



MIDDLE MATTERS

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Letter from the Co-Chairs

Recently there was a program on National Public Radio about teachers and summer. Why do so many teachers spend part or much of their summers learning? Each year many teachers spend part of their summer involve teacher workshops, conferences, teacher exchange programs, working with a mentor in an area related to your interest or teaching or another experience. The focus of the radio program was on the diverse learning experiences that teachers might have and how they bring those experiences back to their students through their teaching. As you prepare to go back to school, are there summer experiences that you might use to stimulate an interest, motivate students to pursue a topic, and/or help students create a bridge between prior knowledge and new knowledge?

As you think about the upcoming school year, consider how you might share your summer learning and explorations with students. What did you discover/uncover/explore this summer? And how might you share that new passion and knowledge back to your students? How might your experiences affect how and what you teach this fall?

Here are a few options for sharing your summer explorations and learning with students.



- Talk about your summer learning experiences whether academic or in an interest area. Be sure to share any challenges as well as any accomplishments.
- Create an Interest Development Center (IDC) on a place or topic that you explored.
- Include postcards, maps, videos, books, artifacts or any other material on the topic
- Put up a US or World map and mark your travels and ask students to note their travels as well.
- Ask students about their experiences with the release of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.
- Provides students with an opportunity to peruse a variety of survey books such as those in the Eyewitness series published by Dorling Kindersley, The newest titles on *Oil*, *China*, *Great Scientists*, and *Mesopotamia* include CD ROMs of Clip Art and are invitations to explore.

Continued on page 2

LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

....continued from page 1....

- Talk with your students about any summer activities that led to questions they might want to explore.
- Ask your students what summer “gifted” experiences they might have had at one of the many university-based programs available throughout the US, both residential and commuter. Consider how these are similar to or different from their usual school experiences.

As a result of all these questions, ask yourself how you might reorganize the learning environment to capitalize on the strengths of all learners?

Here's hoping that all of you had a wonderful summer – relaxing, learning, reading, swimming – doing whatever it is that helps you have a balanced and healthy life. As you prepare for the school year, remember to put the NAGC Conference in Minneapolis on the calendar. The Middle Grades Division Pre-Conference Institute on Wednesday, November 7 will focus totally on the Parallel Curriculum Model and its practical applications for single subject and interdisciplinary curriculum development for middle grades gifted students. And there are some great middle schools to visit on Thursday. We look forward to seeing you there. Our first fall issue will have more information on the conference, but you can get the “early bird specials” by going to the NAGC website.

All our best to you as you start the new school year,
Susannah and Susan

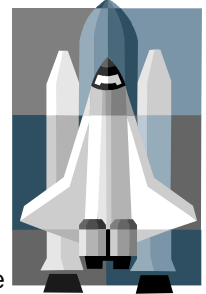
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MOVE OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE (Space Camp for Educators)

By
Janice M. Novello, Ph.D.



“Be prepared to move out of your comfort zone. You will do things that you never knew you could do.”

This introduction began my experience at the International Space Academy 2007, housed at the Huntsville, Alabama Space Camp. As a Honeywell Scholarship Recipient, I was a Florida representative in the program that included 47 states and 23 countries. We formed working teams of 15 people who lived, ate, traveled and completed all briefings and missions together. My Team Spirit included educators from 10 states and Romania, India, and Great Britain. We were a fun group who laughed our way through the long days of 7 AM until 10:30 PM, but took our work of learning very seriously. We competed with other teams to see who could design and build the most durable atmospheric heat shield for space vehicles, a liquid propelled rocket that had the highest trajectory and an adaptation of a hydroponics growth mechanism for use on a Moon Base.

We also prepared to complete two simulated Missions that would dock our Orbiter (Space Shuttle) with the International Space Station and included repairs “in space” by our crew. To do this, we went through Astronaut training, which included learning to walk in 1/6 gravity, Aviation rescue practice and, yes, a tumble in the machine that we liked to call the human gyroscope tumbler. My job as Commander of the Space Station included overseeing six on board experiments and working with the Houston base to guide us through 5 anomalies which included an on-board fire and an Oxygen filter malfunction. I also served as a Mission Scientist at Home Base.

