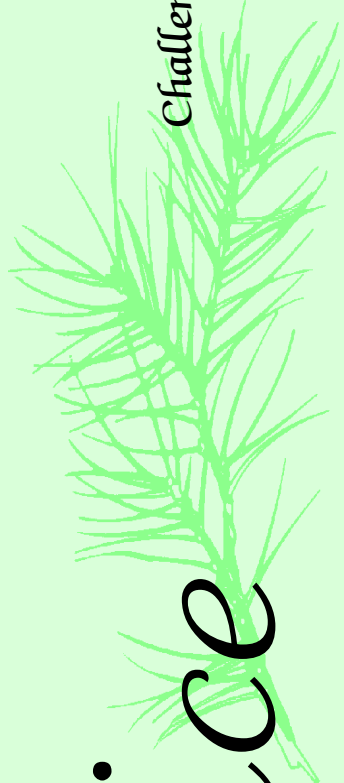


Fall 2010

Challenging Gifted Learners

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Voice

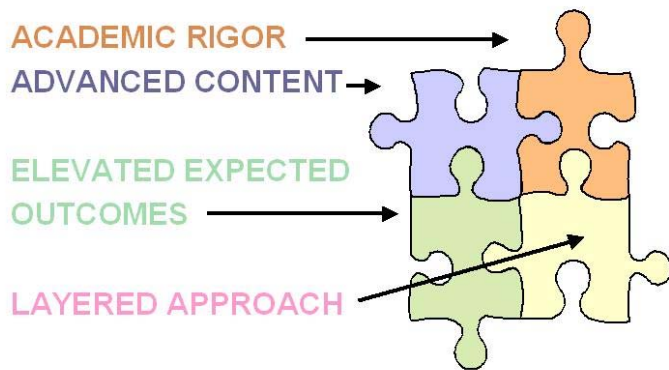
Advanced Studies Curriculum

By Mary Slade

Advanced studies curricula is based on the assumption that advanced students need something other than the prescribed grade-level curriculum when the expected outcomes have already been mastered or can be learned quickly. Therefore, the purpose of the advanced studies curriculum is to compact the general education curricula in order to modify, adapt, and supplant the grade-level curricula in core academic areas. Curriculum implementation between gifted and general education calls for a unique approach to curriculum design. Although many different instructional methods and curriculum materials used in any number of service delivery models in gifted education to create learning experiences, it is the proposed advanced studies curriculum framework outlined below that is unique.

Curriculum Components

The advanced studies curricula scaffold consists of four critical components. The four integrated components together define the nature and contents of the advanced studies curricula. The combined effects of the four components address the unique learning needs of advanced and gifted learners. However, spill-over effects for most students are possible. Essentially, the proposed curricular approach includes both enrichment



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MATTERS

GRAY

Ruth Thom
MEGT President



It's been interesting to note the impact of all of this summer's storms. Some of my plants have fared well and even thrived through the heavy rains. Others have been beaten down and taken some time to recover, and numerous tree branches have broken off completely. We might say the same for students and teachers facing the storms of everyday living. Why is it that some people rise under pressure and others flounder or crumble?

My husband, who is a military chaplain, spends a lot of time discussing how to help service members build resiliency. Although we don't often use that particular term, I think the educational community has been working to build resiliency in our students for years. We have added before and after school programs, breakfast programs, summer school programs, and countless character-building programs in our efforts to go beyond just academic instruction.

Those of us in the field of gifted education have had to be resilient. Our programs come and go. Our roles are continually changing, and often misunderstood or unappreciated. Yet our incredible students drive us to rise above these challenges and persevere.

As you begin this new school year, my hope for you is that you will guard your time and energy so that you remain resilient through the inevitable ups and downs the year will bring, and are able to be a positive influence in building resiliency in your students.

