



EARLY CHILDHOOD DIVISION NEWSLETTER



Fall 2006

Newsletter Editor, Sneha Shah-Coltrane

NEWS from Early Childhood Division CHAIR

Fall is here, school is in session and with that said our challenges begins. The education of young children takes on a new persona when they exhibit traits that are academically above and beyond their age and grade peers. Issues of identification, practice and models of appropriate pedagogy often perplex teachers and parents alike. Each day I ask myself the following question: What did I do to influence this child to grow academically, cognitively, socially and emotionally? That is our continued challenge and calling.

Each day brings a new question we must ask of ourselves. How do we quench the thirst of a youngster that has to need to understand how electricity works, comprehends and laughs at the idioms in Amelia Bedilia stories or can explain to a peer that carrots do not grow in the cellophane bags they see in the grocery store. The information in this issue will hopefully continue to provide insight into some of the attributes of educating our young gifted learners.

Enclosed you will find the NAGC Board of Directors approved *Early Childhood Position Statement*. This document helps educators to understand the nuances of our young gifted learners as well as a bibliography that provides us sources for reference. In this issue, please also find two articles that teachers can use right away in your classroom. One focused on informative and well designed web sites, and another about how to "Kick It Up a Notch" in your classroom and create an even more engaging classroom.

Also in this issue we would like to share with you the recipients' of the Early Childhood Division NAGC Attendance Grant. This grant opportunity is open to any member of the Early Childhood Division. The grant provides the recipients with the NAGC convention registration fee. The following proposals received the 2006 Awards. Kimberly Crawford of the Lake Forest Country Day School submitted, *The Gift of Diversity: Celebrating Learning Difference in Early Childhood Classroom*. Our second recipient is Nan Hathaway from the Rocky Mountain School for the Gifted and Creative. Her experience in gifted education presents a focus on choice based art. *Is There a Scribble Stage for Sculpture?*, shares with us her insight.

The NAGC conference is just around the corner. Please see the enclosed listing of ECD events! It is our hope that those of you attending the conference will attend our annual Early Childhood business meeting as well as the many sessions that have been carefully selected for your educational expansion. I will be presenting a session of literature appropriate for the young gifted child, entitled So Many Books, So Little Time. Our division is also sponsoring a pre-conference session hosted by Dr. Mary Ruth Coleman and Sneha Shah-Coltrane from U-STARS~PLUS at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This day lonession entitled, Strategies to Nurture, Recognize, and Respond to Outstanding Potential in our Young Students, should prove to be valuable and informative as they invite you to explore this topic with them.

To that end, I want to thank all the E.C. members for their continued support. I have been involved with this division for over 8 years as well as with NAGC. This past year I was honored with the 2005, NAGC Administrator of the Year. It was truly a high point in my career. A generous gift from Ball State University accompanied this award. It was my distinct pleasure to convert this award into two scholarships for graduating seniors that had been involved in my school district's gifted program. I look forward to seeing you at NAGC!

Laura Beltchenko
Early Childhood Division Chair
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A look inside this issue...

- ECD Position Paper
- NAGC Summary
- Reviewed Websites!
- "Kick It Up A Notch in the Classroom"
- Attendance Grant Winner Articles

Since 2002, the ECD has been working diligently on an Early Childhood Position Statement. We are pleased to report that the NAGC Board has approved this final version below. Good work team!



Early Childhood Position Statement

Creating Contexts for Individualized Learning in Early Childhood Education

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) is an organization of parents, teachers, administrators, educators, other professionals, and community leaders who unite to address the unique needs of children and youth with demonstrated gifts and talents as well as those children who may be able to develop their talent potential with appropriate educational experiences.

NAGC periodically issues policy statements dealing with issues, policies, and practices that have an impact on the education of gifted and talented students. Policy statements represent the official convictions of the organization.

All policy statements approved by the NAGC Board of Directors are consistent with the organization's belief that education in a democracy must respect the uniqueness of all individuals, the broad range of cultural diversity present in our society, and the similarities and differences in learning characteristics that can be found within any group of students. NAGC is fully committed to national goals that advocate both excellence and equity for all students, and we believe that the best way to achieve these goals is through differentiated educational opportunities, resources, and encouragement for all students.

