Looking Back on the 63rd Annual NAGC Convention

About 3,000 advocates of gifted children traveled to Orlando, Florida to learn and collaborate at the 63rd Annual National Associated for Gifted Children Conference. Alex Wright, the opening night keynote speaker, kicked off the conference to a bustling crowd full of energy. Wright is the Creative Director of Walt Disney Imagineering and spoke about creativity, a topic close to our hearts. Wright spoke about creativity as a process and the first idea might not be the best one. He challenged the audience to question assumptions and ask, “why not?” or “what if this?” rather than “no” or “that can’t be done.” His spirited speech set the mood for the informative sessions that filled the next three days. The conference would not have been complete without Thursday night’s Creativity Night: The Magic of Creativity held by the Creativity & Arts Network. The night was a huge success with about 250 people in attendance! For those who missed out on this night, this issue highlights a few of the outstanding presentations.

Team Building
Learn different team building activities that foster creative problem-solving, risk-taking, and collaboration – page 5

Rubik’s Cubes Mosaics
Did you know Rubik’s Cubes make beautiful mosaic art? Learn about this hands-on activity on page 7

Why Play Games?
Playing games can help build and enhance thinking skills. Learn about the game created by Set Enterprises, Inc. – page 8

& More!
An Elegant Problem

The characteristics of **An Elegant Problem**:
Provides fluency of responses, flexibility of problem space, room for elaboration, opportunities for original answers, a worthiness factor, and the potential for elegant solutions.

**The Elegant Problem** focused on uniting the senses (perception) and the intellect (imagination) *because* the senses are a primary way of gathering information. These acute perceptual and imaginational skills are especially recognized in the arts and sciences. Highly creative artists and scientists often credit their cultivated perceptions like noticing and aesthetic sensibilities as in the beauty of a solution to their major contributions.

**How can we cultivate an aesthetic sensibility?**

Potential solutions guided the discussion surrounding this example of an elegant problem:

1. A rough cut of the educational documentary "Engaging the Imagination: Wally's Way" was shown to demonstrate techniques for making a heart connection to art. The photo above features Wally in his “Pied Piper” role. Learn more about the film here: [www.Wallyswayfilm.com](http://www.Wallyswayfilm.com)

2. Attendees were given performance cards© S.Kay to have students use at cultural encounters, for example, an assembly at school or a professional concert, play, or museum.

**ABOUT THE PRESENTER**

Sandra I. Kay has a Doctor of Education and Master of Education in Special Education from Teachers College, Columbia University and a Bachelor and Master of Science in Art Education from SUNY New Paltz. She has written over 50 articles and chapters. Her work has been published in *School Arts, Journal of Aesthetic Education, Design for Arts Education, Roeper Review, Creativity Research Journal, Gifted Child Quarterly, Teaching Exceptional Children, Problem Finding, Problem Solving*. Her research interests focus on developing talent/expertise and on the problem-finding aspects of creative thought, visual thinking, and other habits of mind that engage the imagination and promote self-directed inquiry in children and adults. She is a founding faculty member of the Center for Teaching Critical Thinking and Creativity (CTCTC) at San Diego State University.
Creativity Through the Ages: The Importance of Encouraging Creativity in Children at Home and School

The importance of creativity in all learning environments was explored with the help of a case study of a young boy. The study documented Mikey’s home and school life from kindergarten through age 21. Audience members were encouraged to comment on the presentation about their experiences, comments, answer the guiding questions, and/or new questions. The following guiding questions included:

- The self-directed play of young children has been described as:
  - Just “random play” of children who just don’t know how to conform to societal expectations?
- Do you agree? Or could early play indicate creative potential?
  - Do children need outlets for creativity in formal school classrooms to develop talent to their potential in their chosen domain?
  - Can creative potential be stifled?
  - How can parents and teachers encourage creativity in learning?
  - Can talent be recognized by predictive behaviors in childhood?
  - What environmental factors determine whether talent is developed?
  - What role does “passion” or “calling” play in development of talent?

