

Newsletter

A Beacon of Light and Hope: The Growth Model and Its Potential for Evaluating the Academic Progress of Gifted Learners

by Laura O'Brien, VAG parent member

With the pending re-authorization of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the spotlight for Adequate Yearly Progress now shines brightly on the growth model and the *academic progress* (or lack thereof) made by students who perform below grade level. In some instances, this growth oriented approach also shines light on high achieving students who perform outside of their grade level.

Some states report their AYP data with growth models built on growth assessments, such as the Northwest Evaluation Association's (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). Such assessments provide accurate and precise measurements for the academic growth of ALL children. Student academic progress is tracked individually over time, with no grade level barriers, on a single, universal scale – essentially a yard stick for academic growth.

"Typically when our assessment goes in, the first thing that a school district will say is 'Oh my goodness, we are not challenging our gifted students enough.' It is the first real measure they have to see that," said Ginger Hopkins, Vice President



of Partner Relations, NWEA, a nonprofit organization working with nearly 3,000 education agencies and nearly 3 million students.

Essentially, the growth model is gaining attention in education circles because it uses statistical analyses of existing testing data to predict the progress of students. Such information is invaluable for illuminating the hard work of schools making great strides toward, but not quite meeting AYP. With the growth model, a school – and a student – can potentially get recognition when, for example, a 5th grader makes an impressive leap from a 1st grade math level to a 3rd grade math level in one year.

Coincidentally, the growth model in combination with multi-grade, adaptive,

growth assessments provides a beacon of light for improving the academic progress of high performing learners. These tests can, for example, document when a 5th grader makes an impressive leap from a 6th grade math level to an 8th grade math level in an academic year.

Of course, neither the growth model nor multi-grade, adaptive growth assessments are a magic potion, especially for gifted children. No database of content focused questions accurately measures instructional outcomes like creativity, curiosity, analysis, open mindedness and organizational abilities. Nonetheless, high and low performing students are currently preparing for and taking once-a-year, grade

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**Look for the Revised Regs for the Gifted on the Town Hall site
in late Spring...<http://www.townhall.state.va.us/>**

Growth Model

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level tests that provide little, if any data, to guide and improve individual instruction and inform placement decisions.

Some Virginia school districts have begun examining the growth model and its application to gifted students' learning. In fact, over the past two years, Arlington County's Gifted Services Advisory Committee researched testing options that support differentiation and measurement of gifted students' academic progress.

"Arlington Public Schools' Strategic Plan embraces responsive education as a key objective. The Gifted Services Advisory Committee has looked at measures the school system could adopt to provide schools with a tool to assist in providing consistent differentiated instruction to students and to build in a measure of accountability for ensuring that the schools provide instruction for gifted children that enables the child to make at least one full year of progress each year. Based on our research, we made a recommendation to the School Board to look into adopting value assessment and computerized adaptive testing," said Julia Judish, co-chair of the Arlington County Public Schools Gifted Services Advisory Committee.

Some states and school districts enhance their growth models by adding multi-grade, adaptive growth assessments like the MAP, which can evaluate student achievement beyond grade level. Such multi-grade, adaptive growth assessments provide a far more accurate measure of student and school achievement according to the Steering Committee of the Delaware Statewide Academic Growth Assessment Pilot's 2007 report, *A More Accurate Growth Model: Using Multigrade Assessments to Measure Student Growth*. (See http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/NCLBActII/2007/10/the_next_version_to_nclb.html)

"Is the general program generally good for kids? Yes, maybe gifted kids are generally well served by this program. But does that mean that your individual child made the kind of growth and performance they needed to make for their individual goals?" said NWEA's Ginger Hopkins when speaking about the growth model as compared to growth assessment.

Growth assessments help educators pinpoint the appropriate content and

challenge levels, broken down in specific content strands, for differentiation. Multi-grade, adaptive growth assessments accomplish this by varying the difficulty of the questions based on the student's response to earlier questions on the test, thus calibrating the test to the learner. With multi-grade, computerized adaptive testing, teachers can test students in the classroom and immediately generate a report that details each student's individual instructional level, his or her mastery of content, and predictors of appropriate academic growth for that student.

For high achievers, there is no ceiling on the level of difficulty of content and complexity even up through high school and into college level material if needed. Likewise for low achieving students, essential gaps in beginning level skills and knowledge can be identified. With these data in hand, teachers have a powerful tool. For example, NWEA's MAP generates individualized RIT scores, based on the equal interval Rasch Unit (RIT) score, just like an academic version of a yard stick. (See <http://www.nwea.org/assessments/ritcharts.asp>.) The DesCartes continuum of learning aligns students' MAP test scores with state standards. (See <http://www.nwea.org/classroom/descartes.asp>.) Together, MAP and DesCartes help teachers (a) consider what content to enhance, develop or introduce to each child and (b) helps predict and evaluate the rate at which these students learn the skills and content.

Glenview School District #34 in Glenview, IL, has worked with NWEA for nearly a decade. In a phone interview with the author of this article on October 11, 2007, Phil Collins, Assistant Superintendent of Student Achievement in Glenview, reported that MAP data, normed by NWEA every five years, helped his school system see that some of their gifted students and high achievers were, in fact, coasting.

"Those students are good workers and hard workers in class and get along well with the teacher, but are they really being challenged the way we could challenge them and in the way we should challenge them? In some cases, we found they are really not, so it caused staff, principals and teachers to say 'OK, what do we need to do differently?' If we did not have the growth data, I don't know that that issue would have ever been brought to light," said Mr. Collins.

In Glenview, teachers and students not only use data to prove what students have learned but also to improve achievement by working together to set individualized growth targets for the school year. Collins said that classroom teachers in Glenview are moving away from a grade level performance perspective. In fact, Glenview is now working toward evaluating their instructional programs, including gifted programs and advanced math placement, in order to set growth goals and evaluate effectiveness.

Many districts, like Glenview #34 are exploring the growth model and growth assessments. In fact, the US Department of Education granted waivers from traditional NCLB tests to pilot growth-based accountability and evaluation models in Tennessee, Iowa, North Carolina, Delaware, Ohio, Arkansas, Florida and, most recently, in Arizona and Alaska.

By definition the growth model does not necessarily refer to a new assessment or test. The growth model is a statistical process typically incorporating data, usually from existing on grade criterion based tests, like the SOL assessments, that are analyzed to illustrate and predict achievement growth over time for schools, programs and cohorts of students. States now using growth models may turn to consultants such as Battelle for Kids or SAS, a database management company in North Carolina.

Author Biography

Laura O'Brien is a freelance marketing and public relations consultant based in Richmond, Virginia. For 10 years, Mrs. O'Brien was president of Amann & Associates Public Relations, Inc. serving Fortune 500 clients nationwide. Mrs. O'Brien's current public relations and marketing practice is focused on the arenas of non-profit advocacy and education. A graduate of James Madison University, Mrs. O'Brien has two young daughters, one of whom receives gifted services in the local public school district.



(See <http://www.sas.com/govedu/edu/solutions/performance.html> or <http://battelleforkids.com>.)

