Spotlight

Newsletter of the Arts Division of the National Association for Gifted Children

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Arts Division Institute

Recap from Convention 2004

By Gail Herman

The Institute at the 2004 NAGC convention was wonderful, thanks to two groups that presented their ideas and programs. The first group was from Jefferson County Public Schools in Colorado, and they gave a great presentation on ideas for addressing the needs of artistically talented students in content areas. Since many teachers find it difficult to plan for artistically talented students while addressing the regular curriculum, this session allowed participants to learn about how to use Advanced Learning Plans for identified students to guide instruction. The presenters shared their process for identifying and serving artistically talented students. Then they shared how to provide appropriate accommodations in the content areas through artistic challenges. Participants joined in activities while examining student products and learning specific strategies for the development of arts integration. The presenters, Cheryl Franklin-Rohr and Sherry Crawford, (303-982-8476), gave generously and also shared their ideas in handouts. Many participants made a point to find these presenters later in the evening and throughout the conference for more information.

The second group of presenters at the Wednesday

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Putting the Awe Back in Inspiring

By

Susan J. Superson

Gifted Education Teacher/Consultant

East Longmeadow, MA

Let's talk numbers. You teach in one of the 50 states. You teach 8th grade Algebra. There are 32 students in your class, which you strongly believe should be 2 classes of 16 since this is an advanced class. State budget cuts for education have brought your own district's budget back to level funding which, you, since you teach math, know really means cuts everywhere from the number of reams of graph and copy paper to scientific calculators and computers. Your state has told your district that your school's *Average Yearly Progress (AYP)* as indicated by whatever state-mandated testing you suffer is not up to the rate it should be. You must find a way to teach math which will counteract this trend while simultaneously raising the bar for all.

Coupled with all of this are the following facts: by the time a student reaches 8th grade 75% of the material in a Math book is redundant, and 5% of students will tune out, turn off and drop out, stating *school* was the main factor that lead to their failures. Finally, in addition, your average age is somewhere around 45. You recognize that your students' hormones have taken possession of their bodies as evidenced by the fact that your brightest student grew 3 inches over the winter break. However, your own hormones are having their way with your body. Let's face it. A perimenopausal woman or a male in mid-life crisis and 32 teenagers is an equation for disaster. What to do?

Students today are so used to the quick fix and having *Jeeves* produce the answer to their every question that they have lost the sense of awe and the ability to be naturally inspired by the mysterious beauty of the universe and the connectedness of all things. By bringing them back into the realm of discovery learning and giving them the chance to experience that "Ah Ha!

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afternoon Arts Institute was the Utah-based Arts in Teaching and Teacher Education (ATTE) Program. This group has an amazing collaboration between Brigham Young University in Provo, UT, and the public schools. They emphasized infusion of the arts into visual and performing arts classes as well as the regular curriculum. Participants learned high-level thinking strategies and techniques for music, dance, art, and drama using themes such as families, democracy, communities, and culture. Topics included spotting and nurturing talents, and the multiple values of arts in schools, society, democracies, and our troubled world. The highlight for participants was to actually learn strategies by doing them: song/chant, drama improvisations, drawing art transformations while learning composition, and dancing with student dancers who came with the dance teacher. The dance students performed an improvisational piece based on a painting in the theme of "society." Their skill level and creativity were amazing as they integrated and altered their own styles, favorite movement qualities, with the concept of the artist's meaning AND the artist's use of line, shape, texture, and content. The whole presentation was enlightening. I only wish we had videotaped it for the rest of our division who were unable to come on Wednesday.

We look forward to another wonderful division Institute this year---plan to be at the Convention site in Louisville, KY, Wednesday afternoon, November 9, 2005!

Gail N. Herman has been busy teaching for Lesley University in Nevada and performing in NJ during January. She also taught a short Teaching Lab course at her local Garrett College! Please send Gail requests and/or ideas and possible presenters for the Arts Institute at NAGC 2005 (gnherman@gcnetmail.net).

"The arts are an even better barometer of what is happening in our world than the stock market or the debates in congress."

-Hendrik Willem Van Loon, The Arts

CHOICE WORDS

February, 2005

Dear Arts Division Members,

Well, things are looking up, dear members. I am excited to tell you all that the Arts Division is looking better and better. First, we have a new Vice-Chair, Bess Worley II, from the College of William and Mary. She is dedicated to NAGC and the Arts, and we are most fortunate to have her on board. We also have a new Secretary/Treasurer, Valerie Gregory, who is also from Richmond, Virginia and William and Mary.