Next, the audience members used data from sample product portfolios to assess creativity in young gifted children. The portfolios included scores from three products created at school and two products created at home. Conversations ensued about the difference in scoring between students with high scores on home products compared to students with high scores on classroom products. Are these differences
considered? Are these students (ones with high at school scores) at risk if they do not qualify for gifted services? Finally, Piirto’s Pyramid was used to explain the link between creativity and talent development. Most talent can be recognized by predictive behaviors in childhood, and environmental factors determine whether talent is developed. An individual’s talent is not enough, he/she must experience a passion or calling which leads to commitment.

13 Suggests for Parents and Teachers

1. Provide a place
2. Provide materials
3. Encourage
4. Do on your own
5. Set the tone
6. Value the work of others
7. Make family value
8. Avoid sex-role stereotypes
9. Use private lessons and classes
10. Use hardship to teach
11. Discipline and practice
12. Allow “oddness”
13. Use humor and creativity training


ABOUT THE PRESENTER

Susan Grammer spent the first 20 years of her adult life as a biomedical researcher, but once her children started kindergarten in 1999 she became interested in educating gifted learners. After learning just a little bit about creativity, she realized that all of the best scientists she had worked with over the years benefited from a high level of creativity in their work. Along with advocating for gifted learners in Michigan as a member of the Board of the Michigan Alliance for Gifted Education, she also created a K-12 earth science outreach program in 2006 at Western Michigan University. In 2012, she moved to Oklahoma with her family, and began her journey in educational psychology at Oklahoma State University. She earned an M.S. in Educational Psychology/Developmental and Instructional Psychology in 2016. As a graduate student, Susan studied the work of Jane Pirto and other creativity researchers and the role of creativity in talent development and became convinced that encouraging creativity is the best way to help students to find their own passions and learn to be their own best teachers!
**Developing Creativity through Team Building in the Classroom**

Turn your gifted students into a team of creative problem-solving, risk-taking collaborators through experiential team building activities that can be used at any time during your school day. Imagine the possibilities for brainstorming and solution finding to fun challenges that can include and expand academics!

For any activity:
1) **Explain and check for safety**
2) **Play!**
3) **Debrief:** What went well? What didn’t? What brainstorming and planning was involved? How was the task completed? Was their trial and error? How did they work as a team? (communication, trust, leaders, and followers, etc.)

**Team Building Activities**

**Blind Cube**
Give all players a blindfold and have them put them on. Tell them they must find twelve pool noodles around them and put them together to make a perfect cube. For safety, make sure you are watching closely for potential hazards as the players ‘wander.’

**Equipment Needed:** Pool noodles or similar objects to make a cube, blindfolds

**Variations:** Have students make other shapes and figures

**Sample Standards:** Soft skills, shapes, attributes, structures, communication

**Stepping Stones**
Establish a start and finish line. Give the group “lily pads” / spot markers they can use
to cross the “river” (1 per person). The group’s objective is to cross the river (lava, jelly, etc.) without stepping into the river. This river is running and if someone is not connected to each lily pad at all times, it will float away (be taken by the leader). Establish the consequences for if a person “falls in” (individual or group starts over, lose use of the body part that touched, etc.).

**Equipment Needed:** Boundaries, spot marker for each participant

**Variations:** Polluted river, volcanic eruption, historic escape

**Sample Standards:** Soft skills, movement, pollution, volcanoes, habitats, historic figures, related literature, write a narrative

### Key Punch

Establish a space about 6 feet wide and randomly place numbered spot markers (1 through 30) inside the area with numbers facing up. Place the starting line about 15 feet away and have all participants stand behind it. The objective is for the team to run down around the numbered “keys” and, as a team, touch all of them in order, and then return back past the starting point. Each time they do this, you should time them and let them try to improve as much as possible. The rules are as follows 1) they cannot touch the ground inside the boundary or the boundary itself, or they are penalized, 2) they may not touch any of the “keys” out of order, or they are penalized.

**Equipment Needed:** Rope/string for boundary, numbered spots

**Variations:** Use fractions instead of whole numbers

**Sample Standards:** Soft skills, brainstorming, planning, experimentation, refining, counting

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**ABOUT THE PRESENTER**

Kathy Marks is an Educational Consultant near Atlanta, GA. She loves to mix and mingle her passion and experience teaching gifted students and adults with team building. Involved in various NAGC networks and committees, Kathy has a special excitement for the Javits-Frasier program. Check out her Gifted Ed Resource page at [http://www.kmarksconsulting.com/gifted-ed-resources.html](http://www.kmarksconsulting.com/gifted-ed-resources.html) or for more team building games contact her at [kathymarksconsulting@yahoo.com](mailto:kathymarksconsulting@yahoo.com).
Rubik’s Cubes Mosaics

Rubik’s Cubes Mosaics is a great way to introduce students to Rubik’s Cubes or take it up another notch if they already know how to solve the cube.