Even though some pilot states are not using detailed, individualized growth assessments as their testing basis, nevertheless growth models are gaining ground.

“To ensure greater flexibility in tracking individual students’ annual progress, growth models provide states with more options for a nuanced accountability system, while adhering to the core principles of No Child Left Behind,” Margaret Spellings,

education secretary stated recently on the US Department of Education web site. (<http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/growthmodel/proficiency.html>)

However, as Jane Clarenbach, Director of Public Education at the National Association for Gifted Children, points out, “as powerful as the growth model is for following individual student progress, until NCLB holds districts accountable for the performance of all students, rather than only those who are below-proficient, programs and services for gifted and talented

students will continue to depend on local school and community leaders who are concerned about meeting the needs of all their students.”

The bottom line? With the addition of more precise multi-grade, adaptive, growth assessments, the current growth-focused spotlight may finally help illuminate opportunities to evaluate, and consequently improve, the achievement and the rate of progress of all students, including not only low achieving but also high achieving and gifted students.

Accessing Data to Plan, Assess and Evaluate Differentiation

By providing accurate, instantaneous information that pinpoints a student’s level of academic achievement, adaptive growth assessments, usually conducted in the Fall and Spring, allow teachers to advance each student’s learning as mastery at each level is achieved. Teachers can project a student’s academic aspirations for the future, set appropriate individual goals with the student, and adapt instruction to best fit his or her needs.

Subject: Mathematics Goal
Strand: Computation RIT Score
Range: 231 - 240

Skills and Concepts to Enhance 221-230	Skills and Concepts to Develop 231-240	Skills and Concepts to Introduce Above 240
Estimation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses rounding to estimate answers to real-world problems involving multiplication and division of numbers less than 100 (whole numbers only)* • Uses rounding to estimate answers to real-world problems involving numbers less than 1000 with multiplication and division (whole numbers only)* • Uses rounding to estimate answers to real-world problems involving numbers 1000 or greater using multiplication and division (whole numbers only)* • Uses rounding to estimate answers to real-world problems involving fractions and mixed numbers* • Uses estimation to solve problems involving fractions and mixed numbers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses estimation to solve problems involving decimals • Determines the most accurate answer (fractions only)* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses estimation to solve problems involving decimals
Whole Numbers – Addition and Subtraction		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Models algorithms using place value concepts (addition and subtraction with whole numbers)* • Predicts the relative size of the answer when adding whole numbers* • Predicts the relative size of the answer when subtracting whole numbers* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Models algorithms using place value concepts (addition and subtraction with whole numbers)* 	
Whole Numbers – Multiplication and Division		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses multiplication strategies to explain computation (e.g., doubles, 9-patterns, decomposing, partial products)* • Multiplies multiple-digit numbers • Models algorithms using place value concepts (multiplication and division with whole numbers)* • Divides a 4-digit number by a 2-digit number • Divides multiple-digit numbers • Divides numbers by powers of 10* • Predicts the relative size of the answer when dividing whole numbers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Models algorithms using place value concepts (multiplication and division with whole numbers)* • Divides multiple-digit numbers • Uses appropriate algorithms to represent multiplication or division with whole numbers* • Predicts the relative size of the answer when dividing a smaller whole number by a larger whole number 	

continued on the page 4

**Skills and Concepts to Enhance
221-230**

**Skills and Concepts to Develop
231-240**

**Skills and Concepts to Introduce
Above 240**

Fractions, Decimals – Addition and Subtraction

- Adds fractions with like denominators with reducing or converting to a mixed fraction
- Adds fractions with unlike denominators without reducing
- Adds fractions with unlike denominators with reducing or converting to a mixed fraction
- Adds whole numbers, fractions, and mixed fractions without reducing
- Adds mixed fractions where converting from improper fractions is necessary
- Subtracts fractions with like denominators with reducing
- Subtracts fractions with unlike denominators without reducing
- Subtracts fractions with unlike denominators with reducing*
- Subtracts mixed fractions with unlike denominators with no regrouping
- Subtracts whole numbers, fractions, and mixed fractions with regrouping
- Adds decimals to the hundredths place in horizontal format (not same number of digits)
- Adds decimals through the hundred-thousandths place
- Subtracts decimals to the hundredths place (not same number of digits)
- Subtracts decimals to the thousandths place, horizontally, with and without regrouping
- Subtracts decimals through the hundred-thousandths place, horizontally
- Subtracts a decimal from a whole number, horizontally

- Adds fractions with unlike denominators with reducing or converting to a mixed fraction
- Adds whole numbers, fractions, and mixed fractions without reducing
- Adds mixed fractions where converting from improper fractions is necessary
- Subtracts whole numbers, fractions, and mixed fractions with regrouping
- Subtracts a decimal from a whole number, horizontally

Fractions, Decimals – Multiplication and Division

- Multiplies a fraction by a fraction without reducing to simplest form (complex problem)
- Multiplies a fraction by a fraction where reducing to simplest form is necessary
- Multiplies a fraction by a whole number
- Multiplies mixed fractions
- Divides a fraction by a fraction
- Divides a mixed fraction by a fraction

- Uses models to multiply and divide fractions and connect the actions to algorithms*
- Multiplies mixed fractions
- Uses models to multiply and divide fractions and mixed fractions and connect the actions to algorithms*
- Divides a fraction by a fraction
- Divides a fraction by a whole number
- Divides a whole number by a fraction*
- Divides a mixed fraction by a whole number*
- Divides a whole number by a mixed fraction*
- Divides a mixed fraction by a fraction
- Divides a fraction by a mixed fraction*
- Divides a mixed fraction by a mixed fraction

New Vocabulary: borrow, compute, tenths

New Vocabulary: none

New Vocabulary: none

New Signs and Symbols: none

New Signs and Symbols: - negative number, • point, segment overbar

New Signs and Symbols: none

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 * Both data from test items and review by NWEA curriculum specialists are used to place learning continuum statements into appropriate RIT ranges.
 Blank cells indicate data are limited or unavailable for this range or document version.

VAG Newsletter Information and Deadlines

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Navigating the Curricular Highway into a Mathematics Classroom

by Amy Germundson, M.Ed., doctoral student at the University of Virginia

Standards-based instruction permeates the curricular highway today. With the pressure of high-stakes testing, this highway often feels like a narrow street constricted with massive content coverage and a lack of meaningful learning. As professionals in this field, we are challenged to take reflective look at our conceptions of quality pedagogy in relationship to this curricular highway. Is this narrow street our only option? Let's look at one teacher's thinking!

Mrs. Lindi is in her second year of teaching seventh grade mathematics in a large urban school. In the next weeks, she is beginning a two week unit on statistics. In teaching this unit the previous year, Mrs. Lindi presented the information in a series of mini-lectures followed by guided and independent skill practice. Even with the selection of real-world application problems from the textbook, student engagement was a challenge. Beyond the unit, her students didn't seem to retain the content. After reflecting on her own practice, she is excited to figure out a different way of approaching this unit.

