs and activities described in this subsection—

(2) **shall address** the learning needs of all students, including children with disabilities, English learners, and **gifted and talented students**; and

(b)(3)Types of **permissible** activities (p 336)

(3) may include, among other programs and activities—

(J) providing training to support the identification of students who are gifted and talented, including high-ability students who have not been formally identified for gifted education services, and implementing instructional practices that support the education of such students, such as—

- (i) early entrance to kindergarten;
- (ii) enrichment, acceleration, and curriculum compacting activities; and
- (iii) dual or concurrent enrollment programs in secondary school and postsecondary education;

(p 343)

Title IV: 21st Century Schools

Subpart 4 – Academic Enrichment (p 625)

Sec. 4644 Supporting High-Ability Learners and Learning.

Javits Gifted & Talented Students Education Act (pp 636 – 642)

For further information about the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), visit the NAGC website. For additional questions, contact Jane Clarenbach, NAGC Director of Public Education at janec@nagc.org.



National Association for Gifted Children
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Questions and Answers about the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Q: What is the ESSA?

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is the name of the 2015 legislation that revised and reauthorized the federal K-12 education law known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). Prior to passage of ESSA, the law was referred to by the moniker No Child Left Behind.

ESSA/ESEA is the source of most federal K-12 education initiatives, such as Title I schools, accountability for student achievement, programs for English language learners, math-science partnerships, and Title II professional development. Approximately \$21 billion in federal funds under ESEA is distributed to the states and school districts each year through complex formulas based on student population and poverty and through individual grant programs.

Q: Is there anything in ESSA relevant to gifted and talented students?

Yes. ESSA retained the Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program, which was part of the prior ESEA, and added new provisions that address data collection and reporting, use of professional development funds, use of Title I funds, and computer adaptive assessments.

Q: Is anything required of states related to gifted and talented students?

Yes. There are two new requirements:

- On the state report cards: States must include student achievement data at each achievement level that is disaggregated by student subgroup (e.g., low-income, race, English learners, gender, and students with disabilities). Previously, states provided detailed information for students performing at the proficient level and below. Now, states also will have to include information on students achieving at the advanced level.
- In applying for Title II professional development funds, states must include information about how they plan to improve the skills of teachers and other school leaders that will enable them to identify gifted and talented students and provide instruction based on the students' needs.



Q: Is anything required of districts related to gifted and talented students?

Yes. There are two new requirements:

- Districts (“local education agencies” in ESSA) must collect, disaggregate, and report their student achievement data at each achievement level, as the states are required to do.
- Districts that receive Title II professional development funds must use the money to address the learning needs of all students. ESSA specifically says that “all students” includes gifted and talented students.

Q: What about the Javits program?

The Javits program, which has been operating since 1988, was retained in ESSA. The program focuses grant funds on identifying and serving students who are traditionally underrepresented in gifted and talented programs, particularly minority, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, and children with disabilities in order to help reduce gaps in achievement and to encourage the establishment of equal educational opportunities for all students. In addition, the Javits program funds a national research center on gifted education and when funding permits, also funds grants to states to improve the ability of elementary and secondary schools to meet the special educational needs of gifted and talented students. As with other grant programs, Congress must provide funding for the Javits program each year. Information about the current group of grantees is available on the NAGC website.

Q: What else is noteworthy in ESSA?

There are several other provisions in ESSA that support gifted and talented students:

- For the first time, ESSA specifically notes that districts may use Title I funds to identify and serve gifted and talented students.
- ESSA now allows states to use computer adaptive assessments as the format for state assessments used for accountability purposes and authorizes grant funding to states to develop such assessments.
- Districts may use their Title II professional development funds to provide training on gifted education-specific instructional practices, such as enrichment, acceleration, and curriculum compacting.

Q: When do the new provisions go into effect?

The 2016-2017 school year is a big transition year. Applications for Title I and other formula grants will begin July 1, 2016; other federal grant programs will go into effect in October 2016. State accountability plans will go into effect in the 2017-2018 school year.