Second, we have had a few articles for this newsletter submitted by our members. We hope this will increase over time, and that we will have articles galore! Have you submitted any? We will have more newsletters before the next convention, and we would like to feature your contributions.

Next, we have even had some bios and newsy notes submitted from the members so that we can keep each other up to date on contributions by our members. BUT, we need more. So we are waiting for yours if you have not yet submitted them. Karen Engelkenjohn has agreed to help put our newsletter together, and she needs your help. So please send all contributions for future newsletters to Bess: bebew2@yahoo.com.

At the convention we had some wonderful presentations. Hopefully, these terrific presenters have submitted their proposals for the Louisville convention and that many of you also submitted proposals. When selecting proposals, we look at insuring a diverse representation of all the arts so the sky is the limit! What can we learn from you? What do you have to share? Start thinking know about next year's proposal!

We also had a very productive Arts Division meeting. Along with our new leadership we looked at bringing the by-laws more into line with the needs of the Division. In the near future you will be receiving your ballot to approve these suggestions for change. The NAGC Board then has to give final approval and the new By-laws will then be in place. This will help us have a more effective – and efficient Division.

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Epiphany!" sense of wonder, you can re-ignite their ability to understand math as a living pursuit having great meaning to their lives. Here's how.

Take them back to the 13th century and introduce them to a man known as Leonardo de Pisa or more affectionately, Fibonacci. It starts with his number series which builds one upon the other by taking the 2 previous numbers and adding them to get the next. Thus, you have 1,1,2,3,5,8,13,21,34,55,89… Mathematicians consider this sequence to be the most beautiful in the universe. There are many cool things about this sequence. For example, dividing a number by the one preceding it will always give you exactly 1.618 beginning with 5 divided by 3. But it's even cooler than that. Fibonacci, doing his work in the 13 century, basically had only his natural world to observe to discover mathematical truths. The amazing thing is that he noticed that most living things grow and reproduce in the pattern of this sequence. For example, rabbits, in ideal situations would breed in the sequence of the series, with 1 pair the first month, 2 pair the second, 3 the third and so on.

Similarly, plants grow new shoots in this pattern. Also, most flowers have petals in the numbers in the Fibonacci sequence. Here are some examples: lily 3, buttercup 5, delphiniums 8, some daisies 13, and so on. This is why a four leaf clover is considered good luck-it is rare! In addition, if you look carefully at the seed head of plants and pinecones, you will see a spiral pattern of growth. There will be 8 spirals in one direction and 13 in another, or perhaps 55 and 34. All Fibonacci numbers! Cut an apple in half and you will discover 5 seeds. A banana, 3 seeds. Your students will love discovering this (and eating the healthy snack after observing). You see, most of them have never taken notice of the living things around them and take them totally for granted instead. Amazingly, the following living things all grow and spiral in the same proportion: ram's horns, ferns, sea horses, ocean waves, and galaxies! How cool is that?

Now here is where it gets even more exciting. Remember when we said that each Fibonacci number divided by the number previous to it gives us an answer of 1.618? Well, this number, called phi (fee), is considered to most amazing number in the universe. Mathematicians are so astounded by it that they have called it the Golden Proportion or Divine Proportion. It seems divine in the sense that it argues for a grand plan for the universe. Here's how.

If you measured the height of the Parthenon's at its highest point and also took the measurement of its length, then divided length by height, the answer you would arrive at is 1.618. Ancient crosses are built in this proportion. So is the façade of the Untied Nations building in New York City. The rectangles on a board game are in this proportion. A violin has been built in this proportion as well. By squaring off the edges of ancient vases, statues, and famous landscapes painted centuries ago, you will discover the same proportions. An egg, a shell, a fir tree, all can be squared off so that the length divided by the width is 1.618. Connect the numbers on a clock at 10, 2, 8, 4, drawing a rectangle, and the length divided by the width of that rectangle it will be in the 1.618 proportion! By now you have at least gotten most of your students to wake up. But here is how you really hook them in.

What are kids most interested in? Let's be realistic. It's their faces and bodies and the faces and bodies of sports figures and media stars. So, where's the math in that? The answer is everywhere! The joints in our fingers can be measured and divided and the proportion will approximate 1.618. The human head and face have golden proportions in many of its measurements. Leonardo di Vinci's *Head of an Old Man* is actually a study in the golden proportion. Seem too distant to spark an interest? Then, your students will enjoy knowing that Denzel Washington has the most mathematically proportioned face currently known.