Step One: Starting with the Standards

Mathematics Standard 3:

- Display and use measures of central tendency such as mean, median, and mode, and measures of variability such as range and quartile.
 - Read and construct displays of data (line graphs, circle graphs, etc.) using appropriate techniques and technology.
 - Evaluate arguments based on statistical claims.
 - Formulate hypotheses, draw conclusions, and make convincing arguments based on data analysis.
- Colorado Mathematics Standards

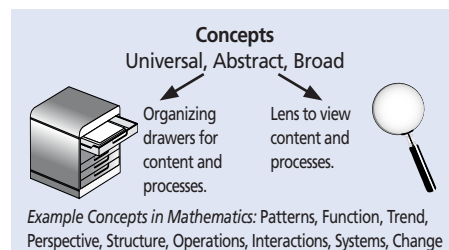
Like many teachers in her building, Mrs. Lindi begins planning with the standards. While the standards give her a direction in curricular planning, she is overwhelmed with the large number of

benchmarks to address. She asks herself some of the following questions:

- How can I organize this information in a way that makes sense to students?
- Is there a common thread running through all of these benchmarks?
- How can my students use this information to make sense of the world?
- How can I teach this information in a way that transfers to other contexts?
- What do I want my students to remember about this unit five years down the road?

Mrs. Lindi realizes that the benchmarks are by in large a compilation of knowledge (procedures, algorithms, facts) and skills. What seems to be missing is an organizing framework that "glues" the knowledge and skills domains into a bigger picture. What is the point of knowing the difference between mean, median, and mode? How does central tendency relate to statistical analysis? How do professionals in this field evaluate arguments?

Step Two: Organizing Content and Skills Around Concepts



This year, Mrs. Lindi decides to connect the benchmarks with concepts or "organizing drawers." A concept is a broad mental construct that frames a set of common attributes (Erickson, 2002). For this particular unit, bigger concepts she could potentially use include relationships, perspective, point of view, measures, and trends. She knows her students most likely have some prior idea of what these concepts mean from other disciplines areas. In fact, her students have recently explored the concept of point of view in literature. But, how does "point of view" function in mathematics? How can "trends" serve as a lens to view statistics?

Knowing her seventh graders well, she decides to explore the benchmarks through

two of the above concepts: measures and point of view. Mrs. Lindi knows her adolescent students certainly have some thoughts about point of view in from their everyday lives. Why not transfer and expand this existing conceptual framework into statistics? She connects these concepts into one singular big idea that umbrellas this unit: Students will understand that statistical measures are often used to support a point of view. To begin the unit, Mrs. Lindi converts this statement into an essential question and posts it on the wall: How do different statistical measures shape impressions of data? As the class explores the knowledge and skills of the unit through a series of learning experiences, students will construct an on-going answer to this larger question. To do this, she develops guiding questions to ask throughout the unit that open doors of thinking related to the essential question. For example, what characterizes a measure? What isn't a measure in statistics? How does reporting mean, median, or mode shape public impressions of a data set? In developing her unit this way, Mrs. Lindi believes students will engage with the content in a way that allows for higher level thinking, long-term retention of the material, and connections to world situations and their lives.

Guided by standards and benchmarks, Mrs. Lindi integrates the knowledge and skills of this unit into an umbrella idea that is transferable to other units, disciplines, and life. By doing this, the curricular highway becomes a route that remains directional but allows for networking, subsystems of roads, and multiple connections between learning destinations!

Amy Germundson is graduate research assistant and doctoral student at the University of Virginia where she is pursuing a degree in Curriculum and Instruction with a shared concentration in Mathematics, Science, and Gifted Education. Previously, she taught a variety of high school mathematics/physical science courses and integrated seventh grade science in the International Baccalaureate Program while earning a M.Ed. in Science Curriculum and Instruction and Space Science. Her interests and current work with schools focuses on differentiating math and science instruction for diverse learners.



Raising Gifted Children

by Teresa Manzella, Gifted Children's Coordinator for Minnesota MENSA and Co-chair of Parent/Kid Day at NAGC's 2007 Convention in Minneapolis

I have been on the journey of raising gifted children for almost 15 years. I have a daughter who is a sophomore in the Program for the Exceptionally Gifted (PEG) at Mary Baldwin College and a son who is a Davidson Young Scholar. Because I was a member of Mensa for several years before I became a parent, I was fortunate to have friends who could understand me as a gifted person. Most of them didn't (and still don't) have children, however. When I had my children and discovered what I was dealing with, I needed to branch out in my search for understanding. I joined the MN Council for the Gifted and Talented (MCGT), and started working on developing local programs for children through Mensa.



There are so many challenges associated with raising gifted children that it is difficult to condense them into a brief article. The three main topics I'll address are testing, school, and networking. Many apparent obstacles can be overcome with knowledge, advocacy, and encouragement from others.

For my family, the fact that raising gifted children would be a daunting challenge did not become apparent until our daughter

went to Kindergarten. By then, we had stopped telling most people about what she and her younger brother did—we just had fun with the kids. They had fun, too, just being their own curious, energetic, amazing selves.

Testing

But our daughter was already reading fluently before entering school, so she was made the de facto teacher's assistant. First grade was all right, as her personality clicked with that of her teacher. Things began to deteriorate rapidly in second grade, and by the end of third grade, we knew we had to get both children tested to find out exactly what we were dealing with.

Many parents balk at the prospect of finding out "that number" (IQ) or "labeling" their children. I firmly believe that, if a child shows precocious abilities, is experiencing difficulties with school, or seems to be terribly sensitive about many things (or all of these, and likely more), an educational evaluation is the responsible thing to do. Testing can get quite expensive, but it's not as costly as braces. Most of us will foot the bill for braces without hesitation, taking out loans if necessary. Finding out a child's level of giftedness can be just as crucial to that child's chances of being healthy and happy in life. Without the analysis of an objective professional, parents are literally flying blind.

Test results not only provide information vital to understanding the child, they also provide a means of accessing networks and programs that would not be available otherwise. American Mensa, Davidson Institute, and National Association for

Gifted Children are just a few examples of organizations that can help you with this journey—but they all require qualifying test scores. Test data also provide what some parents I know refer to as ammunition when it comes to pursuing grade skips, accelerated content, and so on. (See www.hoagiesgifted.org/testing.htm for more on testing.)

We are fortunate to live in the same area that Dr. Karen Rogers lives, so she tested the kids for us. They agreed that, because some of the material was hard, they had fun: they got to work their brains! Many gifted children truly enjoy the testing process for this reason. The knowledge we gained about our children has been critical in addressing their needs over the past five years.

School

School is one of the topics that most frequently comes up when I talk with parents of gifted children. The more gifted a child is, the more active the parents need to be as advocates in the school setting. After we got our test results, we worked with the local district for a single grade skip for each of the children. That was not effective for long. I volunteered, and I met with the teachers and the principal. In the end, I pulled the children out and enrolled them in the Minnesota Virtual Academy (MNVA). Doing school at home has been a great fit for us. MNVA is a public school with many options for accelerating grades and subjects. We have great flexibility in how we approach meeting our son's educational needs (now that he's the only one at home).