For more information on ESSA, visit the legislation update section of the NAGC website. Contact Jane Clarenbach, NAGC Director of Public Education, with questions. janec@nagc.org or 202-785-4268.



Mid-West Summer Camp Opportunities:

Purdue University's GERI Summer Camps
<http://www.geri.education.purdue.edu/>
West Lafayette, Indiana
Camps for students completing grades 5-12

Macalester College's MITY Camps
<http://www.mity.org/>
St. Paul, Minnesota
Camp for students entering grades 5-11

Northwestern University's CTD's summer camp
http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/program_type/summer-programs
Evanston, Illinois and the Greater Chicago Area
Camp for students ages 4 through students completing grade 12

Iowa State University's summer camp
<http://www.opptag.iastate.edu/summer/index.php>
Ames, Iowa
Camp for students entering grades 3-11

University of Wisconsin-Madison's WCATY Camps
www.wcaty.wisc.edu
Madison, Wisconsin
Camp for students grades 4-12

Concordia College's summer Language Village camps
<http://www.concordialanguagevillages.org/youth-village-life>
Bemidji, Minnesota and other Minnesota locations
Camp for students and families

Carleton College's Summer Academic Programs
<http://apps.carleton.edu/summer/>
Northfield, Minnesota
Camp for students in grades 10-12

North Dakota Governor's Schools
<http://www.ndsu.edu/govschool>
Fargo, North Dakota
Camp for students in grades 11-12

South Dakota Governor's Camp
<http://www.usd.edu/education/gifted-camp/sd-governors-camp.cfm>
Vermillion, South Dakota
Camp for students in grades 7-9

South Dakota Ambassadors of Excellence Program
<http://www.usd.edu/education/gifted-programs/ambassadors-of-excellence-program>
Vermillion, South Dakota
Camp for students in grades 10-12



Image courtesy of Bing Images

Position Papers

MEGT has a wealth of resources at your fingertips! On the MEGT website, www.mnegt.org, you will find fifteen position papers authored by practitioners in the field of gifted education and members of MEGT.

Traditionally, a new position paper is authored each year to state the organization's position on a topic. As fifteen years have passed, it was decided to update the research and strategies on the oldest position papers.

This year, MEGT updated "Young Gifted Learners, Ages 3-8" (2000, 2016) and "Gifted Learners in Rural Settings, PK-12" (2001, 2016).

If you are interested in being part of the process authoring and updating position papers, please contact Lisa Worden or any of the board members to express your interest!



Responding to the Needs of Young Gifted Learners, Ages 3-8

*A Position Statement of the
Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented (MEGT)
www.mnegt.org*

Purpose

Developmentally precocious young learners are found within all cultures, as well as all socioeconomic, racial, linguistic, and ethnic groups. These children have accelerated developmental rates and corresponding needs which must be recognized and addressed if they are to be provided with appropriate and equitable programming. Teachers, parents and caregivers must respond to young gifted learners' cognitive and affective differences to help them reach their full potential. Schools in particular, need to offer curricular interventions and program services that nurture the development of precocious young learners. The purpose of this position paper is to acknowledge the unique needs of young gifted learners. The goal is to encourage those who interact with these children to provide cognitively appropriate challenges and affective support on a consistent basis.

Characteristics

Teachers and learners need help recognizing potential and the factors that distinguish precocious development which places children out of sync with expected developmental stages. Young gifted learners may demonstrate some or all of the following behaviors earlier and to a higher degree when compared to their chronological age peers. Researchers most frequently cite the following traits as indicative of precocity:

Cognitive Characteristics

- Early language acquisition
- Wide knowledge base
- Exceptional curiosity and a heightened sense of wonder
- Provocative and penetrating questioning behavior
- Intrigue with big ideas
- Tenacity and passion for specific areas of interest
- Intuitive thinking
- Capacity to think creatively and to problem solve effectively
- Preference for complexity and novelty

Social/Emotional Characteristics

- Heightened sense of empathy and social justice
- Tolerance for ambiguity
- Subtle or sophisticated sense of humor
- Heightened response to sensory input
- Early awareness of differences
- Leadership skills
- Perfectionistic tendencies

Concerns and Recommendations

The following research-based guidelines are intended to help adults nurture the talents of young gifted learners.