MEGT Board Notes

Tuesday, June 22, 2010
Ground Round in St. Cloud
By Mary Ann Rotondi

Our MEGT Board met on **Tuesday, June 22, 2010** at the Ground Round in St. Cloud. The highlights of our meeting are as follows:

- Our **annual budget** for 2010-11 was adopted.
- The upcoming **position paper** on clustering will be available on our website and in hard copy for the EDMN Conference in October.
- As per our previous **legislation**, districts will still be receiving \$ 12 per student for gifted programming.
- Our **Winter Conference ~ February 6-8th, 2011** at **Cragun's** ~ is in the planning process with more details available in the fall.
- A one-page flier is being developed to advertise the **benefits** of being an MEGT member.

The next meeting of the Board will take place on **September 11th** at the Ground Round in St. Cloud.

The deadline for the Nicholas Green Distinguished Student Award has been extended to October 15.

Make sure to visit the MEGT website at www.MEGT.org for information and great resources—and your visit is now being counted!

MEGT *Voice*

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...a nonprofit advocacy network
Member of The National Association for Gifted Children
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Please send all articles and announcements for the next issue by December 1, 2010 to:

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Note: E-mail submissions are preferred

Address Changes and Corrections should be mailed to:

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Advanced Studies, *continued from cover*

options for most students as well as accelerative content and elevated student outcomes for advanced students.

Layered Approach

The layered characteristic of the curricular approach refers to the connectedness of the advanced studies to core academic areas of study at each grade level, as well as the hierarchical nature of the various curriculum options. Traditionally, advanced studies and grade-level academic curricula are not necessarily connected, and almost certainly are developed and implemented separately without consideration of one another. However, the layered approach is based on the assertion that the core academic areas, such as language arts and mathematics, are the foundation for advanced studies at the elementary grade levels. Although the nature of advanced studies may include interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary studies, the core academic area(s) form the basis of points of meaningful departure to related areas of study. Further assumptions are made that

advanced students have already or will quickly master the grade-level expectations in most academic areas and thus require a more complex and sophisticated curricula for more advanced study. The significance of this approach lies in the assertion that complex curricula must be firmly based in academic disciplines in order to evolve into the appropriate levels of sophisticated study. Unfortunately, all too often other approaches to advanced studies involve extensions of the core academic areas rather than deeper and more meaningful study of a discipline. Furthermore, too frequently the proposed enrichment curriculum exists in addition to the grade-level curriculum and seldom draws a strong connection to the current area of study for the student. However, in the layered curriculum approach, advanced studies replaces or adapts the current discipline of study for the student, thus creating a direct relationship between the discipline under study and the advanced studies taking place.

In addition to establishing a strong relationship with academic areas under study, the layered curricula address various levels of advanced studies. Each layer adds increasingly qualitatively different and thus more significantly advanced curricula for advanced students. The existence of many layers addresses not only the varying needs for different students but also the different types of giftedness. Almost all students' needs are met at some level of the

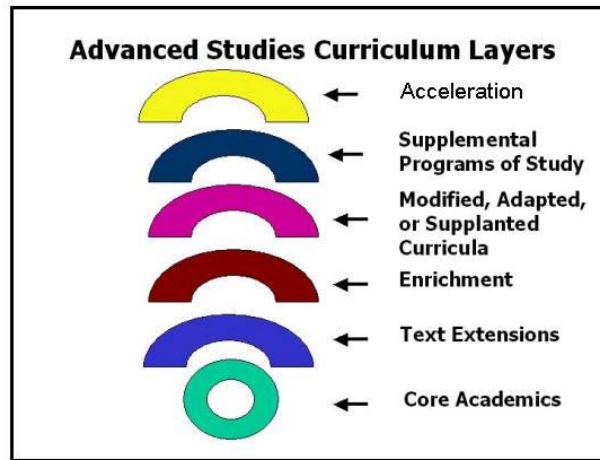
curriculum approach, while the distinctly unique needs of the gifted learner certainly are addressed as well.