There are many activities students may conduct such as taking measurements of the top of head divided by width of head, or height divided by the distance of the waist to the ground, or arm length divided by length of elbow to fingertip. Your students will discover that each will approximate 1.618, and the proportion holds true for all cultures, races, sizes and shapes. It does not discriminate.

Perhaps by now your students are rediscovering the capacity for awe. You have allowed them to uncover the connectedness all living things have with each other. They have come to the realization that math is actually the very essence of nature, music, architecture, art and our human bodies. In fact it would seem that without math there could be no art. During this amazing journey, you will begin to hear your students posing questions that even *Jeeves* can not answer. These will be the critical and creative questions we have long hoped to infuse into the curriculum. They are questions like, "Do you think these number patterns prove the existence of God?" And, "Do you think the more mathematically proportioned someone is, the more we think that person is good looking?" And even, "Could we build a Fibonacci pyramid?" "Could we bring in pinecones and shells and seed heads and apples and make a living Fibonacci museum?" "Could we teach this stuff to the 6^{th} graders?" Your answer, if you are alive and well and an advocate for your profession, is a resounding "Yes!"

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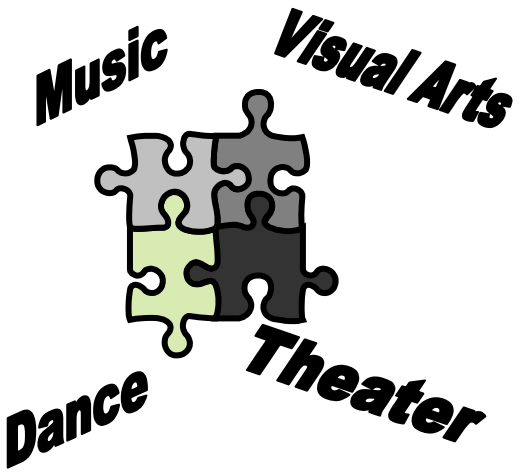
NAGC has issued a list of questions that a Division ought to address in assessing their membership health. Most of them are related to the number of people who are active in the division – who are involved in Division projects and at the Convention. Another area deals with convention proposals. So let's make the Arts Division a vital one! Get involved!

It concerns me that all over our country districts are cutting back or even eliminating arts programs and services in our schools: More than ever before. So it becomes essential that we all stand up to be counted as advocates for the Arts in schools. Articles abound around the importance of the arts to all the content areas as well as their importance in keeping kids in school. Studies support the use of the Arts in the schools, but we must continue to advocate for districts that commit to keeping the Arts.

Are you someone who has a strong Arts component in your district? Or are you one whose support for the Arts has been reduced or eliminated? We need you both to speak up and give us your ideas. Submit an article. Or give this newsletter some suggestions – or questions. And definitely submit a proposal for the conventions. We're counting on it!

We need you.

Best,
Penny Choice
Division Chair



NAGC PROPOSAL PROCESS

By Bess Worley II

NAGC is in the process of moving to a completely Web-based proposal process, including submission, proposal review, and room/time assignments. This year, 2005, will be the last year that a "paper" Call for Proposals will be available on the NAGC website. To work within the space limitations in the Louisville Convention Center, concurrent breakout sessions will be limited to 30 for each session. Here is an overview of the new process:

- Division reviewers for the Arts division will be the current elected officers consisting of the Chair, the Vice Chair, and the Secretary/Treasurer.
- Division reviewers will rank the sessions submitted to your strand in the order of priority for placement in the program. Reviewers will use the Division rubric, along with the general proposal guidelines, to assign scores.
- The Program Committee of NAGC then meets in April to assign sessions to time slots and rooms, taking into consideration speaker conflicts and the variety of topics offered in a given timeframe. This process should go a long way toward preventing conflicts and enabling NAGC to publicize convention content much more quickly to a variety of key audiences.
- Presenters will then be contacted with information about the status of their proposal.

The Arts Division's proposal description is as follows: Division welcomes proposals that address all facets of creative writing as well as the visual and performing arts. The proposals should focus on: a) research in the area of the artistically gifted and talented; b) practical strategies and resources to foster artistic expression; or c) increasing awareness of artistic expression, aesthetic perception, aesthetic valuing, and aesthetic appreciation.

Penny and I will be attending the Division Leadership Retreat in Washington, DC, on March 11th – 13th to learn more about the new system. Look for a summary of this meeting in the next newsletter.