It was during the Aviation Challenge that I realized just how important each team member was to the success of the team. There was a challenge that included being lifted on cables in a helicopter hull that crashed into a lake. The simulation included exiting the flooding and sinking helicopter, swimming to a safe point, and then awaiting a rescue that included being lifted by a basket with ice-cold “rain” pouring on you. I definitely felt challenged and was not the first in line to go through the maneuver, I finally did it but with a pounding heart. I felt elated! One of our team could not swim and he held back as we completed the helio drop and the line drop from a 3-story tower. I went over to him and told him if he wanted to do the drop I would do it with him. I shared it was not about the swimming, it was about staying focused on the outcome. He and I stood on the dock to go next and the others in Team Spirit saw us. Without exchanging a word, everyone understood and the team put on the required protective gear and we all completed the training together.

I celebrated my birthday during the Academy. The miles between my family and myself seemed to grow with no one to celebrate with me from home. When I came to dinner that night, the entire Mess Hall sang Happy Birthday to me. Somehow the Director managed to have chocolate cake, my favorite, for 120 people.

I met some incredible people who inspired me. Veteran Astronaut Story Musgrave flew 6 Shuttle Missions. He developed the tools and completed the EVA’s (time outside the Orbiter in space) to not only repair the Hubble Telescope but also actually improve its data collecting capabilities. He is also a poet, a philosopher, an artist and has 8 businesses that include collaboration with other gifted people and the Walt Disney Company. His philosophy is everything you do, all the choices you make and the difficulties you overcome make you the person you are at this moment. Rejoice in the tough times as they will give you inner strength and determination you need to take you to the next level in your life. I shared dinner with Homer Hickum, author of Rocket Boys, which many of us know as the movie October Sky. He shook my hand, looked directly at me and thanked me for choosing to be a teacher, a choice that he also made in his life. He asked our group to encourage bright and talented students to search for the passion in their life and then just do it. Knock down the obstacles that might try and stop you. If you love doing it, you will find a way to stretch your abilities to the next level.

At my graduation as I walked across the stage to received my wings I thought about how much I had grown and how many people inspired me. The most important lesson I learned was that, just as predicted, I could do things that I never thought I could do.



"Scientists now believe that there may be a connection between the recent earthquakes and the record snowfall."

"WHEN WE HAVE AN EDUCATION SYSTEM THAT STACKS UP POORLY IN MATH AND SCIENCE EVEN COMPARED WITH DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, WE HAVE A FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM."

Harris Miller

HOAGIE'S GIFTED RESOURCES

http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/whats_new.htm



GIFTED IN THE NEWS

NAGC's list of great Resources!

<http://www.nagc.org/CMS400Min/index.aspx?id=1003>



Cartoon #4419

"It's an inexact science."

Science Trade Books that Encourage the Exploration of Scientific Discovery....

Susannah Richards, Eastern Connecticut State University

The world of nonfiction is more inviting than ever before. While nonfiction books of the past often sat on library shelves as dust catchers, the current generation of non-fiction books are too good to let sit on the shelves. These full of facts are colorful, accurate, read like novels and they invite the reader to explore topics and ideas.

There are always more questions than answers. They say that a really good teacher understands that it is not the answers to questions that count as much as the questions that stem from the exploration. Since it would be impossible to answer all of the questions that students generate, we need good books that act as curiosity mentors, providing the right amount of information without killing the topic. What makes a good nonfiction book? It is accurate and breathes life into a topic. It presents the topic in context and illuminates it with appropriate.

For the scientifically curious, there is a series of books published by Houghton Mifflin that focus on contemporary scientists in a wide variety of scientific pursuits. These books are part of the Scientists in the Field series and each title focuses its attention on a specific area of science. Each of these titles provides a comprehensive, accurate and inviting invitation to a specific scientific world and presents the story behind the science focusing on the human dimensions of the scientific pursuit.