National Association for Gifted Children

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Early Childhood Position Statement

Creating Contexts for Individualized Learning in Early Childhood Education

This position statement, initiated by the Early Childhood Division of NAGC, focuses on creating optimal environments for recognizing, developing, and nurturing the strengths and talents of young gifted children, age 3 through 8. Characteristics of these young gifted children can include (but are not limited to): the use of advanced vocabulary and/or the development of early reading skills, keen observation and curiosity, an unusual retention of information, periods of intense concentration, an early demonstration of talent in the arts, task commitment beyond same-age peers, and an ability to understand complex concepts, perceive relationships, and think abstractly (Clark, 2002; Smutny, 1998; Smutny & von Fremd, 2004). Although many individuals are influential in the lives of young children, this position statement targets those who care for and are responsible for teaching young gifted children, including parents, caregivers, teachers, administrators, and other members of the community.

Early childhood gifted education focuses on recognizing, developing, and nurturing the strengths and talents of all children age 3 through 8. Early childhood educators and family members have mutual goals to develop children's capacity and passion for learning to the fullest potential. In addition, research indicates that an interactive and responsive environment in early childhood supports both cognitive and affective growth and establishes a pattern of successful learning that can continue throughout children's lives (Clark, 2002; Smutny, 1998). As such, the creation of rich and engaging learning environments in schools, homes, and communities during early childhood can enhance educational opportunities for learners and help put children on the path to academic achievement.

In many children, a pattern of gifted behaviors and/or advanced performance can be seen as early as pre-school; however, classroom modifications for gifted students altering the pace, depth, or complexity of instruction are rarely implemented in pre-school and early-elementary classrooms (Robinson et al., 2002; Stainthorp & Hughes, 2004). Thus the early educational experiences of many young gifted children provide limited challenge and hinder their cognitive growth rather than exposing learners to an expansive, engaging learning environment. This problem may be intensified among traditionally underserved populations of young gifted students including culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse learners, as well as children from poverty because in many cases additional resources for providing enriched learning experiences in homes and communities are also limited (Robinson et al.; Scott & Delgado, 2005). Therefore, NAGC believes that providing engaging, responsive learning environments in which young learners' interests, strengths,

and skills are identified, developed, and used to guide individualized learning experiences benefit all children, including young gifted children. Further, NAGC believes that providing a broad range of educational, health, and social services is especially critical for enabling young children from economically impoverished environments to develop and demonstrate high potential.

Young gifted learners are a heterogeneous group that is not easily defined or assessed. They present educators and families with unique challenges due to their rapid and often asynchronous development (Elkind, 1998). Varied and uneven physical, social, emotional, and cognitive growth can make identification of young learners' strengths, skills, and interests, and the subsequent provision of individualized instruction, difficult for those without formal training in acceleration and differentiation of curriculum and instruction (Gross, 1999; Smutny & von Fremd, 2004). In fact, research indicates that highly gifted young children frequently hide their advanced abilities or outstanding behaviors in educational settings to fit in socially with their peers (Gross). In addition, parents offer a unique perspective and are often among the first to recognize gifted behaviors in early childhood indicating that families must be included as active partners in the identification process and subsequent planning of learning environments (Barbour & Shaklee, 1998; Gross; Smutny, 1998). Ultimately, educators and families must work together to consistently develop and adapt environments that cultivate and respond to the learning needs of young gifted learners (Smutny & von Fremd).