The various layers of advanced curricula are related but distinct. The core of the layers represents academic disciplines of study (e.g., writing, mathematics, reading, etc.). The next most basic form of advancement of the curricula involves using text-based extensions that broaden only part of the grade-level curriculum. Enrichment, the next layer of advanced studies, includes changing some but not all aspects of the core curriculum to include higher-level critical or creative thinking in students' studies of the core academic disciplines. The next layer of curricular studies is a great point of departure from the grade-level curriculum, however, the

more advanced studies are related to the core academic areas under study. Specifically, this layer includes changing, modifying, or supplanting the content, process, and product of the expected curricula. When it becomes apparent that advanced students need curriculum modifications regularly, the grade-level curricula are supplanted with alternate more advanced programs of study regularly.

The alternate programs of study

are advanced for the student's current age and grade assignment. Finally, the last layer of curricula involves curricular experiences that provide above grade level experiences on a regular basis via acceleration. This may mean grade advancement or the delivery of more advanced curricula to the advanced students at an unusually younger age than it is typically delivered.



Advanced Content

Advanced content is the hallmark of advanced studies because of its catalyst nature in supporting more comprehensive advanced curricular experiences. Without appropriately rich, sophisticated, and complex content, students are unable to fully engage in higher order thinking as well as develop meaningful and comprehensive products. All too often advanced students are not given an appropriately rich and challenging content, but rather, a broader rather than deeper curriculum for study.

The appropriate content for advanced studies curricula includes increasingly accelerated content within or across disciplines that allows deeper study of a given discipline rather than a cursory study of basic ideas and foundational knowledge alone. Although the most basic layers provide merely extensions or enrichment, more accelerative content

continued on page 4



Advanced Studies

continued from page 3

that introduces students to advanced materials for their age or grade-levels. The advanced content addresses students' advanced interests, existing knowledge, and faster pace or rate of learning within a discipline or across related disciplines.

The advanced studies curriculum must correspond with elevated student expectations that reflect significantly different components—content, process, and product. Therefore, differentiated curriculum for advanced learning involves uniquely different content, process, and products as compared to the grade-level curriculum. The layered curricular approach allows for modifications of some or all of these components to address students' learning needs. Therefore, the advanced studies curricula provide more significantly complex content, higher-order processes, and appropriately advanced products while maintaining connections to the intended discipline(s) of study.

Academic Rigor

The cornerstone of differentiated curricula for advanced studies is the provision of academic rigor commensurate with students' advanced abilities and aptitude. The goal of the education of all students is making continuous progress, however, often advanced students are not challenged consistently at an appropriately high level or not at all by grade-level curricula, thus no progress or learning is made. In fact, when working through general education curricula advanced students' grades often reflect minimal learning or existing knowledge rather than substantial growth or progress.

The proposed advanced studies curricula are linked to academic

disciplines and thus provide levels of rigor via curriculum layering. The lowest level of challenge is evident in the grade-level curricula, while each curriculum layer is an alternative for advanced studies that provides greater rigor commensurate with varying students' different needs. Rigor is achieved through applying different layers of curricula to learning. The curriculum layering provides a variety of entry and exit points within the advanced curricula so that all students can be provided commensurate rigor that is necessary for continuous progress, growth, or learning.

Elevated Expected Outcomes

Essentially, academic rigor is achieved by creating relatively high expectations for student performance in comparison to age and grade-level comparisons. Critically, appropriately high expectations can only be achieved through significant changes in the standard grade-level courses of study, in particular, significant advancement of the content within or across disciplines of study. In order to provide challenge appropriate for all types of advanced learners, advanced curricular options must be available.

In order to achieve academic rigor for advanced studies, the curricular approach must be diagnostic-prescriptive in nature. Student proficiency of grade-level student outcomes outlined for core academic areas of study must be demonstrated through pre-assessments. Based on student need, more elevated outcomes are developed to outline advanced student performance expectations. Thus, curriculum compacting of the expected academic course of study allows for the layering of advanced curricula to fulfill rigorous student expectations.

Advanced studies depend on enhanced or elevated expected outcomes for student performance in

place of grade-level expectations. Because advanced students require unique entry and exit points in the grade-level curricula, age or grade based student outcomes are often inappropriate. Therefore, appropriately elevated student outcomes clearly delineate the level of rigor or challenge expected for student performance. These intended outcomes are related to but are not exclusive to the core academic areas under study because the content, process, and product aspects of the expected outcome must be modified, adapted, or supplanted with appropriate but related changes.