The first published title in the series was *The Snake Scientist* in which readers explore the reemergence of tens of thousands of red-sided garter snakes each year in Manitoba, Canada. With this first title, the series set high standards for investigative and accessible nonfiction that provides a glimpse of science in action. One of the latest titles in the Scientist in the Field series provides a potential connection to this year's Caldecott Award winner, *Flotsam* by David Wiesner. Loree Griffith Burns helps readers explore oceanography in *Tracking Trash: Flotsam, Jetsam and the Science of Ocean Motion*, another engaging and enlightening text in the Scientist in the Field series.

Donna Jackson, who wrote two titles for the Scientists in the Field series spent many days at the Colorado State University's Veterinary Hospital and the result of her research comes to life in *ER Vets: Life in an Animal Emergency Room* (2005). This book will not only answer questions about how veterinarians care for serious injured or ailing animal patients, but it will also stimulate readers to ask questions about the connections between the human medical fields and veterinarian medicine.

With codes like HBC (hit by car) and BDL (big dog, little dog: a big dog attacked by a little dog), and FB (foreign body), readers will wonder about the lingo that vets use to describe some of the more common events in the ER veterinary clinic.

In each case, the reader follows the animal from the first sign that it needs medical attention through treatment to recovery. Particularly noteworthy is the story of a tiny foal who was born blue and as he affectionately become known as Paco the Taco. He suffered from Hypoxia, not enough oxygen reaching the organs. As the teams of veterinarians monitor and treat Taco from Coma to a ventilator to a healthy foal officially named Reysin Caine.

With the large number of nonfiction titles published each year, a great source for fabulous nonfiction are the Robert F. Sibert Award winning titles. The Robert Sibert Informational Book Award is presented annually by Association of Library Service to Children (ALSC) division of the American Library Association since 2001 to the author of the most distinguished informational book published during the preceding year. This award has recognized a number of science books since its inception. The 2007 Sibert Award went to Catherine Thimmesh For *Team Moon: How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon*, which chronicles the behind the scene problem solving that accounted for successful lunar landing.

Other science titles that have been recognized with the Sibert Award to Honor Award include two of the Science in the Field titles-Sy Montgomery's *The Tarantula Scientist* and *The Quest for the Tree Kangaroo: An Expedition to the Cloud Forest of New Guinea*.

In addition to the Sibert Award winners, another extensive resource for quality science nonfiction is the list of Outstanding Science Trade Books for Grades K-12 presented by the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) in association with the Children's Book Council (CBC). This list reflects books published in the previous in the previous year and the lists for the last eleven years available at <http://www.nsta.org/publications/ostb/>. The new annual list is published in the March edition of *Science and Children*, an NSTA journal.

Scientists in the Field Titles

Batten, M. (2001). *Anthropologist: Scientist of the People*. Photos. Magdalena Hurtado & Kim Hill. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Bishop, N. (2002). *Digging for Bird Dinosaurs: An Expedition to Madagascar*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Burns, L. G. (2007). *Tracking trash: Flotsam, jetsam, and the science of ocean motion*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

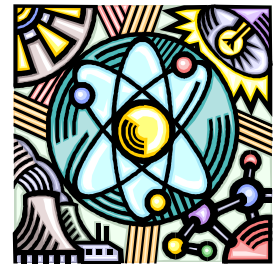
Collard, S. B. (2005). *The Prairie Builders: Reconstructing America's Lost Grasslands*.

Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

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- Jackson, D. (2004). *The Bug Scientists*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Jackson, D. (2002). *The Wildlife Detectives: How Forensic Scientists Fight Crimes Against Nature*. Photos. Bob Rozinski & Wendy Shattil. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Jackson, E. (2005). *Looking for Life n the Universe: The Search for Extraterrestrial Life*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Kramer, S. (2003). *Hidden Worlds: Looking Through a Scientist's Microscope*. Photos. Dennis Kunkel. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Montgomery, S. (2001). *The Snake Scientist*. Photos. Nic Bishop. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Montgomery, S. (2004). *The Tarantula Scientist*. Photos. Nic Bishop. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Montgomery, S. (2006). *The Quest for the Tree Kangaroo: An Expedition to the Cloud Forest of New Guinea*. Photos. Nic Bishop. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Osborn, E. (2006). *Project Ultraswan*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Sayre, A. P. (2002). *Secrets of Sound: Studying the Calls of Whales, Elephants and Birds*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Swinburne, S. (2003). *Once A Wolf: How Wildlife Biologists Fought to Bring Back the Gray Wolf*. Photos. Jim Brandenburg. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Swinburne, S. (2003). *The Woods Scientist*. Photos. Susan C. Morse. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Turner, P. (2005). *Gorilla Doctors: Saving Endangered Great Apes*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.