Early childhood educators and family members play powerful and critical roles in establishing and supporting learning environments at home, in community settings, and in traditional school settings (Feinburg & Mindess, 1994; Smutny, 1998). These contexts vary and require the active participation of caring adults to recognize and nurture children's strengths, interests, and abilities. However, similar core elements must be in place across all contexts to establish an appropriate and responsive educational learning environment (Bredenkamp & Rosegrant, 1995; Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1993; Katz & Chard, 2000; Feinburg & Mindess; Smutny). The attributes of these core elements include:

- recognition of students as individuals who enter school with a unique set of experiences, interests, strengths, and weaknesses that will influence their readiness to learn (Elkind, 1998; Feinburg & Mindess; Smutny & von Fremd, 2004)
- informal and formal observations about student strengths and readiness that inform the planning of learning opportunities (Smutny; Smutny & von Fremd)
- flexibility in the pace at which learning opportunities are provided (Some gifted learners

benefit from acceleration to prevent needless repetition while others make gains with additional time to explore a topic in a more in-depth manner than same-age peers.)

(Smutny & von Fremd)

- challenging and content-rich curriculum that promotes both critical and creative thinking across all academic disciplines including reading, math, science, and the arts (Robinson et al., 2002; Smutny & von Fremd)
- opportunities to build advanced literacy skills (Gross, 1999; Stainthorp & Hughes, 2004)
- ample and varied materials including but not limited to technology, print material, and manipulative resources (Barbour & Shaklee, 1998; Bredekamp & Rosegrant; Clark, 2002)
- instructional strategies that foster an authentic construction of knowledge based on exploration, manipulative resources, and experiential inquiry (Barbour & Shaklee; Clark; Katz & Chard),
- early exposure to advanced concepts in age-appropriate ways (Clark; Smutny)
- learning opportunities that provide choice and the development of independent problem solving (Robinson et al.)
- the identification and use of individual student interests to encourage investigative behaviors (Barbour & Shaklee; Smutny & von Fremd)
- interaction and collaboration with diverse peer groups of children having like and different interests and abilities (Bredekamp & Rosegrant; Elkind)
- experiences that range from concrete to abstract (Katz & Chard; Smutny & von Fremd)
- opportunities for social interaction with same-age peers as well as individuals with similar cognitive abilities and interests (Bredekamp & Rosegrant; Clark)
- engagement in a variety of stimulating learning experiences (including hands-on opportunities, imaginative play, and problem-solving) (Barbour & Shaklee; Clark; Smutny), and
- caring and nurturing child-centered environments that support healthy risk-taking behaviors (Barbour & Shaklee; Clark; Elkind; Smutny).

To actualize these optimal learning environments, NAGC supports the development of information for parents, educators, and caregivers on the traits, behaviors, and unique learning needs of young gifted children. We also promote collaboration with early childhood educators to increase their capacity to identify and nurture the interests, talents, and abilities of young gifted learners and to create intellectually engaging learning environments to provide the highest quality education

possible for all young children.

Annotated Bibliography

Barbour, N. E., & Shaklee, B. D. (1998). Gifted education meets Reggio Emilia: Visions for curriculum in gifted education for young children. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 42, 228-237.

This article explores the relationship between gifted education and early childhood education relating to curriculum development and implementation, evaluation procedures, and parent involvement.

Bredekamp, S., & Rosegrant, T. (Eds.) (1995). *Reaching potentials: Transforming early childhood curriculum and assessment, Vol. 2*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Published by NAEYC, this book describes curriculum development for young children and connects goals and objectives to national curriculum standards.

Clark, B. (2002). *Growing up gifted* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

This book traces the development of giftedness from birth through adulthood with chapter four focusing on early childhood. Insights are offered about environmental factors, parenting, and educational experiences.

Edwards, C., Gandini, L., & Forman, G. (1993). *The hundred languages of children. The Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

This book explains the constructivist learning approach to educating young children exemplified in the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy. The approach “fosters children’s intellectual development through a systematic focus on symbolic representation” (p. 3).

Elkind, D. (1998). *Reinventing childhood: Raising and educating children in a changing world*. Rosemont, NJ: Modern Learning Press.

Written by child psychologist, David Elkind, this book examines modern conceptions of early childhood, including a chapter describing definitions and identification of intelligence and giftedness in young children.

Feinburg, S., & Mindess, M. (1994). *Eliciting children's full potential: Designing and evaluating developmentally based programs for young children*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing.

The authors describe in detail how early childhood classrooms develop student’s potential by embracing the cognitive development model.