Finally, appropriately rigorous advanced studies must include modifications in student assessment. Students involved in advanced studies curricula must be provided grades based on the advanced curricula if a significant amount of their studies necessitates deviation from the grade-level courses of study. Overall student assessment, including grades, must be based on the elevated expected outcomes for students assigned to advanced studies. Although, completed extensions and enrichment are least likely to be assigned grades, in particular, if the advanced studies is for the purpose of exploration or is optional for student completion.





High Ability Students' Attitudes Toward the Accelerated Reader Program

by Karen L. Westberg, Ph. D. Gifted/Creative/Talented Program
and Amy F. Smith, Ph. D. Graduate Reading Program, University of St. Thomas

What do high ability students *really* think about the Accelerated Reader (AR) program, an independent reading program in which students read fiction and non-fiction books of their choice and take brief online recall/comprehension quizzes on books? In this article we report the results from the administration of a questionnaire with Grade 3–8 high ability students.

Review of the Literature

AR was developed by Renaissance Learning to (1) increase students' motivation to read and (2) increase students' achievement in reading. When reviewing the literature on this program, however, we discovered inconsistent findings about the impact of AR on motivation and achievement.

Many parents and teachers speak with pride about the use of AR in their schools and perceive the AR program to be achieving its promise (personal communications, 2009), but several independent research studies reveal negative outcomes of the AR program (e.g., Conrath, 2007; Krashen, 2005; Melton, et al., 2004; White, 2005). Some authors, such as Persinger (2001) and Brisco (2003), questioned if AR is responsible for getting students excited about reading or if it simply gets students interested in the program to earn points and prizes, which actually undermines students' intrinsic motivation. Gallagher (2009), the author of *Readicide*, argues that the "overtaching of academic texts" and the use of programs, such as AR, that offer extrinsic rewards for reading, are responsible for "readicide", the noun he created to describe "the systematic killing of the love of reading, often exacerbated by the inane, mind-numbing practices found in schools" (p.

2). Only a few studies have investigated whether the AR program actually has an impact on students' reading achievement. As with the AR studies on motivation, the results of these studies are varied, and only a few used comparison groups.

Method and Procedures

Because of the contradictory findings in the literature and the wide use of AR, we decided to obtain the views of high ability students through a descriptive questionnaire administered to Grade 3–8 high ability students in public schools and students

participating in a 2010 summer enrichment program. The 30-item questionnaire contains 5 demographic items, 24 items on a 4-point response scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree), and one open-ended item at the end for additional comments. While all of the questionnaire items are of interest to us, the last two interval-scale items were most important because they address the two major claims of the AR program. These items are "I think AR motivates me to read more" and "I think

continued on page 6

Table 1

High Ability Students' Questionnaire Item Means and Standard Deviations (N = 319)

Questionnaire Items	M	SD
6. I like to read.	3.39	.732
7. I like to read only books that have AR quizzes available.*	2.19	.829
8. I like to read books that do not have AR quizzes available.	2.59	.761
9. The AR quiz questions ask about important details from the book.*	3.15	.681
10. The AR quiz questions ask about the main ideas from the book.*	3.06	.682
11. The AR quiz questions make me really think about what I have read.	2.89	.820
12. I always read the whole book before taking an AR quiz.	3.69	.589
13. To pass the AR quiz you must have read the book.	3.40	.776
14. The teacher supervises when I take AR quizzes.	2.00	.837
15. My classroom has a wide variety of AR books and quizzes.	2.67	.870
16. My school library has a wide variety of AR books and quizzes.	3.63	.621
17. AR is used school-wide at my School.	3.42	.701
18. I am able to use the AR computerized quiz program without help.	3.67	.541
19. I read mainly because I want to gain rewards for my AR points.*	2.24	.947
20. My teacher offers rewards for accumulating AR points.	2.26	.955
21. My school offers rewards for accumulating AR points.	2.97	.988
22. My teacher connects AR to other instruction and activities in reading class.	2.44	.774
23. Receiving rewards helps increase my motivation to read.	2.50	.956
24. My teacher uses my AR quizzes as part of my report card grade.	2.61	.963
25. Using AR as a report card grade motivates me to read.	2.37	.990
26. I think AR motivates me to read more.	2.57	.937
27. I think the AR program has helped me with my reading skills.	2.73	.971

Item Nos. 1-5 on the questionnaire were demographic items.