Additional books mentioned in this article:

- Jackson, D. (2005). *ER Vets: Life in the Emergency Room*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Thimmesh, C. (2006), *Team Moon: How 400,00 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Wiesner, D. (2006). *Flotsam*. New York: Clarion.

SCIENCE FAIRS FOR GIFTED LEARNERS

Taken from: Volume 6 / Issue 1 / Fall 2005 <http://www.dukegiftedletter.com/movabletype/mt-tb.cgi/218>
by Michael S. Matthews, PhD

What Is a Science Fair, Anyway?

A science fair is an event in which students present independent research projects. They are required to produce new data to answer a question, which is considered a higher-level skill than merely summarizing knowledge gathered by someone else. A panel of judges reviews the projects, interviews the students about their work, and provides evaluations. The independent judging process sets these projects apart from many of the other assignments that students do in school.

Unlike many school assignments, science projects can be taken as far as students' abilities and the rules allow. Students may enter their projects in fairs held by their own schools or by small groups of local schools. Those whose projects perform strongly are invited to enter district fairs; the winners there move on to statewide fairs. At the high school level, the top finishers in each state compete in the international fair, sponsored by Intel. Your child's science teacher or district science coordinator should have information about local science fairs.

Science projects are appropriate for students from the upper elementary grades through high school; gifted children as young as nine should be capable of conducting them. For judging purposes, competitions usually are divided by grade level. In some states, younger students may not be eligible to compete beyond the district level. Check with local organizers to find out what age or grade requirements may apply in your area.

Science fair projects offer gifted students

- an extended time frame. Because science projects may be the longest assignments that students have ever done, they help develop sound time management skills.
- an introduction to a scientific discipline. These projects give students a firsthand view of what it might be like to work in a particular field of science.
- a high ceiling. Unlike many school assignments, science projects can be taken as far as students' abilities and the rules allow. At higher levels of competition, many projects are nearly indistinguishable from research conducted by professionals.
- individualized feedback from judges who are usually professionals in science, medicine, and academe.
- a new opportunity every year. Since science fairs are held annually, students may expand on work begun during a previous year or pursue new areas of interest.
- the chance to compare their work with that of other students. In this way they can both interact with those who have similar interests and learn how they might improve their own efforts.

Tips for Projects

The following tips can help your child have a successful experience:

- Allow enough time. Science fair projects call for a large time commitment outside the classroom and are almost impossible to do well at the last minute. Spread them over several months to ensure a well-reasoned, high-quality result. Parental assistance with scheduling and time management is key.
- Develop the title first. A good title will guide the student into the next steps of the design process and also convey the nature of the project clearly to the judges. An informative title like "The Effect of Sunlight Exposure on Vitamin C Content in Bottled Apple Juice" allows both participant and reader to envision the project.
- Make sure that the idea is really research. A research project requires the student to answer a question by making repeated measurements and collecting new information about some variable. Demonstrations that merely illustrate something already well understood produce no new knowledge.
- Approach projects involving humans or vertebrate animals with caution. Such projects require additional paperwork and supervision and therefore extra time.
- Avoid cookie-cutter projects. Judges tire of seeing them because, again, they tend to produce no new knowledge. Although plenty of books and online sites list project ideas, they generally are not original. Students who find that they must use these sources should develop a clever twist to make the project their own.
- Keep organized records. A lab notebook, for instance, enables students to document every thought or action related to the project. Directions for keeping an orderly lab notebook are found in most introductory science fair materials but often are ignored by students. Be sure to follow these guidelines carefully.
- Attend to good graphic design. The project display board should clearly convey the basics of the project to the viewer. Make the title legible, the graphs and photos stand out, and the captions concise. Above all, use correct grammar and spelling. The display board is the first (and sometimes the last) impression the judges and others will have of the work, so make it a good one.