Gross, M. U. M. (1999). Small poppies: Highly gifted children in the early years. *Roeper Review*, 21, 207-214.

This article discusses issues in the identification of young highly gifted children and describes the developmental differences in this unique group of learners. Research-based suggestions for improving identification and service provision are also provided.

Katz, L., & Chard, S. C. (2000). *Engaging children's minds: The project approach* (2nd ed.). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Katz and Chard describe the Project-Approach to curriculum development and the principles and practice of the approach. The approach is based on philosophical underpinnings of Dewey and experiential learning.

Robinson, N. M., Lanzi, R. G., Weinberg, R. A., Ramey, S. L., & Ramey, C. T. (2002). Family factors associated with high academic competence in former Head Start children at third grade. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 46, 278-290.

This study examines the factors related to the academic achievement of the top 3% of third grade students participating in the National Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Project.

Scott, M. S., & Delgado, C. F. (2005). Identifying cognitively gifted minority students in preschool. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 49, 199-209.

Scott and Delgado examine the efficacy of a pre-school screening instrument for identifying cognitively gifted minority students.

Smutny, J. F. (Ed.). (1998). *The young gifted child: Potential and promise: An anthology*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

This comprehensive volume presents and synthesizes the research of 41 experts in the fields of gifted education and early childhood education to address topics related to identification, special populations, parenting, socio-emotional needs, and education.

Smutny, J. F., & von Fremd, S. E. (2004). *Differentiating for the young child: Teaching strategies across the content areas (K-3)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

The book details a rationale, tools, and techniques for including differentiated instruction for young learners across the curriculum. Smutny and von Fremd also emphasize the vital relationship between effective assessment and successful differentiation.

Stainthorp, R., & Hughes, D. (2004). An illustrative case study of precocious reading ability. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 48, 107-120.

This longitudinal case study drawn from a larger study illustrates the educational experiences of bright, early readers and the factors that can impede or foster continued growth of literacy skills.

REACHING
FOR RIGOR
AND RELEVANCE



NAGC 53rd Convention

November 1 -5, 2006

Charlotte, NC

HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DIVISION!!!

[ECD Sponsored NAGC Pre-Conference](#)

Wednesday, November 1, 2006

Strategies to Nurture, Recognize, and Respond to Young Children in K-3 Classroom

Mary Ruth Coleman and Sneha Shah-Coltrane, U-STARS~PLUS, UNC-CH

Pre-registration required

[Division Work Session and Business Meeting](#)

Thursday, November 2, 2006 from 2 – 4:30pm

Please join us to help make our Division grow and make even more of a difference!

[OTHER WORKSHOP PRESENTATION HIGHLIGHTS](#)

- Reaching High Potential in Primary Classrooms*
- Building a Program for Math Talent: Essential Components for Success*
- Art Across the Curriculum*
- Get a Life! Integrate Biography into Your Classroom*
- So Many Books, So Little Time: Choosing and Using Quality Literature with Young Gifted Children,*
- Creating a Curriculum-Based Pull-Out Program for Gifted Elementary Students*
- Differentiation for Gifted Primary Students in the Regular Classroom*
- Metacognitive Inspiration and Fun for Primary Minds*
- Arithmetic vs. Mathematics - Thinking Outside the Box - Grades 1-5*
- Using the Schoolwide Enrichment Reading Framework with Talented Readers*
- Duke University TIP Talent Search: What's it All About?!*
- Curriculum for Developing Talent in Primary Grades*
- Learning from Others, Learning with Others - An Exploratory Cross-Age Tutoring Program*
- Fostering Creativity and Critical Thinking in the Young Gifted Child: Thinking with Junk!*
- Breaking the Ceiling Scores for Profoundly Gifted Children Using the WISC-IV*
- Kick Your Classroom Up a Notch: Nurture and Respond to Outstanding Potential through Differentiation*
- ICEbreakers and REPs for Student Engagement*
- Research Fun (and Rigor!) for Primary Gifted Students*



WEBSITES TO EXPLORE!

Compiled by Laura Beltheckenko

These websites were previewed, but always check sites again in case of changes.