Frequently, typical grade level curricula does not address the cognitive needs of young gifted learners, which leads to student lack of engagement in the learning environment. Young gifted learners need to be provided with a developmentally appropriate and intellectually challenging curriculum. This recommendation can be met through the use of a variety of instructional strategies, including curricular or grade acceleration, individual learning plans, early entrance to kindergarten, and grouping practices. The curriculum should stimulate, inspire and challenge children's thinking.



Young gifted learners may not reach their creative potential without the intentional delivery of an appropriately engaging environment. These learners need to be provided with playful, exploratory experiences that allow for problem-based, creative and critical thinking opportunities. These include meaningful, intriguing and interest-based experiences and activities.

The advanced development of young gifted children may result in emotional sensitivity, social isolation, perfectionism, fear of risk taking, or anxiety. These learners need to be provided with opportunities to spend time with intellectual peers for support and affirmation of their uniqueness and strengths as well as opportunities to interact with adults who help them develop social skills and coping strategies.

Characteristics of young gifted learners occasionally manifest as behaviors that may be construed as negative. Those who work with these children need to understand the complex nature of the characteristics of the gifted. This understanding will lead to a focus on the child's strengths, parent/teacher collaboration, the development of social skills, and cognitive challenge. Adults then are able to guide students whose precocity may be perceived negatively toward a more positive perception.

Educational personnel lack an understanding of the needs of gifted students.

Teachers, parents, and caregivers who serve young gifted learners need to be provided with professional development that addresses the needs of this unique population. The professional development experiences should include information about the wide range of developmental abilities and interests of this population and also focus on how to address students' individual needs rather than base decisions on students' chronological age. Workshops, online coursework, conferences, and online readings provide resources to teachers to assist in their capacity to engage the young gifted learner.

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National Association for Gifted Children Position Paper on Early Childhood
www.nagc.org/about-nagc/nagc-position-statements-white-papers

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*Originally released 2000
Updated February 2016*



Responding to the Needs of Gifted Learners in Rural Settings, PK–12

A Position Statement of the Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented (MEGT)

www.mnegt.org

Purpose

Of the over five million people living in Minnesota, the vast majority live in the seven county metro area or other urban centers throughout the state. Gifted students who live in rural areas in Minnesota are often isolated from their gifted peers and have access to fewer resources than students in larger urban and suburban districts. The purpose of this paper is to acknowledge the challenges of educating gifted students in a rural setting and to ensure that the cognitive and affective needs of all gifted learners are appropriately and consistently addressed.

Concerns

All gifted learners deserve rigorous and challenging programs and services. The following may be barriers in rural settings for meeting student needs.

With the majority of rural districts having student bodies of less than 1000, rural schools often have a small number of gifted learners spread across grade levels. Districts are pressed to allocate resources and time to create sufficiently challenging curricula for these small numbers of students. Additionally, interaction with intellectual peers is vital to both the academic and social-emotional growth of gifted learners. In rural schools, gifted students may lack access to intellectual peers.

Rural districts may have fewer educators with knowledge of or specialized training in gifted education. Research has shown there exists amongst rural educators a general misunderstanding of various strategies used to meet the needs of gifted learners, such as grade and subject acceleration (Howlee, Rhodes, & Beall, 2009). Rural district staff members have multiple responsibilities and might be teaching on variances outside of their areas of licensure. This results in a lack of educator capital for meeting the needs of gifted learners.

Small rural districts tend to have higher rates of poverty, resulting in fewer opportunities for increasing educational funding. Limited resources diminish a focus on identifying students and creating curricular options.

Recommendations

The following research-based guidelines are intended to support gifted learners in rural settings.