Michael S. Matthews is assistant professor in the Gifted Education Program at the University of South Florida in Tampa. In addition to science learning, his research interests include creativity, underachievement, and cultural and linguistic diversity.





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QUESTIONS and ANSWERS from the MIDDLE



Question

My wonderful 7-8 Language Arts teacher recently brought an interesting issue to me and asked for my help. She had assigned a Civil Rights research project to her students wherein they could pick their own topic, find three categories on which to focus, and present their research via an interactive PowerPoint presentation to be shared with our 5th grade students. She taught the research method of using several sources and writing down facts on note cards, rather than printing info off of sites. All good stuff! The "problem" occurred when two of her highly gifted students (7th graders) told her that they had researched their topic, kept it all in their heads, and then put that in their final product. They could cite some of the websites, but a lot of the information they "knew" was prior knowledge. Her question was whether or not it's okay to forgo the proper citing of information and to not use note cards to write down information as it is read out of books or off of websites. These two students did not use any note cards at all apparently. When she asked to see their cards, they both said (and I think separately-they're not working together) they had it in their heads.

Submitted by:

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Response from Bob Seney, Professor Emeritus/Gifted Studies

What a great question and I am afraid my answer may turn out to be more of an "article" than a response. But first, the quickest answer is Yes and No! Now, that will certainly take some explaining. So let me begin by saying that when I was teaching middle school, the three "R's" for my designated gifted language arts classroom were Reading, Writing, and Research. This was the focus of the classroom and all "required" skills and curriculum were addressed and built into that framework. Needless to say, research was a major element in our work together.

We quickly learned the difference between an *informational report* and a *research report*. An informational report is a paper based on secondary research and cites other scholars and authorities and thus their work **must be** credited. Here is the opportunity to teach the seriousness of plagiarism. A research report requires the use of primary resources, the designing of an hypothesis, and sometimes original "experimentation" to support that hypothesis. Quotes from authorities who have worked in the same area simply make the work of the student author stronger. The student's findings are supported by researchers in the field.

This means that our students must learn the "language" of the professionals in the field and that proper citing, footnoting, referencing, and reference lists or bibliographies are part of that professional language. If others see sloppy referencing or bibliographies that do not follow the accepted and prescribed forms, then the first and most obvious conclusion made by readers is that the **scholarship** of the paper is sloppy as well. All of the work of the student author is discounted and is for naught, regardless of how valuable or true the study may be. So, it is very important that our students learn the professional language of referencing and citing. So yes, students should be required to learn and use "the proper citing of information."

Now, for the process of informational search (we can call it a "Review of the Literature). While the teacher cited above taught an appropriate and time honored process, let's face it - that is not the way we do research any more. What we need to be teaching is how to locate the right information and how to appropriately *high-light* significant information on *photocopies* of articles, book chapters, etc. These are the "research notes" of today. There are very few professional researchers out there today that use note cards. I strongly believe that we must teach our students how current professionals work. But, I also recognize the importance of teaching our students how to appropriately record, reference and, at times, *relocate* information. So I taught my students a process (called T-Notes) for keeping their own thoughts (notes) on cited material. I had them draw a large "T" on notebook paper. On the top of

graphical information of the source that they were using, which is then used later when the Reference List or Bibliography is created. On the left side of the “T” they listed phrases, references, and quotes from the reference with page numbers. On the right side of the “T” they wrote their own reactions, questions, and comments parallel to the cited material. My students (including my college students!) found this a much more convenient and systematic way to keep their research notes.