Besides the “fun-factor,” there are many benefits of mosaics with Rubik’s Cubes. For example: it builds/increases spatial thinking abilities (instrumental in improving math, science, engineering and computer science skills), promotes perseverance, builds collaboration skills for student teams, and it’s a great STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) activity.

For more information on the benefits of spatial thinking skills see http://spatiallearning.org/

The Educational division of Rubik’s Cubes provides free loaner sets for educators! For more info go to: www.youcandothecube.com There are also great teacher resources on the website for incorporating Rubik’s Cubes into your STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) related lessons. They also host a competition. Please see the website above for more details.

**Activity**

1. Use the template to create your own design for a 3 x 3 cube set or 2 x 4 cube set
2. Don’t forget to leave blank squares for white
3. Once the design is finished, divide up the cubes on paper and start making the design for your assigned cube

**Materials for the Activity**

Design and cube templates can be found here http://preview.tinyurl.com/nagc-cube-mosaics

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ABOUT THE PRESENTER

Claudette Van Ravenstein is the Gifted And Talented Education (GATE) District Coordinator for Harmony Public Schools in the Houston area. She has served over 1300 students from 18 campuses (& adding more in 2017) in the GATE program. She started teaching full time in 2010, first as the Technology Teacher for K-3 at the Harmony School of Excellence campus. In 2011, she embarked on her GT journey when she started providing pull-out services for elementary students. In 2014, she became the Houston GATE District Coordinator.
Why Play Games?

Just as lifting weights can build muscles, playing quality games can build thinking skills. This hands-on workshop demonstrated the use of intellectual games to teach and solidify logical and spatial reasoning as well as cognitive thinking skills. Using games in the classroom can teach students how to convert data into knowledge by recognizing patterns and how to apply that knowledge to achieve solutions. Intellectual games are great for exercising both sides of the brain and for maintaining and enhancing STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) thinking skills through repeated practice.

Games are a valuable tool to enhance skills needed in the 21st century. This seminar explored games and discussed the skills they exercise such as:

- Critical thinking, problem-solving and flexible thinking
- Collaboration across networks and leading by influence
- Agility and adaptability
- Initiative and entrepreneurialism
- Effective communication
- Accessing and analyzing information
- Creativity and imagination
- Executive function
- Working memory
- Cognitive processing speed

By utilizing these skills in a fun and repetitive fashion, gifted students are able to build mental muscle memory so that they can access these skills more readily in other situations.
SET Enterprises Resources for Teachers

- Free Daily SET Puzzle (http://www.setgame.com/set/puzzle)
- Free Daily Quiddler Puzzle (http://www.setgame.com/quiddler/puzzle)
- Free Xactika Puzzle (http://www.setgame.com/xactika/puzzle)
- Online Teacher's Corner (http://www.setgame.com/teachers-corner)
- Host a SET Competition or a Game Night (www.setgame.com; setgame@setgame.com)

ABOUT SET ENTERPRISES, INC.

Set Enterprises, Inc. is an all women-owned and operated business with a global presence; its games are sold all across America and in over 40 countries around the world. Set Enterprises, located in Fountain Hills, Arizona, is a leading developer of award-winning family and educational games with 15 games currently on the market: SET, SET Junior, SET Dice, Quiddler, Quiddler Deluxe, Quiddler Junior, Five Crowns, Five Crowns Junior, Xactika, Karma, Mini Rounds, and the newest game, WordSpiel. By popular demand, Set Enterprises also recently launched the second edition of The Quiddler SHORT Word Dictionary. Retrieved from http://www.setgame.com/company-information
Only You Can Help Save Fred!

Fred has been spending his summer boating on the Missouri River, but he’s not too bright (after all, a worm’s brain is pretty small). He does not know how to swim, and he never wears a life preserver. **The Worst Has Happened!** His boat has capsized, and he’s stuck! Fortunately, his life preserver is in the boat, but unfortunately he does not know how to reach it without falling off and drowning.