Arts Division

Member Profile---

Merri Kae VanderPloeg writes:

I am the supervising director of Gifted Education in Anchorage, Alaska. Our gifted program consists of 51 full-time gifted elementary teachers and 30 middle school and 10 high school teachers. There are 2,473 students receiving services in our district of 49,000 students. We have an elementary enrichment pull-out program for grades 2-6, a self contained highly gifted program for grades K-12, cluster grouped gifted language arts and science classes for 7th and 8th graders as well as a mentorship program for 10th-12th grade identified gifted students. I have been in this position for three years but prior to administration, I was a K-12 gifted resource teacher, K-12 art teacher, and Gifted Coordinator for Highly Gifted.

When I am not supervising the gifted programs, I am very active in the Partners in Education Program through the Kennedy Center as well as the Alaska State Arts Council. Gifted Education is a very rewarding and challenging career. I am encouraged by a wonderful staff, school district, and parent organization that cares about gifted children.

What are we doing? ALOT! We are currently developing our elementary Saturday enrichment camps for five Title I schools that will take place in January-March. In June, we will be holding our first Summer Camp for Gifted, co-sponsored by our local university. Recently, the Anchorage School District Gifted Program participated in a poetry workshop with the Kennedy Center Partners in Education Division. It was a phenomenal presentation by Sandy Lyne. I would encourage our committee to see if Sandy could be a possible presenter. His methods for teaching poetry to students workshop was one of the best I ever attended.

Penny wondered if any of us were pleased with some of the Arts Division presentations. I attended the Harlem Renaissance and All That Jazz session. It was GREAT with plenty of resources/materials for teachers. I am planning on using the unit for our Saturday enrichment day.

Merri Kae VanderPloeg
Anchorage School District
Gifted Programs

Computer Resources for Arts Division members:

From the Dana Foundation's "Arts Education in the News" comes a list of websites for your perusal:

From Brown University, go to
www.artslit.org/handbook.html
A handbook full of arts lessons.

www.pbs.org/teachersource/arts_lit.htm
is a PBS's Teacher-Source website which includes a section on arts and literature. Start here and narrow your search from there for lessons and activities.

The Community Arts Network has good resources at
www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archive/63methods.php
--Go to useful arts toolkits.

For a searchable database of state arts education policy go to
http://aeparts.org/policysearch/searchengine
Choose your state and see results or select all states and all topics.

And finally, I recently read that Macmillan McGraw-Hill made a deal with the leading licensor of rights to Broadway shows for inclusion of scripts, music, choreography and teacher guides in elementary and middle school music texts. Look for the 2005 General Music Textbook, **"Spotlight on Music".**
Way to go! Check it out!

By Penny Choice

Arts Division

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR GIFTED CHILDREN

1707 L. Street, NW, Suite 550
Washington, D. C. 20036
Division Chair: Penny Choice
E-mail: pennychoice@comcast.net

Vice Chair: Bess Worley II
E-mail: bebew2@yahoo.com

Newsletter Editor: Karen Engelkenjohn
E-mail: kengelkenjohn@hotmail.com

For more information,
visit the NAGC website:
http://www.nagc.org

JOIN US FOR THE 2005
CONVENTION IN LOUISVILLE, KY
NOVEMBER 9TH - 13TH

From the Editor

"All serious daring starts from within." Eudora Welty

It takes a lot of daring to stand up for gifted children and for quality arts education. There are those who say "those kids don't need special programming – they'll do just fine in the regular classroom." When money gets tight, the arts and gifted education often take the biggest hits. But for most of us in the Arts Division of NAGC, love of the arts is a fire that burns within and helps us to dare to stand up for our gifted young people.

One goal of the Arts Division is to publish 4 newsletters a year. To do this, we would like to have submissions from our members. So please take a bit of time from your full, creative lives to share with us. We would like to hear of successful arts programming, curriculum ideas, and online resources. We would like to do more "Member profiles" too. Thanks to Merri Kae VanderPloeg for sharing news of gifted programming in the 49th state! You may send your articles to Penny, Bess, or me via the e-mail addresses listed above.

Hoping to hear from you soon,
Karen Engelkenjohn

Karen Engelkenjohn is a teacher of K – 6 gifted students in the Hazelwood, Missouri School District. She incorporates fine art into most of her instructional units. Lately she has been on a committee designing an advanced studio art experience for highly gifted middle school artists.