1. **Marcopolo** internet content for the classroom provides the highest quality standards-based internet content and professional development to K-12 teachers and students. Its partnering links are:
 - Artsedge, providing arts integration
 - Ed Sitement, providing instruction in the humanities
 - Illuminations, National Council for the Teaching of Mathematics
 - Read-Write-Think, International Reading Association and National Council for the Teaching of English
 - Science NetLinks, providing information regarding science
 - Xpeditions, National Geographic's contribution for the study of Geography

<http://www.marcopolo-education.org/home.aspx>
 2. **Classroom Connect**, helping teachers use technology to improve teaching
<http://www.classroom.com>
 3. **Internet 4 Classrooms**, helping teachers use technology to improve instruction and personal tech skills.
www.internet4classroom.com/
 4. **FunBrain**, the title tells it all! A must explore for students that enjoy puzzles and games.
<http://www.funbrain.com/>
 5. **National Library of Virtual Manipulatives for Interactive Mathematics** Learning and understanding mathematics, at every level, requires student engagement. Mathematics is not, as has been said, a spectator sport. Too many of current instruction fails to actively involve students. One way to address the problem is through the use of manipulatives physical objects that help students visualize relationships and applications. We cannot use computers to create virtual learning environments to address the same goals.
<http://matti.usu.edu/mlvm/mav/vlibrary.html>
 6. **EduScapes** is an information site designed for life long learning by the noted technology specialist, Annette Lamb. EduScapes has been consistently ranked in the 'Top 50' K-12 education sites by Google.
<http://eduscapes.com/>
 7. **Starfall** is an online reading and writing program for pre-kindergarten—third grade.
www.starfall.com
 8. **Rubistar** is an online Rubric creator for all grade levels in a myriad of subjects. Customize to your personal classroom needs.
<http://rubistar.4teachers.org/>
 9. **Kathy Schrocks' guide for Educators, Teachers, Helpers/Assessments and Rubric Information.** This is a gold mine of information.
 10. <http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/assess.html> **Reading A-Z** offers thousands of printable teacher materials to teach guided reading, phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, reading fluency, alphabet, and vocabulary. The teaching resources include professionally developed downloadable-leveled books, lesson plans, worksheets, and reading assessments. Children's books and lessons are appropriate for all sorts of reading programs, including K-6, ESL/ELL, special education, and remedial reading. The reading program's downloadable books and lesson plans are standards based and results oriented.
<http://www.readinga-z.com>
 - United Streaming.** The best in visual Literacy & building background knowledge. (subscription)
<http://www.unitedstreaming.com>
 11. **Hoagies Gifted Education Page.** Winner of the NAGC 2005 Community Service Award. A bounty of gifted info!
<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/index.htm>
 12. **Teaching That Makes Sense** This is a wonderful website that provides a myriad of lesson structures for writing.
www.ttms.org
 13. **Scholastic for Teachers**
Explore the interactive writing activities
<http://teacher.scholastic.com>
- FREE, FREE, FREE,**
If you are not already a subscriber, please go to www.edutopia.org and get your free subscription to "edutopia." This wonderful technology based periodical is from the George Lucas Educational Foundation.

The Gift of Diversity: Celebrating Learning Differences in the Early Childhood Classroom

By Kimberly Crawford, M.S., C.C.L.S.

Many schools across our country express a commitment to diversity in their core values. Oftentimes, when discussing diversity, people are quick to think of dimensions such as race or ethnicity. Naturally, an average classroom is likely to vary with regard to children's gender, race, beliefs, and socio-economic status. Educators of young children, however, need to recognize, appreciate, and accommodate other forms of diversity as well. This means understanding that each child is unique and recognizing their individual differences. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, nurturing, and positive environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each child (University of Oregon, 2006). Celebrating these learning differences is essential to growth and development and will influence every aspect of a child's life; academically, physically, socially, and emotionally.

For children who are gifted, learning differences often come at a great price. Sensitivity to the special needs of these children presents an important challenge to educators. Because of the child's high intelligence, many teachers underestimate their need for support and overestimate their ability to persevere on their own. Children who are gifted have many talents that most other children do not, but these gifts need nurturing, understanding, and love in order for them to develop to their full potential. With the appropriate strategies, resources, and support, early childhood classroom teachers are in a unique position to advance the intellectual interests, talents, and well-being of these young children.