Gifted learners must be provided with an appropriate and intellectually challenging curriculum on a consistent basis.

This recommendation can be met through the use of strategies including curriculum differentiation, acceleration, individual learning plans, and grouping practices. Multi-age grouping can bring gifted students together from different grades. Methods of service delivery could include independent study, web-based technology, online interactive TV options, dual enrollment programs with university and community colleges, cooperative classes with other districts, and sharing qualified teachers among districts for advanced content areas.



Gifted learners must be provided with opportunities to participate in co-curricular enrichment activities, and academic competitions.

This can be addressed by participating in local, regional, and state programs, such as creativity competitions, inventors' fairs, mathematics leagues, writing conferences, and summer academies (see Resources).

Gifted learners must be provided with an environment that supports their emotional and social needs.

This recommendation can be met by ensuring gifted learners spend time with intellectual peers for support and affirmation of their uniqueness and strengths. It's essential that students interact with educators, counselors, and mentors, remotely if necessary, who can help them develop social skills and coping strategies.

Educators who serve rural gifted learners must receive professional development experiences that include information about gifted students' characteristics and needs, curriculum differentiation, various grouping practices, and appropriate programs and services.

This recommendation can be accomplished by providing networking and collaborative experiences and distance-learning opportunities. Teachers can obtain additional certifications or advanced degree work specific to gifted learners through on-site training, online learning and regional and state gifted conferences and meetings.

Rural gifted learners must have programs that are consistently supported.

This recommendation can be met through adopted school board policy that provides adequate funding, trained staff, ample materials, and appropriate instructional spaces.

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Resources

- Academic Programs and Competitions, Including Web-Based Programs**
- Links to Several Academic Programs: www.hoagiesgifted.org/academic.htm
- Minnesota program links www.synergyexchange.org/educate/reach.aspx

Originally released 2001
Updated February 2016

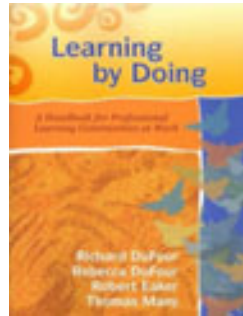


Your Dream PLC is at Your Fingertips!

By Melanie Olson, Board Member-Outreach

Professional Learning Communities are becoming commonplace in Minnesota schools. According to *Learning by Doing, A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities*, 6 Essential Characteristics of PLCs include the following.

1. Shared mission, vision, values, goals
2. Collaborative teams focused on learning
3. Collective inquiry
4. Action orientation and experimentation
5. Commitment to Continuous improvement
6. Results orientation



Over the last few years, I have created the PLC of my dreams! I am the PLC leader. I decide when and where we meet. We have met at 5am, at a vacation destination, in the car, or when my children are napping. I control the content and learning focus of each meeting. I have the ability to add new members to my PLC and can remove those who aren't aligned with my vision or focus. It's a growing community of about 800 individuals and/or organizational representatives. My dream PLC is on social media.

I created a professional Twitter and Facebook account for the sole purpose of growing professionally from others. At the time of writing this article, I follow 644 accounts and am followed by 618 accounts on Twitter. I have a smaller group of 147 friends on Facebook with whom I share content. My PLC includes those who are passionate about gifted education, creativity, STEM, technology integration, parenting, computer science, psychology, art education, and more. Some of my members are experts in their field. Other members are classroom teachers, my school colleagues, as well as former and current parents of students.



Over time I have learned more from my social media PLC than any professional development that I have participated in. The learning is continuous and I am in control. It does require active engagement. When I am participating I am sure to like and share content on Facebook. On twitter I like and retweet posts that are inspiring or thought provoking to me.

MEGTs PLC has grown significantly over the last year. We now have 235 friends on the MEGT Facebook page. We follow 517 accounts and have 445 followers on Twitter.