Item Response Scale: 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Agree*, 4 = *Strongly Agree*

*Items 7, 9, 10, 19 will be reversed scored in correlational analyses



High Ability Students' Attitudes, *continued from page 5*

the AR program has helped me with my reading skills.”

Results

Student questionnaires were administered to a total of 319 students (144 boys, 175 girls) who reported receiving gifted services in their respective schools. The grade levels of the students were: Grade 3, $n = 55$; Grade 4, $n = 62$; Grade 5, $n = 85$; Grade 6, $n = 50$; Grade 7, $n = 43$; Grade 8, $n = 24$. Not too surprisingly, 63% of the students indicate their grades are excellent, and 26% of the students state that they attain above-average grades. When asked how long they had participated in AR, students stated: 1 year, $n = 19$ (6%); 2 years, $n = 37$ (12%); 3 years, $n = 68$ (21%); and 4 years or more, $n = 192$ (60%); with 3 students not responding to this item.

The primary research question for this study was: How do high ability students view various aspects of the AR program, i.e., the influence of AR on their motivation to read; the impact of AR on their reading skills; the use of AR quizzes for assessment; the tangible rewards used by some teachers; and the availability of AR books? This was examined by computing the means and standard deviations on all interval-scale items (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, 4 = *strongly agree*). The means (arithmetic averages) and standard deviations for the items are shown in Table 1 (see page 5).

What do these numbers mean? We remind readers that an item with a mean (arithmetic average) of 3.00 and above indicates that students agreed with the statement. For example, nearly all students (90.3%) selected *strongly agree* or *agree* responses on item no. 6 (mean = 3.39). An item with a mean of 2.00 to 2.89 indicates that students rated the statement with *disagree* or *strongly disagree* more frequently than *agree* or *strongly agree*. The most surprising result on the table is the means listed for the last two items, nos. 26 and 27, which were less than 3.00, which indicates that a fair number of students did not agree with those statements. Although Renaissance Learning claims that the purpose of AR is to motivate students to read and improve reading skills, this study found that a large number of high ability students' responses do not support this claim.

We found interesting results about the relationship between some items on the questionnaire, particularly with regard to the last two items. We found a negligible relationship between “I like to read” (item 6) and “I think AR motivates me to read” and “I think the AR program has helped me with my reading skills” (correlations were $r = .144$ and $r = .073$, respectively). This suggests that high ability students don't need AR to be motivated to read and further their reading skills. In addition, grade level was the only demographic variable significantly related to students' perceptions of AR's influence on motivation and reading skills. Grade 7 students' responses were significantly lower than younger students' perceptions about both motivation and the influence of AR on their reading skills. We suspect if

the Grade 8 sample had been larger, we would find the same results with them. This tells us that as students get older, they have less favorable views about AR.

At the end of the questionnaire, 250 students wrote brief comments. The majority were positive comments, such as: “I think AR is a good program and you get prizes for reading a good book.” The negative comments centered around dissatisfaction with the unavailability of some books and quizzes, the types of questions on the quizzes, or having AR point totals included in grades or on report cards. Comments reflecting these include: “The questions are sometimes about little details in the story that you might forget—it might be less confusing if the questions were about the main points in the story”; and “It would be easier if we didn't have to get a certain amount of points for a grade. I love to read, but I don't like AR.” A few students shared their frustration with not being allowed to read higher-leveled books, such as: “I read books like *Eragon*, *Twilight*, etc. and I can't take tests on them and I feel like I am babied.”