Above all else, children who are gifted are children first. Being gifted describes the talents a child has, not who the child is. Indeed, they have many characteristics and behaviors that set them apart from the typically developing child. However, these characteristics and behaviors are not things that need to be changed, but accepted. Inside is an individual who needs to be loved and appreciated just as much as any other child. It is imperative that educators look beyond the gifted label, a deceptively simple category, and delve into the complexities and exceptionalities that make their students individuals. These children must be expected to make mistakes, to get upset, and to disappoint. However, they must also be expected to take on challenges, to be happy, and to succeed. Teachers need to understand the unique development of these children while fulfilling their commitment to providing the most appropriate and equitable education.

The classroom environment is one of the most influential factors for a child with learning differences. Most importantly, teachers need to provide an environment where children feel safe to be themselves, free of judgment or criticism. The classroom needs to be a place that encourages creativity, curiosity, and exploration. It should be a place where children are provided with the tools, strategies, and support to learn in the way that they learn best. Children should have opportunities to learn through multiple intelligences while engaging in their own discovery of how their mind works. They need to be active participants in the learning process while participating in decision making, critical thinking, and problem solving. Children who are gifted benefit from a child-centered learning environment where they are given the freedom to pursue areas of interest.

For example, if a child is interested in studying the solar system, the teacher can provide supplemental books for the student to read independently. The internet is also a good resource for children to research a topic, with appropriate supervision. It is important to talk with the child about how to narrowly define their topic, what resources they will use, and how they could share this new information with the class. Children who are gifted need the freedom to choose and the guidance to succeed. Oftentimes, curiosity about a particular subject is contagious and the rest of the class becomes interested instantaneously. These interests need to be validated and integrated into the curriculum at every chance possible. Through this approach, teachers are meeting the needs of the individual student, as well as generating the interest of others.

"Sometimes being gifted means acting like your not. Teachers make me pretend to learn things that I already know or want me to act interested in something I can barely stand. Give gifted kids the opportunity to learn more about what they want to learn about. Give us more things to learn that are more interesting to think about. I like it better when I can just read and learn it on my own at my own pace."

All children need to be excited about learning and passionate about their experiences in the classroom. Children who are gifted desire a classroom environment where achievement is expected and encouraged, but where they can also fail without feeling like a failure. They should be provided with a developmentally appropriate and intellectually challenging curriculum that is individualized, allowing children to progress at their own level and pace (Roedell, W. 1990). In order for this progress to take place, teachers need to have a flexible approach to everything they do in the classroom. Assessment needs to be ongoing in order for teachers to plan appropriate and challenging learning opportunities for each student. When planning for lessons, it is important for the teacher to plan activities for children that may need more of a challenge. A useful strategy is to incorporate creative thinking and open-ended problem solving into daily lessons. These types of activities allow for all children to explore their thinking in a variety of ways and to a range of degrees.

The learning differences that giftedness presents can greatly impact the social and emotional development of children. As with typically developing children, tremendous emphasis should be placed on nurturing the whole child. "How children feel about themselves is far more important than what they know: 'I can' is more significant than IQ" (Smutny, J. 1997). Many teachers wonder how a child so smart can have such a difficult time fitting in with peers. However, children who are gifted often experience asynchronous development. It is not uncommon to find these children experiencing a vast gap between their advanced intellectual skills and their less advanced social and emotional competencies (Roedell, W. 1990). Being gifted usually amplifies a child's emotions in depth, degree, and intensity. This degree of difference from the norm is what creates a child's vulnerabilities (Smutney, J. 1997). Again, because these children are so intelligent, their emotionality is often misunderstood and can therefore lead to a multiplicity of problems.