Effective advocacy is the key to working with the schools on behalf of gifted children. If you are to do this on your own, you need to be armed with test scores and research. Reading as many of the books on this topic as you can will help prepare you to be an advocate. (Click on the "Resources" link at www.mcgt.net for a list of excellent books.) Be certain to read "A Nation Deceived." The information contained in that report on various types of acceleration is invaluable. (Visit www.nationdeceived.org for more information and your own copy.)



A good sense of humor and the realization that most teachers also want what's best for your child will help as well. If you would like your child's teacher to implement ideas that will differentiate the curriculum for your child, give the teacher a gift of the book or magazine you found the ideas in. Try working with the teacher directly before escalating the situation. Be aware that the solution that has been found for this year may have to be adjusted within the school year, and next year will be a whole new situation.

Networking

Earlier this year, MCGT sponsored a gifted education resource fair. One woman drove for nearly 10 hours, from the far northwestern part of North Dakota, to attend. As she registered, she was in tears, telling the people working the table that she'd never before been around anyone she could talk to and get suggestions from about raising her child. In October, I scheduled a museum day for my Young Mensan group. A family that was new to the group attended, and the parents were amazed and delighted that the rest of us were quite free with our tips and shared experiences. Their son immediately connected with the other kids and had a great time.

These are just two examples of the sense of belonging, validation, and relief that comes from networking. Parents need it to know that we are not alone in facing these challenges and that we can learn and benefit from others' experiences. We may not all agree on politics, disciplinary approaches, etc., but we know that we share the commitment to doing what is best for these extraordinary children. Kids need it to know there are others like them. They derive the acceptance they crave when they can talk about their favorite books, global warming, micrometeoroids—you name it—without getting the odd stares they have become so accustomed to.

If your local group doesn't have regular get-togethers planned, step up and be the one to make the networking situations possible. Even an email list for exchanging ideas can be a great help (try www.groups.yahoo.com).

Raising gifted children is indeed challenging—and downright exhausting at times. Fortunately, we parents are smart people too, and we can find the resources that may provide some of the support we need to make this journey.

From the Executive Director

From all reports, the 12th Virginia Conference on Gifted Education was excellent. Over 600 of you arrived in Williamsburg as the 'Virginia monsoons' weighed in for three days. The spirit of the participants was not dampened and there was much excitement about the presentations and the sharing of ideas among colleagues. Some of your complimentary comments were: "One of the best VAG conference I've attended." "The range of learning opportunities – from the theoretical to the practical – stimulated my thinking about gifted education." "I really enjoyed the materials, the speakers and the comfortable environment." "Liked the variety of breakout sessions – there were many things that I could take back and use." Not all the comments were complimentary – for some of you, the hotel meeting rooms were too cold, and for a few, they were too hot. While some of you thought the food was great, some wanted more food during the day. Lack of sufficient hands-outs is always a problem if a session is really popular. We will look at all your comments and continue to try to improve our future conferences. Thank you for your support of VAG and gifted education in Virginia.

In the fall we will be back at the beautiful Hotel Roanoke on October 5 and 6, 2008, for our Sixth Virginia Seminar on Gifted. The board is working on putting together the best program ever. We will have experts in the field of gifted education as well as an in-depth session in technology. Registration information will be available in the spring newsletter and will be posted on our website: www.vagifted.org by May. Please put these dates on your calendar and plan to attend.

Liz Nelson



Editor's Note

It's a new year, and with it, for most of us, comes the push to "finish up strong" for the 2007-2008 academic year. This issue looks at that push from multiple angles. Our cover article, by parent member Laura O'Brien, examines the "growth model" as a method of evaluating the academic progress of gifted learners. Also featured is an article by Amy Germundson, a doctoral student at the University of Virginia, which aims to help us navigate the curricular highway into the mathematics classroom. Our Parental Pundit column is back this issue. Written by Teresa Manzella, this piece will give parents and educators alike tips on raising gifted children.

As usual in our winter issue, we recognize our VAG Outstanding Teacher of the Gifted award winners as well as those from the state of Virginia who received recognition at the National Association for Gifted Children conference. *Coffee Talk* returns this issue featuring an interview with Andrew Mahoney, a licensed professional counselor, marriage, and family therapist whose practice focuses on the gifted and talented. As we move toward standardized testing season, we couldn't resist putting a little quiz in the mix. Test your knowledge of No Child Left Behind and its implications for gifted education. See how well you do! Tom Flaherty's third installment of his odyssey into the world of college admissions appears as "The College Essay."

VAG also welcomes a new face to the Virginia Department of Education. Dr. Donna Poland will be filling the position vacated by Dr. Barbara McGonagill. Read about her on page 14. You'll also find pictorial coverage of the VAG Conference as well as book reviews.

So, there is plenty to keep you turning pages this issue, but, as always, we'd love your input. Send your submissions to me at sferguson@mbc.edu. Enjoy!

Stephanie K. Ferguson



Charting the Course: The Next Thirty Years

Conference Photos and Comments



“Thanks for including a parent component.”

“There were many useful ideas that I will share with co-teachers.”

“Great job – one of the best VAG conferences I’ve attended.”

“Thanks for all the work; I really enjoyed the materials, the speakers and the comfortable environment.”



“The range of learning opportunities – from the theoretical to the practical – stimulated my thinking about gifted education.”

“The conference was well organized and comprehensive. Lunch was good. Marriott staff members were professional, courteous and helpful.”



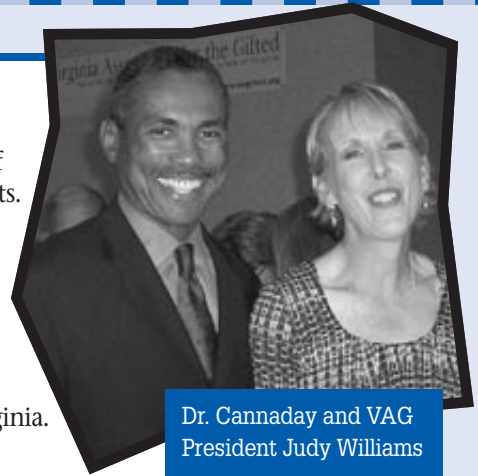
VAG Recognizes Dr. Cannaday

At the twelfth Annual Virginia Conference on the Gifted held in October, the Virginia Association for the Gifted presented a Lifetime Membership to Dr. Billy Cannaday, Jr., Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Commonwealth of Virginia. VAG bestows this recognition to individuals whose exemplary leadership and outstanding contributions to gifted education have affected Virginia's children, teachers, schools, programs, and/or policies.

Dr. Cannaday was appointed to a four-year term as superintendent for public instruction by Governor Kaine on April 12, 2006. Prior to his tenure in the state department of education, Dr. Cannaday served from 2000 to 2006 as superintendent of Chesterfield County Public Schools, the fourth-largest school division in Virginia. During his tenure there, Dr. Cannaday was named Virginia's 2005 Superintendent of the Year by the

Virginia Association of School Superintendents. From 1994 to 2000, Dr. Cannaday was superintendent of Hampton Public Schools, which is the third-largest urban school division in Virginia.