Conclusions/Discussion

The results of the questionnaire indicate that high ability learners enjoy reading (which was anticipated), but slightly less than half of the sample did not think AR motivates them to read or influences their reading skills, which causes us to question the appropriateness of AR with high ability students. Why are schools continuing to support the use of AR with high ability students who already love to read and have advanced reading skills? Additionally, the findings indicated that students in middle school do not like AR as well as elementary students, and some students report being frustrated when they are not allowed to read higher level books or books that are not on the school's AR list. A few students explained that they read non-AR books at a different pace (faster or slower) and, when not reading an AR book, they enjoyed reading more than one book at a time (just as some adult readers do.)

Younger students are quite enthusiastic about the program, but many admit that the primary reason for this is because they like seeing themselves at the top of the “AR point list” posted in their media centers, or they like receiving tangible rewards when attaining a certain number of points. Perhaps we should reflect on whether or not this is what we aim for when using AR?

It is ironic that AR was intended to promote independent reading in students, but because of the points, book lists, and reading levels associated with AR, it sometimes actually restricts students' independent reading options. Guided reading is supposed to be directed at students' instructional levels, but independent reading should not be directed at instructional levels. There is a difference between instructional levels and independent reading levels. Sometimes students like to read books for pleasure *below* their reading level and, at other times, read books *above* their



reading levels. Some students like to read a favorite book several times for the pleasure of rereading certain scenes or getting reacquainted with a particular character. Because of AR, some educators are not applying what they have always known about “best practices” for independent reading, particularly when working with advanced readers.

Recommendations

We believe that schools need to take a closer look at how they are implementing AR to determine how they can lessen some of the high ability students’ frustration with the program. For example, posting student point totals in the media centers or in classrooms, including AR points in students’ reading grades, or going overboard with AR point celebrations and tangible rewards (pizza parties, trinkets, etc.) turns pleasure reading into a competitive activity. Renaissance Learning, the publisher of the AR program, does not recommend that schools employ massive reward systems when implementing the program.

If schools are using AR, they should consider using differentiated instructional methods to better meet the needs of capable readers. For example, students should have options for alternative assessments—different methods for sharing what they have read besides answering low-level quiz questions. Excellent readers should be provided with options to opt out of AR and read the books they want to read for pleasure or participate in alternative, challenging activities that advance their expertise in reading. Best practices suggest that many academic programs are not appropriate for *all* students, and this most certainly applies to advanced readers.

We were surprised to see how infrequently independent researchers have studied AR. If AR is implemented differently, such as changing the practices that create undue pressure on students, experimental studies could examine the effectiveness of different implementation procedures. Having teachers conduct action research studies on AR in

their schools and finding out how their students view AR is also a good idea. And, finally, teachers’, administrators’, and parents’ views of AR should be explored. Adults perceive AR to be a successful program and a reliable indicator of student comprehension. Researchers should investigate this perception, and ask more questions of teachers, administrators, and parents to better understand the phenomenon and the effectiveness of AR for high ability students in schools.

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Gifted and Talented Youth Week

October 30-November 6, 2010

Governor Pawlenty has been requested to officially declare October 30-November 6, 2010, as Gifted and Talented Youth Week in the state of Minnesota. During that week, we encourage those in the gifted community to plan activities which will raise awareness and support of the needs of gifted and talented kids.

We anticipate that the proclamation, signed by the governor, will read: Minnesota’s children and youth are some of our greatest resources. Minnesota’s educational system plays a key role in recognizing and developing this valuable human resource by fostering the development of intelligence, creativity, academic, leadership, and visual and performing arts. Minnesota’s tens of thousands of gifted and talented children can be helped to realize their full potential by strategic cooperation between education, community, and government. The maximum development of each individual’s intellectual and creative powers enhances Minnesota’s ability to successfully meet the challenges of the future.



MCGT NEWS...

MINNESOTA COUNCIL FOR THE GIFTED AND TALENTED



Upcoming Events

Thursday, September 30, 2010. "What Works: Practical Strategies for Gifted Learners." Gifted Conference sponsored by the University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis. Opening panel presentation and three breakout sessions. Features four fulltime St. Thomas faculty members with expertise in gifted education: Jan Hansen, Sarah Noonan, Karen Rogers and Karen Westberg. More information: www.stthomas.education/events.