Appropriate citing from websites could easily take a whole chapter in itself, but check out the style manual that you are using (APA, Chicago, MLA, does anybody use Turabian any more?) and see how they cite web pages. [For more info than you would even want on style manuals just put “style manuals” in your search machine. The Duke University website is especially extensive.] I suggest that you limit the number of websites used and referenced and that you build in or create a “student self-check” on the legitimacy and accuracy of the information from websites. I have had students citing *on-ion.com*, for heaven’s sake, as legitimate information! As you can see, the internet has created some research and citation problems all its own. By the way, if you are looking for a good manual and classroom guide, I really recommend *The Write Source 2000*. Go to their website [www/thewritesouce.com](http://www.thewritesouce.com) for the latest edition. This valuable guide is available at different grade levels and it provides guidelines for the research process, note taking, letter writing, and much more. Highly recommended.

Now for the last part of my response. We know that many of our gifted students are walking encyclopedias of information that they have just picked up because of their innate curiosity and voluminous reading. So how do we address “prior knowledge”? This is where we can truly “differentiate” for gifted students in their informational search process. If they know it, then have them search out the resource from which they learned this bit of information, so that they can properly give credit. This kicks their searching up several notches and requires a more sophisticated type of informational searching.

So this is my “Yes and No” response. Yes, they must cite and properly reference. This is the language of the professionals. And No, they don’t have to keep “traditional” note cards. Differentiate the process, including note taking, for them, but keep them responsible for the information which they share in their power point presentations, written reports and papers.

Maybe our readers would like to share some of their suggestions/activities, etc. that they use in teaching the research process. Please email it to us. We would love to know what is going on in your classroom.

Bob Seney, Professor Emeritus/Gifted Studies

Science Education for Gifted Students (A Gifted Child Today Reader)

Editors: [Susan K. Johnsen, Ph.D.](#), [James Kendrick, Ph.D.](#)

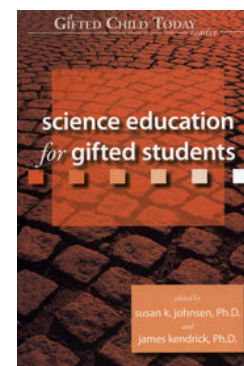
Available through Prufrock Press

For the first time, the [Gifted Child Today Reader](#) series brings together the best articles published in *Gifted Child Today*, the nation's most popular gifted education journal. Each book in this series is filled with exciting and practical classroom ideas, useful summaries of research findings, discussions of identification and classroom management, and informed opinions about educating gifted kids. Anyone involved in education will benefit from the practical, research-based ideas this unique series has to offer.

A differentiated curriculum for gifted science students needs to be organized around basic scientific principles that require more advanced levels of thinking and complex processes. Many of the authors provide units of study and specific lessons that model best practices in teaching science.

Science Education for Gifted Students begins with creative ways to engage children in the primary years, thus ensuring that they develop a love of science that will last a lifetime. Subsequent chapters deal with acceleration and enrichment in the sciences, including instructional units on magnetic levitation, integrating science and physical education, and real-world archaeology.

Educational Resource



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MISSION STATEMENT

The Middle Grades Division recognizes the unique needs of gifted middle grades learners and educators. Middle school is the level at which gifted students face great challenges to full development of their potential and is a time when a large number of gifted students, particularly girls and minority students, begin to underachieve in response to perceived societal and peer pressures. The division recognizes the need to develop appropriate strategies for working with these students. To address these concerns, the division works in the areas of curriculum, instruction, research, and communication and dissemination, to assist students, teachers, and administrators as they endeavor to make the middle school years a positive and challenging experience for gifted students.

MIDDLE MATTERS

- Is **your** Middle Division Newsletter!
- Become part of it by sending items for publication!
- Send in questions for our new Question/Answer column!
- Articles, stories, humor, or anything you'd like to share relating to Middle Level Gifted Education.
- 75—500 words (or more if need be)

HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO PUBLISH AN ARTICLE BUT DIDN'T KNOW HOW?

Well, here's your chance to get something that you're great at, or something that you'd like to share

IN PRINT!!!

Send in an article about anything that relates to teaching Gifted in Middle School.

We'll do the editing (if you'd like), and you'll have your article published.

Also, send us ideas about what topics or issues you'd like to see addressed in future editions!