"People in my class think I'm weird. It sometimes feels like everyone else doesn't want to be my friend. One kid said I was too smart to be his friend. I know things other kids don't know. I'm mostly smarter than any other kid I've ever met, so I have to try harder to be more like everyone else. I can't always talk about things I want to talk about because kids don't want to listen. I can't always participate in class because I see things differently. It's hard to find people to talk to who know something about what I'm interested in, like DNA. I don't like that sometimes people don't treat you well because they don't understand me."

When it comes to helping a child to reach their full potential, parents and teachers are the strongest resource for one another. They can gain valuable insights about a child's behavior by sharing information and listening to each other (Strip, 2000). It is important to keep an ongoing dialogue between school and home. In order for schools to meet the needs of children with learning differences, professional development of teachers needs to be a priority. Teachers need to be better trained in many areas of gifted education including identification and characteristics, curriculum integration, and how to differentiate the curriculum to accommodate the wide range of individual needs. Of equal importance, teachers need to understand the unique emotional and social needs of these children (Hearne, J. & Maurer, B. 2002).

Children love to think about the things that make them special. In fact, it is these differences that make the world more interesting. By modeling and practicing respect and understanding in the classroom, children learn to acknowledge and appreciate diversity. Helping children to celebrate learning differences promotes tolerance and provides a positive environment for all children to be successful. Within this environment children are going to learn that it is their similarities that make them human and their differences that make them individuals.

References:

All quotes provided by a kindergarten student in my 2004-2005 class

Delisle, J. & Galbraith, J. (2002). *When Gifted Kids Don't Have All the Answers*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing Inc.

Hanninen, G.E. "Focusing On Our Gifted youth." Seattle: New Horizons for Learning (www.newhorizons.org).

Hearne, J., & Maurer, B. (2002). "Gifted Education: A Primer." Seattle: New Horizons for Learning (www.newhorizons.org).

Levine, M. (2002). *A Mind at a Time*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Roedell, W. C. (1990). "Nurturing Giftedness in Young Children." ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children (www.ericdigests.org).

Smutny, J.F. (2001). *Stand Up for Your Gifted Child*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing Inc.

Smutny, J.F. (2000). "Teaching Young Gifted Children in the Regular Classroom." ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education; The Council for Exceptional Children (www.ericsec.org).

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University of Oregon (2006). "Definition of Diversity." <http://gladstone.uoregon.edu>

ATTENDANCE GRANT WINNER – MEMBER GUEST ARTICLE
Congratulations!

Is There A “Scribble Stage” for Sculpture?

By Nan Hathaway
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It has been more than 50 years since Lowenfeld described a universal developmental sequence common in children’s drawings. Known as “the Stages of Artistic Development”*, Lowenfeld states that just as babies progress from scooting to crawling and finally to walking, children also mature predictably in their mark-making from “the scribble stage’ to the “schematic stage” and on to “the realistic stage”.

Most parents and educators are not as familiar or comfortable with the developmental stages that may also occur in three-dimensional work, yet no doubt a similar progression exists. Is there a scribble stage in sculpture? Do children need to master one set of skills before they are able to move on to the next? Do students have opportunity and encouragement to spontaneously explore sculpture as they do drawing?

Fundamental learning is taking place when a student engineers a three- dimensional object. What materials are interesting and available? Should one glue, tape, staple or lash? How does one support a heavy object? How can stability be achieved? Is the resulting object functional or decorative? Can one preserve moving parts? What surface treatment might be considered to add beauty, interest, strength or polish?

In order to create a three-dimensional work of art, students must first learn about balance and support. Through guided experiences, trial and error and a good deal of practice, students discover how to make two-dimensional forms stand up. They begin to attach one element to another and discover how to achieve height, width and strength. Early sculptural attempts may look no more organized than the scribble of a three year old, but they are just as necessary and valid as those early marks with pencil or crayon.

It was my habit at one time to set up an “Inventors Workshop” in my art classroom at the end of the school year. This was the one day in the year that the only rule was “there are no rules”. Toilet paper tubes, scraps of Styrofoam, tape, staplers, string and all manner of accumulated “junk” would come out, and in a flurry of excited enthusiasm, students would create something that was of importance to them. It was by far the most popular and anticipated activity that I facilitated. Some students waited all year for this one glorious day.