Dr. Cannaday is a native of Roanoke. He earned his doctorate in Educational Administration from Virginia Tech in 1990, his Master's degree in Educational Administration from Hampton University in 1980, and his bachelor's degree in Health and Physical Education from Virginia Tech in 1972.



Dr. Cannaday and VAG President Judy Williams

“I liked the number of breakout sessions and variety. There were many things that I could take back and use.”



“It's hard to list the best breakout session because all I attended were great!”



“I am impressed with the topics that are useful for ALL students, not just my gifted students.”

“I really liked and enjoyed the strategies that were shared in the sessions. I plan to implement them in my schools.”



Outstanding Teacher of the Gifted Award Winners

The Virginia Association for the Gifted awarded its ninth annual Outstanding Teacher of the Gifted Awards at the October 2007 VAG Conference. The individuals were recognized for their contribution to the gifted education programs in their regions.

The following are excerpts from the candidates' packets and letters of recommendation submitted to VAG in support of their nominations.

Region I: Lisa Anne Chandler

"Lisa is a grade 7 International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program English and gifted resource teacher in Henrico County with eight of her 14 years of teaching spent working with gifted students. Her commitment to her students, her love of learning, and her notable accomplishments in English and curriculum writing make her a role model in the field of gifted education."

"Mrs. Chandler has an excellent way of connecting with the student, which is a great strength as both a teacher and gifted coordinator...The extraordinary number of gifted students with whom she works could seem daunting; however, she seems to look at it as an opportunity to challenge them in as many ways and with as many gifted educational opportunities as possible."

"With such a high number of gifted students in our school population, one of the most vital things that Mrs. Chandler does is staff development. During the summer and school year, she facilitates teacher training in the areas of enrichment, interdisciplinary connections, compacting, learning styles, and differentiation. By doing this, she extends her "Best Teaching Practices" school-wide ... Not only does Lisa create lessons for her gifted students, but she has taken the time to teach me how to develop differentiated lessons for my students."

Region II: Eric Hoyt

"Eric is a 4th and 5th grade gifted education and science teacher in the Chesapeake public schools. He has been working with gifted students for the last ten years. As evidenced by his colleagues'

testimony, his dedication to young people, and his accomplishments as a teacher, Eric Hoyt exemplifies the characteristics of an outstanding teacher of the gifted."

"I think Mr. Hoyt should be Outstanding Teacher of the Gifted because he is one of the best teachers I've had. He has fun with us and teaches us in creative ways. He never makes us feel like we're just kids and he makes us laugh while we're learning.

"Eric Hoyt is a vibrant faculty member... he embodies the admirable qualities of a gifted education teacher whom many students, teachers, and administrators only hope to encounter during their careers... he craves new information and the opportunity to network with fellow educators... Eric's students frequently say that he is the coolest teacher they have ever had and that they wish their other teachers taught like him."

"Eric differentiates his lessons daily to include all student readiness levels, individual learning styles and preferences, and diverse student interest. I have had the opportunity to watch the eager faces of his students experimenting while their learning actually blossomed from an idea into a reality in front of me."

Region IV-E: Eileen B. Wagner

"Eileen is a gifted resource teacher for grades 6 through 8 in the Arlington public schools. She has been working with gifted students for almost 25 years. She has been influential in the development of curriculum for gifted learners, the development of identification processes, effective measures to increase the numbers of traditionally underserved students represented in the program, and the training of teachers in differentiation of instruction for all learners, with an emphasis on gifted.

"One of the most important aspects of Eileen's job is to train teachers and other professional educators who instruct gifted students in learning characteristics and behaviors of gifted children and differentiation of content, skills, activities, and product development. Eileen's performance in this area has been outstanding and very

much appreciated. As Important, Eileen works individually with teachers to support their instructional efforts to differentiate instruction and utilize strategies that meet the needs of students. It is very common to see Eileen co-teaching in classrooms. Her willingness to plan and collaborate with teachers has made a marked difference in the teachers' abilities to feel comfortable with and to incorporate new strategies and approaches in the classroom."

Region V: Jennifer Whitenack

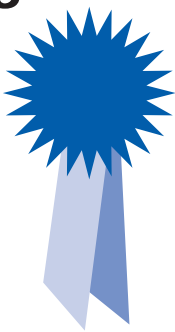
"Jennifer is a kindergarten through 5th grade gifted resource teacher in Albemarle County public schools. She has spent the last 10 of her 15 years in education working with gifted students. With experience as a teacher, leader, and mentor, Jennifer excels at both the division and student level as a teacher of the gifted. Her knowledge, passion, commitment, creativity, efficacy, and work ethic are exceptional and characterize what an outstanding teacher of the gifted should be."

"Jennifer proactively assesses and responds to the needs of individual student. She maintains a true commitment to challenging each student no matter what it takes. Jennifer anticipates needs and figures out how to use the resources of her building and staff to create instructional settings that work for every student ... she is the first to recognize a need and the first to put the plan to meet that need in motion."

"I have had the privilege of working with Mrs. Whitenack for over a dozen years. I have found her to be an advocate for all children, especially those who learn differently due to advanced intellectual abilities. She has an excellent understanding of what is required to differentiate curriculum and how it benefits the accelerated learner."

Region VI: Diane Naff

"Diane is a kindergarten through 5th grade gifted resource teacher in Montgomery County. She has spent the last nine of her 28 years in education working in that capacity. Diane is a knowledgeable, enthusiastic, dedicated professional. Her positive attitude and love of students are reflected in the outstanding quality of the teaching and learning she orchestrates here ... including professional development,



curriculum development, and instructional leadership.”

“Diane has been a pioneer in first teaching herself about differentiation as a classroom teacher, applying this knowledge to her teaching practice, and sharing differentiation strategies with other teachers... as a classroom teacher, I have participated in several staff development workshops that Diane has presented and have learned many new teaching strategies at these sessions...Diane is an exceptional teacher who keeps the impact on student achievement as her touchstone.”

VAG Winners at NAGC

Virginia was once again well represented at the 2007 National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) awards ceremony in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Congratulations to Carol Tieso who was awarded the NAGC Early Leader Award, which is presented to an individual who has exhibited the highest and most consistent degree of leadership in the gifted education field since receiving his or her doctorate.



Carol Tieso

Carol is an assistant professor at The College of William and Mary where she teaches graduate courses in gifted education. Her research interests include examining the impact of flexible grouping and curriculum differentiation on students' achievement, self-efficacy, and self-concept, and addressing the social and emotional needs of gifted, talented and creative students. Dr. Tieso currently serves on the NAGC Board of Directors.

Congratulations also go to Ms. Leighann Pennington from the University of Virginia and Dr. Kimberly Chandler from The College of William and Mary who were each awarded the 2007 Curriculum Award sponsored by the Curriculum Division, which seeks to identify and highlight exceptional curriculum developed by educators who are members of NAGC. In addition, kudos go out to Megan Balduf from The College of William and Mary who was awarded a Graduate Student Research Award – Gold Recognition. Sponsored by the Research and Evaluation Division of NAGC, this award recognizes young scholars who have completed high quality research in the area of gifted education.