**Problem:** How can you save Fred using only 4 paper clips? You may not touch Fred, the boat, or the life preserver directly with your hands!

**Materials**
- Gummy Worm
- Gummy life preserver
- 1 plastic cup
- 4 Paper Clips

**Setup**

![Image of setup with a plastic cup and paper clips]

**Procedure**
1. Set up the challenge as shown in the picture above and "Save Fred".
2. Follow the rules. Fred, the boat, and the life preserver can be touched only with the paperclips. NO HANDS.
3. A flowchart is a diagram showing a sequence of operations. Fill in the flowchart on the backside of this page with diagrams showing step by step how you completed the challenge. Be sure that you: Produce neat and detailed pictures. Label the major parts of your diagram. Include a written description of each diagram using complete sentences.
4. List any problems or challenges that you encountered during the challenge.

**About the Presenter**
Beth Schumacher is the Director of the Talented and Gifted Program at Crow Creek Tribal School in Stephan, South Dakota, located on the Crow Creek Sioux Reservation. She has taught for 31 years and has been at Crow Creek for 22 years. She and her husband have 2 sons, Wyatt and Cody. In her free time, she enjoys fishing, camping, scrapbooking, crocheting, and swimming.
Dear NAGC Member,

Over the years, the Conceptual Foundations Network has spearheaded the effort to preserve the voices and images of individuals who have led the way in our efforts to serve children with gifts and talents.

CF now invites your participation in our new Legacy Archive Project. We are building a video archive of interviews with individuals who have made a significant contribution to our field. Our goal is to interview several individuals each year, so we may preserve their perspectives and the wisdom gained from their experience in gifted education. We need you to join in this project by submitting a nomination or by volunteering to interview.

Nominees for the Legacy Archive Project have made an impact beyond the local level on gifted individuals by informing gifted education practice, policy or scholarship, by influencing thinking about topics of concern through teaching, publications or service, by providing outstanding leadership, or by making other noteworthy contributions.

The Project Committee will review all nominations and anyone determined to have made a significant contribution according to this definition will be added to our list of interview subjects. If you are interested in interviewing your nominee or anyone else on our list, you can also volunteer to be on our list of interviewers.

Click here to submit a nominee. Please be as complete as possible in filling out the survey to help the Project Committee understand the significance of your nominee’s contribution. You may submit as many nominees as you like.

You may also volunteer to be an interviewer through the survey.

Please contact any member of the Project Committee listed below with questions or comments.

Thank you for your help in creating a diverse, truly representative of contributors to our field.

The Legacy Archive Project Committee

Chair, Jennifer Riedl Cross, jrcross@wm.edu
Co-Chair, Stephen Schroth, sschroth@towson.edu
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A huge thank you to all the vendors who donated to Creativity Night. It would not have been a success without your support!

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**ANNOUNCEMENT**

Torrance Center Summer Institute 2017

**July 10th – 14th**

The Torrance Center for Creativity and Talent Development is pleased to announce the 2017 Torrance Center Summer Institute (TCSI)!

Join us July 10-14, 2017 on the campus of the University of Georgia, as we explore the principles of creative thinking as a framework for curriculum development, classroom teaching, and assessment. Designed around research-based strategies for integrating creativity into the classroom, the five day-training will offer strands on the following topics: The Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT), Future Problem Solving (FPS), Common Core in the creative classroom, teaching with technology, and using creativity for equity in gifted and advanced programs. Educators will leave with practical creative strategies for enhancing their overall classroom instruction.

For more information and to register, please visit [https://coe.uga.edu/events/calendar/2017-torrance-center-summer-institute-20170710](https://coe.uga.edu/events/calendar/2017-torrance-center-summer-institute-20170710)
Don’t Miss NAGC 64th Annual Conference Next Year

When: November 9 – 12, 2017

Where: Charlotte, North Carolina

Regular Registration
March 1 – September 15

For more information please visit: [https://www.nagc.org/professional-learning/nagc-64th-annual-convention](https://www.nagc.org/professional-learning/nagc-64th-annual-convention)

Everyone is unique and creative; let’s celebrate eagles in the air where they can soar, rather than making them feel like they are failures only because they can’t run fast. —Let’s get rid of high-stakes testing! —Dr. KH Kim