I now arrange my art classroom in “centers” or “studios”. Each center is equipped materials and tools, but also with visual references; books, art reproductions, and student art work. My role has shifted from director to coach. Students are free to work in the area of their choice, on projects of their own invention, year round. It is little surprise to me that “the Construction Center” is the most popular workstation in my classroom. And while the objects that leave my room are sometimes challenging for adults, (picture an oatmeal box with a paper towel tube taped on top, draped with a scrap of colored cellophane or a tissue box balancing a strawberry basket lined with cotton, cradling three beads a pom-pom and a shell...), it is important to recognize the significance and value of creative construction.

Assessment of learning in my student centered classroom takes many forms. On-going teacher-student consultation assures that the student is productive and thoughtful in the work undertaken. Peer coaching often occurs as students share discoveries and expertise with one another. Students are encouraged to display their work and to write or dictate an

“artist’s statement” to inform the viewer about their piece. In my new role of mentor and facilitator, I have the opportunity to observe artists in action, and make notes about observed progress and growth.

Students bring their own interests and knowledge to their work, resulting in robust dedication and investment in their chosen projects. And while the resulting products do not always accurately reflect the importance of the process, the process has real value and is a significant aspect of the authentic work of artists. Countless meaningful questions and lessons arise when students attempt to work with sculpture. One must learn to walk before one can run.

*Creativity and Mental Growth, Victor Lowenfeld, Macmillian and Co., New York, 1947
To view information about the art program at Rocky Mountain School for the Gifted and Creative, please visit: www.artatrms.blogspot.com

KICKING IT UP A NOTCH IN YOUR CLASSROOM

By Sneha Shah Coltrane, ECD Newsletter Editor

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It's all about the wonder of the world, a challenging and engaging classroom, and students' natural curiosity!

For the upcoming school year, make your classrooms even better for your students and “Kick it up a Notch!” The more interesting and appropriately challenging classrooms can be, the better we can nurture, recognize, and respond to students’ needs.

There are many ways to “kick” your curriculum and lessons up a notch in your classrooms—sometimes it’s a major overhaul and sometimes it’s just adding a little something extra. Below you will find a list of ways to “Kick it up a Notch” in your classroom. Use this list as a cross-check for activities and/or units and to help you go that extra step for your students and teaching.



To kick it up a notch in your classroom, consider:

- ✓ Artistic connection
- ✓ Bi-lingual, multi-lingual opportunities
- ✓ Choice within activities
- ✓ Complex, multi-step tasks
- ✓ Creativity, uniqueness
- ✓ Data, experiments, scientific process— gather, record, analyze and share/display data over time
- ✓ Differentiation: Centers, Compacting, Higher-order thinking skills, Independent Studies/Projects, and Tiering
- ✓ Effective questions
- ✓ Excitement and FUN!
- ✓ Extensions and enrichment to activities
- ✓ Flexible groups, collaborations and independence
- ✓ Hands-on and inquiry-based ideas
- ✓ Higher-level thinking, critical thinking, sophistication
- ✓ High-interest, curiosity
- ✓ Home and community connection
- ✓ Incorporation of skills
- ✓ Incorporation of technology
- ✓ Integration of all content areas
- ✓ Interest and curiosity
- ✓ Journals, documentation
- ✓ Learner profiles, styles, etc.
- ✓ Learner readiness levels, multi-level
- ✓ Movement, drama, kinesthetic activities
- ✓ Multi-cultural perspectives
- ✓ Open-ended activities
- ✓ Performing Arts, drama, music
- ✓ Powerful vocabulary
- ✓ Prior knowledge, student connection
- ✓ Real world, authentic, nature connections
- ✓ Research
- ✓ Resources – realia, manipulatives, literature, supplies
- ✓ Role playing, alternative perspectives
- ✓ Student as teacher
- ✓ Student-created products
- ✓ Thinking maps, graphic organizers
- ✓ Variety of communication means
- ✓ Variety of content and leveled readings
- ✓ Variety of time
- ✓ Zone of proximal development – appropriate challenge