What Do You Know About No Child Left Behind?

Adapted from <http://media.mgnetwork.com/imd/quiz/NCLB/>

As the legislative bid for reauthorization of NCLB draws nearer, its time to test your familiarity with what the legislation currently entails. For each of the ten items below, select the correct answer. Check your NCLB rating on page 13.

- 1. NCLB applies to _____**
A. Both public and charter schools. C. Charter schools.
B. Public schools. D. Home schools.
- 2. NCLB requires every teacher to be “highly qualified”. Who is considered “highly qualified”?**
A. A national board certified teacher
B. A state certified teacher
C. A teacher with his/her state certification in addition to a special certification (e.g., reading specialist, gifted endorsement, etc.)
D. A teacher with professional experience in the subject outside the classroom
- 3. What percentage of fourth graders were reading at a proficient level, according to the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NEAP)?**
A. 79% B. 54% C. 31% D. 25%
- 4. Results from what subject will be added to assessments in 2008?**
A. Social studies B. Science C. Geography D. Civics
- 5. According to NCLB, by which year are ALL students to be reading and doing math at a proficient level?**
A. 2019 B. 2014 C. 2011 D. 2008
- 6. What percentage of students in each of the groups must take the assessment for a school to qualify under NCLB?**
A. 100% B. 98% C. 95% D. 90%
- 7. If a school does not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two consecutive years, what happens?**
A. The school loses accreditation. C. The school is labeled “failing.”
B. The school closes. D. The school receives additional funding.
- 8. Schools still in need of improvement after three years must provide students with supplemental education services. What are they?**
A. Fine arts classes C. Tutoring
B. Study halls D. Accelerated classes
- 9. Phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension skills are part of which NCLB program?**
A. America Reads C. English Language Literacy
B. Title 1 D. Reading First
- 10. NCLB requires schools to assess the academic progress of 10 different groups of students. Which of these is not considered a student group?**
A. Limited English proficiency
B. Students with disabilities
C. Academically gifted
D. Economically disadvantaged students





Embracing Complexity: An Interview with Andrew Mahoney

Andrew Mahoney is a licensed professional counselor, marriage and family therapist, and director of Andrew S. Mahoney and Associates, a counseling center for the gifted and talented in Pittsburgh, PA. He is known as a pioneer in the field of counseling and psychotherapy of the gifted and talented. For more than 20 years he has taught, researched, and developed frameworks for the counseling, psychotherapy, and identity formation of gifted and talented individuals. Andy is a nationally recognized presenter and practitioner in this specialty area, having trained counselors in over 40 states. A long-standing executive board member of the Counseling and Guidance Division of the National Association for Gifted Children and past chair of that division, his work offers original perspectives for serving this unique population.



Jane Englund interviewed Andrew Mahoney.

Englund: What led you to the field of counseling the gifted?

Mahoney: Serendipity. My own experience as an artistic prodigy, painting fluently from age two, and personal struggles as a gifted individual was a major catalyst. I started graduate school with the intention of working in the field of Higher Education Administration. Through work as a college counselor and my own personal counseling experiences, I realized that Counselor Education was where I needed to be. In 1984 there were very few counselors for GT kids, so I decided to focus on issues relating to giftedness.

Englund: What have you found to be the most compelling issues or concerns related to giftedness within your practice?

Mahoney: Complexity is the gist of the struggle of the gifted person. Gifted children are frustrated, both internally and externally, in terms of meeting their own needs. They are struggling to become who they are. It is a constant process of negotiation with the world. Identity issues are huge – how

they develop a sense of self congruent with who they really are without risking losing themselves in agendas often attached to profound ability. The internal and external pressures experienced are often more intense and complicated than the norm. In my model of gifted identity formation, giftedness and holistic identity development are intertwined and inseparable. Understanding and acknowledging this relationship is key in working with gifted youth.

Englund: Could you briefly describe your model?

Mahoney: My model of gifted identity formation was created to adjust for variance. It is a way to better understand individual complexity. The four basic constructs of gifted identity formation are validation, affirmation, affiliation, and affinity.

Briefly, *validation* is an acknowledgment of the range of human deviation in behaviors, emotions, cognition, and sensitivities. It is an acknowledgment that one's giftedness exists as corroborated by others or by oneself – feeling heard. Significant relationships provide sources of validation.

Affirmation focuses on the whole individual without diminishing the fact of isolation. It means acknowledgment and reinforcement of giftedness by many significant individuals or processes.

Affiliation – making connections – refers to the association with other individuals with similar interests while being integrated into a group without loss of identity. It relates to opportunities for gifted individuals to connect with a community that is supportive of their giftedness.

Affinity – individual purpose or calling – is the connection with the world to fulfill life goals and purposes. Affinity provides appropriate challenge and stimulation and can serve as a driving force in affiliation, helping relieve the existential angst associated with being gifted.

Along with these four basic constructs are 12 systems or sub-systems that influence personality and identity development of gifted individuals. They are the systems of self, family, family of origin, culture, vocation, environment, education, social, psychological, political, organic physiological and developmental systems. Many of these

systems simultaneously interface and overlap. The Gifted Identity Formation Model (GIFM) requires the clinician to explore each system in seeking an understanding of how each specific gifted personality has developed and evolved. Understanding and accepting complexity is key.

Englund: You mention variance and deviance in relation to gifted individuals. Could you discuss these terms in a bit more detail?

Mahoney: Gifted people are deviant. I use this word very deliberately. It is a word which is often viewed in a negative rather than positive way. I do not use it negatively; it is the experience of the gifted person. Understanding how they vary, deviate from the norm, is essential in being able to accept oneself in the world, to not deny individual identity. Becoming whole, through validation, affirmation, affiliation, and affinity requires this basic understanding. We need to differentiate our thinking in understanding differentiated people, embrace variance. If we can stop running from complexity and deviance, embrace it instead of marginalizing it, we will be more able to discover meaning and purpose.

Englund: Where do you see your work going in the future?

Mahoney: I would like to continue working towards broadening concepts of giftedness and improving levels of interaction and intervention beyond education. Expanding our ability to meet both counseling and vocational needs of gifted individuals through increased training of counselors and therapists in the field is also a goal.

Englund: Your background in political science makes me wonder how you would interpret or address the politics of Gifted Education at present?

Mahoney: There is always an opportunity to expand this field, reach beyond the accepted avenues of discussion to facilitate understanding and education related to gifted people. The development of currently underutilized avenues or political entities to achieve more awareness and support for gifted issues, going outside the discipline so to speak, is something we might work on overall.

(continued on page 13)

Assess What Do You Know About No Child Left Behind

Adapted from <http://media.mgnetwork.com/imd/quiz/NCLB/>

Check your familiarity with NCLB quiz from page 11 with the answers and explanations provided below. Then, rate yourself using the scoring chart provided.