Tips for creating your dream PLC on social media

1. Connect with MEGT on Facebook and twitter.
2. Seek out those who have a common mission, values, or goals.
3. Connect with those who inspire you to try new things.
4. Look to see who others are following.
5. Like, share, and retweet posts by MEGT and other members that you connect with.
6. Invite others to engage in your PLC



Image courtesy of Olson



A Mathematical Spirit of Adventure

By Jerry Burkhart



The books in the *Advanced Common Core Math Explorations* series are designed to create and nurture mathematical adventurers—learners who think independently, take risks, and explore mathematical ideas in new ways. Mathematical adventurers are not satisfied with knowing *how*; they want to understand *why* and *what if*. They want to find patterns and make predictions. They don't worry when they make mistakes, because

they know that false steps often lead to new ideas.

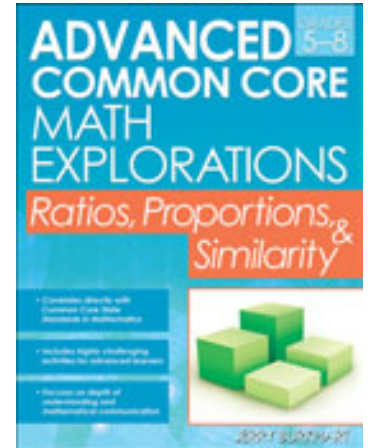
The new *Ratios and Proportions* book in the ACCME series is filled with real-world and mathematical problems that stretch these students' imaginations to their limits. They will create models of our solar system, learn more about why hot-air balloons fly, solve a middle school's overcrowding problem, solve perplexing percentage problems, and learn about the mysteries of Fibonacci numbers and the golden ratio. At first, you may think that the problems are too challenging for your students. But when you give them time to think, talk, and write about their ideas, you will be amazed at the energy and excitement that emerge as they begin making discoveries and realizing what they are capable of! Beware, though—the strategies that they create may be very different than the standard methods you find in textbooks. I learn something new from my students every time I teach an activity.

In an effort to enhance the open-ended, inquiry-based nature of the projects, we have made a few changes to the format in the *Ratios and Proportions* book. Each problem has been placed onto its own page and is introduced with an "opener" that encourages students to come up with their own questions and observations before receiving the directions. I have rewritten the discussion guides as "I notice" statements and "I wonder" questions, and there are vignettes showing examples of classroom conversation. The look and feel of the pages is more open and inviting, and the writing is less formal. The new format was inspired by suggestions from Ian Byrd of byrdseed.tv, who is also creating wonderful videos for some of the activities. I hope you will check them out at his website!

I have also recently created 5280math.com, a website that will provide further support for implementing the activities in the ACCME series, along with other resources for meeting the needs of talented math students. Here you will soon find sample activities, alternate versions of handouts, more detailed solutions to some of the problems, answers to extensions, links to related web resources, samples of student work, and more. And, of course, I invite you to contact me with any questions or

suggestions you may have.

In my experience, students who are encouraged to think independently and creatively about mathematical ideas are much more likely to retain, transfer, apply, and value their knowledge. To this end, I hope that MEGT members and their students will join me on some of the mathematical adventures in the *Advanced Common Core Math Explorations* books!



Celebrating our Your Accomplishments!

Barbra Dullaghan's Perspectives



The *Perspectives* unit, published by Kendall Hunt in 2014, is through the College of William and Mary in Virginia. Written for grades 4-5, the guiding theme of this language arts unit is the recognition that people have their own perspectives based on their experiences in the world around them. The literature selections of the

unit allow students to reflect on their own perspectives as well as those of characters in and authors of classical literature. Students will write a short story by developing and incorporating the literary elements of plot, setting, and characters.