1. **A – Both public and charter schools.** For NCLB accounting purposes, charter schools are considered public schools. The program does not affect home schools.
2. **B – A state certified teacher.** A highly qualified teacher must have state certification, at least a bachelor's degree, and have demonstrated competency in the core academic subjects they teach. A national board certification is not required.
3. **C – 31%.** While 64% of 4th graders achieved the basic reading level, less than half reached the proficient level and only 7% reached the advanced level.
4. **B – Science.** States will add science to their assessment systems at three grade levels by 2008, and proficiency levels will be expected by the 2019-2020 school year, according to the Department of Education.
5. **B – 2014.** All students should be proficient by 2014 or be on track for proficiency within three years.
6. **C – 95%.** At least 95% of students as in need of improvement in each group must be tested for the group to make Adequate Yearly Progress. Students with serious medical situations can be exempt from taking the state assessments with out affecting the participation rates of the respective schools.
7. **D – The school receives additional funding.** When a school is identified as “in need of improvement,” it receives additional funding and/or technical assistance to improve performance. The school must develop a two-year plan to make those improvements. During this time, students are given the option to transfer to a school in the district that made adequate progress.
8. **C – Tutoring.** Children from low income families may be eligible to receive tutoring and extra help with school work

in subjects such as reading and math. It is provided free, generally after school or in the summer.

9. **D – Reading First.** Reading First is an instruction program offered in the early grades. Funds are provided to states to use scientifically based reading instruction programs.
10. **C – Academically gifted.** NCLB does not specifically address academically or intellectually gifted students. The ten student groups are:
 - 1) the school as a whole,
 - 2) white,
 - 3) black,
 - 4) Hispanic,
 - 5) Native American,
 - 6) Asian,
 - 7) multiracial,
 - 8) economically disadvantages,
 - 9) limited English proficiency,
 - 10) students with disabilities.

If you scored:

9-10 correct – You are **ADVANCED!**

5-8 correct – You are **PROFICIENT!**

3-4 correct – You are not really “adequate.”

0-2 correct – You have been left behind

Coffee Talk, *(continued from page 12)*

Englund: Any final closing thoughts?

Mahoney: Everything has meaning and purpose. If we can embrace complexity, let go of fear, reach out in efforts to avoid becoming “stuck within,” our work with the struggles and identity issues of gifted individuals will be facilitated.

Jane Englund is a Doctoral Candidate in Educational Psychology/ Gifted at the University of Virginia. Her research interests include social and emotional development of gifted, affective curriculum infusion, and multicultural education. She can be reached at jeSe@vignia.edu.



The College Essay

Dear Readers:

Below is my college essay, the touchstone of any application. For the sake of brevity, it will be my next column that explains the process by which I arrived at the essay, and that column will also detail other elements of the application process. Here it is:

“Youth Immortal”

When I was six or so, I saw several boys tugging a girl’s coat away from her on the other side of the playground from the teacher. Instinctively chivalrous, I ran over and forced them to let go of her jacket. As soon as the teacher noticed the scuffle, she had us separated and punished all us boys equally. Even after understanding the situation, she told me that I was as much at fault as the boys accosting the girl were. This began my lifelong perception of the flawed justice throughout the world, and my pursuit of finding a life philosophy that satisfies my perception of justice, my pursuit of wisdom.

After four years of home schooling, two in public school, and two years at Woodberry, I finally realized that what little “wisdom” I had was from life experience, not the perusing of ancient abstractions. I realized that I couldn’t simply skip from the illusion to Plato’s heavenly “realm of forms.” I, like any seeker of enlightenment, had to take the long hard path up the levels of knowledge, build a firm foundation, and start putting

whatever ideals I already had into immediate practice. Abandoning my intellectual path bouncing from one powerful view of the world to another, I picked out what I thought to be the best parts of each, embedded them in my mind, and started throwing myself into life.

Daniel Quinn and his book *Ishmael* gave me a strong deference to the future—it belongs to our children. From Khalil Gibran, I took a poetic way of viewing the world, and still attempt see through his poetic exultations of wisdom, his wisdom in matters poetic. Footnoting to Plato, I employed his clear-cut levels of abstraction. I inherited Ray Kurzweil’s powerful optimism in the transformative power of technology upon not only our world, but our selves. Thanks to Ayn Rand, I developed an indomitable sense of self-confidence and worth, while keeping ideals of self-criticism and reflection. Reflecting on my knowledge of history, I decided that religion was a source of too much conflict: I would continue on as an agnostic, to accept equally and be accepted equally by every religion. Beyond such principles, I defined wisdom as an “uncommon level of common sense” or “common sense on a larger scale.”

Nothing is perfect, but I feel that this foundation has served me incredibly well. For the last two years, I have had clarity of mind which I’d lost in the previous years.



This is the third installment of Tom Flaherty’s chronicled odyssey into the world of college selection, application, and admissions. Tom is a student at the Woodberry Forest School, an independent boarding school for boys in Madison County, Virginia.

My quest for knowledge, justice and wisdom is going better than ever, as I collect wisdom wherever I find it. I finally found a grand justification of immortality, in the book *The First Immortal* by James L. Halperin: “Any act of kindness, or spite, is sorta like a stone pitched into an endless sea. Y’know how ripples spread from the impact? If you plan to sail those waters forever, you might be more careful about what you toss into ‘em.” (p. 22). Even if immortality isn’t going to happen, I can sum up ethics in one sentence: live as if everyone were going to live forever. The meaning is clear, yet the idea and its implications are profound. But if I stop at every action to think about every possible consequence, I miss opportunities and do not get things done. So at the same time, that wisdom must be balanced by a far more common one: you’re only young once.

While we must always think about our actions, there’s also no point to living if we negate the adverse effects of life by abstaining from risk and also give up some of the best things in life. I once watched a movie, *Equilibrium*, where a post-apocalyptic society used a drug to suppress emotion, throwing out love and joy to silence hate and sadness. The society was successful, but there’s no point in such a life. As one rebel in the movie put it: without emotion, “breath is just a clock... ticking.” So to revise the original maxim, we now have: live as if everyone were forever young. Capture all of youth’s joy, yet bond it with the prudence necessary to live forever. Too much of one loses the fruits of the other, but in balance, these opposite ideals make success and joy. They work for me, and I’m finding similar notions among others who have achieved success while having a good time as well. Of course, they seem to have gotten to it by common sense, while it took me quite a philosophical journey. But the journey is never over, never was, and never will be. Who knows where it will carry me next?

VAG Welcomes Leader in the Virginia D.O.E.

Dr. Donna Poland, the former Director of the New Horizon’s Governor’s School of Science and Technology, has accepted the Specialist in Gifted Education and Governor’s Schools position last held by Dr. Barbara McGonagill.

A graduate of Poquoson High School, Dr. Poland received her B.S. from North Carolina State University in Wildlife Biology. She worked for 10 years in various civil engineering related positions building nuclear power plants, submarines, and aircraft carriers. She then returned to school to pursue a Master’s degree and Education Specialist degree from the College of William and Mary. In the spring of 2003, she completed her Ph.D. in Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership with an emphasis in Gifted Education Administration at the College of William and Mary. Dr. Poland’s dissertation study focused on gifted instructional practices in science classrooms at Virginia’s Governor’s Schools.