https://www.kendallhunt.com/cfge_la/



Endorsement for

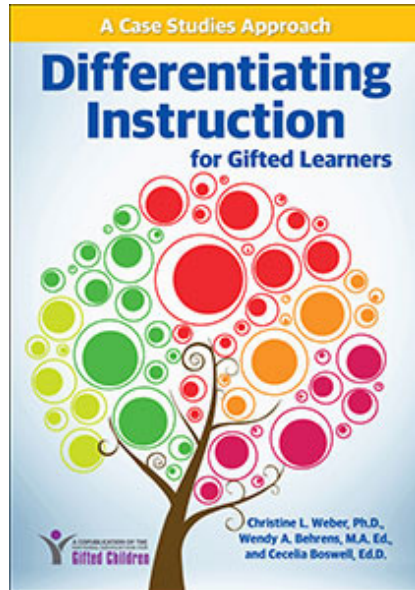
Differentiating Instruction for Gifted Learners: A Case Studies Approach

By Karen B. Rogers, Professor Emerita, University of St. Thomas

The book and for whom it is intended are expounded on very well at the beginning of the book, but thinking myself a pretty good “critical reviewer”, I did my own thinking about whom the book would most impact and who would use this book most frequently. When I checked my list against the list that appears in Chapter 1, I was glad to see that I was able to add another potential target audience or two to the amazingly comprehensive list I found there. This book is going to have to be on the shelf of every educator, no matter what their current role and set of responsibilities, in order to “handle” the multiple issues that arise when there is a gifted child in the “house”, whether that house be a home, a classroom, a grade level, a school, a school district, or a university (teacher education faculty). The way this book has been structured –not only via case study – but in terms of references to general knowledge, research, and extension resources, it will be well dog-eared in a short period of time by its owner!

I found the individual case studies to be thought provoking, definitely “real world” and far from telling anyone what they have to do. As one works one’s way through a case study, the mind can’t help but start to figure out what “I would do”. To tell the truth, though, none of these case studies or their potential outcomes are so easy that one doesn’t learn something brand new about the child, the situation, and how to generalize beyond the case study to groups of highly able children who might be represented by this case study. The book kept me riveted from beginning to end. It will definitely be a base for my own work in professional development and gifted teacher training. It changes mindsets, I think. It certainly did mine!

Image courtesy of Prufrock Press



January 18, 2016 Commissioner Cassellius

It is with pleasure that the Council for Exceptional Children, The Association for the Gifted Division (CEC-TAG), welcomes Wendy Behrens to its Board of Directors. In September 2015, the Board voted to add the President of the State Directors group to the Board. Wendy Behrens, Minnesota Gifted and Talented Education Specialist, is the current president of that group, and, as such, she will join us at our CEC-TAG Board meetings during her tenure.

As a board member, Ms. Behrens will bring the perspective of not only State Directors, but also those of Minnesota educators. We are pleased to have her ideas to add to our national group and to have her learn more about national issues from a variety of educators. Current TAG Board members represent The College of William and Mary (4 members), the University of Central Arkansas (2 members), Baltimore Public Schools (2 members), Texas State Department, Public Schools, and Gifted Association (3 members), The College of Coastal Georgia (1 member), The University of Northern Florida (1 member), Western Kentucky University (3 members), University of Arizona (1 member), and Norfolk State University (1 member). As you can see, we are a geographically diverse group and one who welcomes Ms. Behrens as a representative of Minnesota. Our board meets once in the spring during the National CEC Conference and once during the fall. Spring 2016 CEC Conference will be in St. Louis, MO. The Fall 2016 will coincide with the Texas Association for the Gifted/Talented (TAGT) Conference in Dallas, TX. Fall meeting travel expenses are borne by CEC-TAG.

During the 2016 Fall meeting, Ms. Behrens will present a three-hour session to the TAGT Audience of 3000+ in which her work will be shared with Texas and national educators. We look forward to expanding our outlook for gifted and advanced learners by hearing about Gifted services in Minnesota and, specifically, the Hormel Institute that also brings in nationally recognized authorities on Gifted Education to Austin, MN.

The CEC-TAG Board is pleased to add Ms. Behrens as representative of both State Directors and the Minnesota State Department.

Sincerely,
Cecelia Boswell, Ed.D.
President, Council for Exceptional Children,
The Association for the Gifted



Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented Board

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