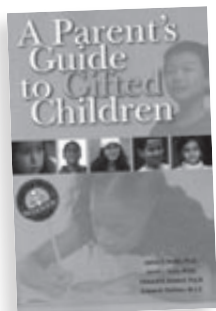
Dr. McGonagill left the Virginia Department of Education to join the administration of the Manassas City Public Schools.



Book Worm

This column is dedicated to reviewing books of interest to the field of gifted education

Webb, J., Gore, J., Amend, E., & DeVries, A. (2007). *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.



Reviewed by Carolyn K. (a.k.a. Carolyn Kottmeyer) founder and web mistress of Hoagies Gifted Education Page

I've said good things about books in the past, and I stand by all my reviews. But if I could rate one book with six stars (out of five) this would be the one. *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children* is THE book that all parents of gifted children should read first. And I mean ALL parents, from parents of moderately gifted kids, to parents of exceptionally/profoundly gifted kids, and twice exceptional gifted kids, too.

A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children begins with the basics: terms and definitions, and characteristics of giftedness, from those typical characteristics we all know, to the gifted child's unique 'overexcitabilities' and potential strengths disguised as weaknesses. Next, the authors discuss communication, an important factor both in parenting and educating the gifted child. Their great ideas are good not only for parents wishing to talk with their gifted kids, but also for parents collaborating with educators, and parents teaching their gifted kids how to communicate and advocate effectively. Even gifted kids need to learn the strength of communication!

Motivation and underachievement are complex issues with gifted children. The authors offer valuable insights into the causes and differences between the two. They move next to establishing discipline and teaching self-management – these are two things we often assume our gifted children can do for themselves, but like any other child, they need our guidance and support. As parents, we need to remember that no matter how smart they are, our gifted children are still children, and we are the adults, with adult experience and wisdom. The authors give us respectful ways to accomplish this.

Continuing with chapters on intensity and perfectionism; idealism and depression; and acquaintances, friends and peers, *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children* moves into a challenging subject: twice exceptional children. If after reading this chapter, you need more information on these amazing and sometimes frustrating gifted kids, read an entire book on the subject, such as *Misdiagnosis And Dual Diagnoses Of Gifted Children And Adults: ADHD, Bipolar, OCD, Asperger's, Depression, And Other Disorders*.

A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children concludes with valuable information on the gifted child in school, including gifted identification and educational 'fit' for the gifted child. This educational 'fit' is what parents of the gifted child are searching for, and the authors offer great ideas on how to find it. And, if you need help, *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children* offers suggestions for seeking good professional help – not all professionals are created equal.

All in all, *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children* is the single book you need to get started as the parent of a gifted child. Every parent should read this book!

DeVries, A., & Webb, J. (2007). *Gifted Parent Groups: The SENG Model* (2nd ed.). Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

Reviewed by Stephanie Ferguson, Director, Program for the Exceptionally Gifted at Mary Baldwin College

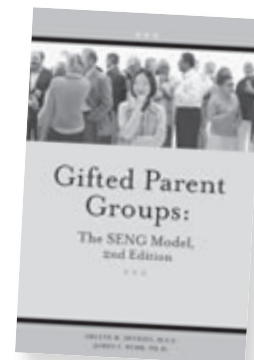
In 1981, Supporting Emotional Needs of Gifted (SENG) program began guided discussion groups for parents of gifted and talented children. The SENG Model for gifted parent groups is designed to bring together 10-20 interested parents, grandparents, or other interested adults to discuss pertinent topics related to gifted children such as: motivation, discipline, stress management, coping skills, and peer interaction. The facilitators' role in SENG Model groups is not that of "sage on the stage" or "expert, but rather one of moderator in order to ensure a nonjudgmental, tolerant, and open forum. The belief is that parents of gifted children are themselves an untapped resource. When brought together in the appropriate atmosphere, these parents can learn from, encourage, and inspire each other. Ideas are also garnered from the book *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children* around which the SENG Model sessions are built.

SENG Model groups meet typically meet for 10 weeks. Each group is facilitated by two or three co-leaders who have received facilitator training prior to starting the parent group. Facilitators are urged to read both *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children* (Webb, Gore, Amend & DeVries, 2007) and *Children: The Challenge* (Dreikurs & Stolz, 1964) prior to receiving their training as many of the strategies referred to in the SENG Model guide are fully elaborated in these books.

This book aims to be training manual for those wishing to be SENG Model groups facilitators. Beyond providing information on the history and background of the SENG Model, giving formats and topics for each session, and facilitator role descriptions, it describes a myriad of techniques that group facilitators are expected to model for group participants such as: expectant praise, building on successes, Socratic questioning, turning statements into questions, reframing, selective ignoring, and many others. Also included are preemptory vignettes about "potential problems" that may arise during group sessions: "the dominating group member", "the withdrawn group member", "the insightful group member", "the hostile group member", and "the fragile group member" along with techniques

to address such behaviors to maintain a positive and productive group dynamic. An Action Plan is also provided to help potential facilitators select location, meeting time, fee schedules, advertising, and acquire resource materials. The volume concludes with multiple appendices with resources for the SENG Model facilitator.

Written without educational jargon, the 2nd edition is well organized, clear, concise, and easy to follow. For those with an interest in starting a parent group, this model provides history, techniques, cautions, and planning tips. SENG Model groups are designed to be neither therapy nor advocacy, but rather discussion groups that often facilitate better communication between parents and schools. The phrase printed at the top of the title page says it all, "flowing with, rather than fighting against."



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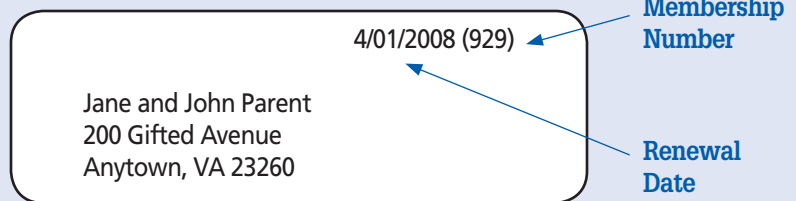
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The VAG Newsletter is one of the tangible benefits of your membership in the Virginia Association for the Gifted. In the four newsletters published yearly, we include conference information, news about programs and events of interest to gifted students, their parents, and teachers, articles by educators and parents about gifted issues, as well as reprints of material from national journals and organizations. We invite you to submit your suggestions and/or articles you have written and would like to share with VAG members through this newsletter. Parents and teachers are especially encouraged to submit their children's original creative writing pieces.

Check Your Address Label



Ballot: Slate of Officers for 2008-2010

New officers take office at the April meeting. Judy Williams will become the Past-President and Pam Flaherty will become President.

Please mark your ballot and return it by March 15, 2008, to:
Elections Committee
Virginia Association for the Gifted
P.O. Box 26212
Richmond, VA 23260-6212

The following slate is presented for your approval:		Yes	No
President-Elect:	Carol Horn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vice President:	Catherine Brighton	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Secretary:	Kevin Simms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Treasurer:	Cynthia Carmine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>