Thursday, October 7, 2010. MCGT CHAT NIGHT. Hosted by Rosemount/Apple Valley/Eagan (RAVE) Chapter, 6.30-8:00 pm. at Falcon Ridge Middle School, 12900 Johnny Cake, Apple Valley, MN 55124. Room number will be posted in the building. Use main entrance, which faces Johnny Cake Rd. Topic, gifted girls and teens. Facilitated by Megan Bearce. Contact: Kathy Geary, katherine.geary@mcgt.net

Thursday, November 4, 2010. MCGT CHAT NIGHT. Hosted by Burnsville-Eagan-Savage Chapter. Location, topic and facilitator to be announced. Contact: Carol Malueg, burnsville@mcgt.net

Saturday, November 6, 2010. MCGT Annual Conference. At the University of St. Thomas on its Minneapolis campus. The keynote speaker will be Edward R. Amend, Psy.D., Clinical Psychologist at Amend Psychological Services, P.S.C. . Dr. Amend is co-author of two award-winning books: *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children*; and *Misdiagnosis and Dual Diagnoses of Gifted Children and Adults*

Conference registration information, including class options for kids from kindergarten to seventh grade, is on the MCGT website, www.mcgt.net Parents coming to the conference with children must pre-register for their child's choice of both a morning and afternoon class.

Saturday, November 13, 2010. Online School Options Fair

November 11-14, 2010. NAGC (National Association for Gifted Children) Annual Convention. In Atlanta, Georgia. More information: www.nagc.org

Thursday, December 2, 2010. MCGT CHAT Night. Hosted by L'étoile du Nord French Immersion School in St. Paul. Topic and facilitator to be announced. Contact person, Desiree Bergquist.

February 6-8, 2011. MN Educators of Gifted and Talented (MEGT) Winter Conference. Cragun's Resort, Brainerd, MN. Keynotes: Joe Renzulli and Diane Heacox. More information: www.megt.org

Thursday, February 3, 2011. MCGT CHAT Night. Hosted by Eden Prairie Chapter. Location, topic and facilitator to be announced. Contact person, Joe Wenc.

Thursday, March 3, 2011. MCGT CHAT Night. Hosted by East Metro Chapter. Location, topic and facilitator to be announced. Contact person, Deb Singletary.

Thursday, April 7, 2011. MCGT CHAT Night. Hosted by St. Anthony Parent Group. Location, topic and facilitator to be announced. Contact person, Cathy Chun.

MCGT CHAT Nights

(Connect, Help, Advocate, Talk)

MCGT CHAT Nights are dedicated to informally connecting parents of gifted children, helping them find other parents in similar situations with an ear to listen, experiences to share, and solutions to offer. CHAT Nights are free and open to the public, and not restricted to only MCGT or chapter members. They are usually held from 7:00-8:30 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month from October through April during the school year. Chapters may choose to provide optional items such as refreshments and childcare, and may charge fees for those services.

Each evening starts with a brief (10-15 minutes) presentation by a facilitator on a topic of interest to be followed by an open discussion on the topic with those present. We will assist chapters with publicity for their CHAT Nights through MCGT's Yahoo discussion group, on the MCGT website, and in Outlook.

Check the Calendar of Coming Events in this issue for the dates, hosts and contact people for the 2010-2011 CHAT Nights. Topics, locations and other information will be posted on the MCGT website, www.mcgt.net.



Program Spotlight

This is a second in our series highlighting gifted/talented programs throughout the state. Our goal is to provide our members with an inside glimpse at a variety of programs from large metro to rural schools. We believe some of our best teachers and mentors are within our own membership. In this issue we are highlighting Maple Lake Public School which is a small rural community approximately 45 miles west of the Minneapolis metro area Maple Lake Public School

School: Maple Lake Public School

School population: 990 K-12

Community type: Maple Lake has some industry and manufacturing but is primarily a community of commuters to the Minneapolis metro area (apx.45 miles) and St. Cloud.

Grades that receive services: Services are provided for students in Grades 1-8

Number of students: This number varies from year to year but generally in the 110-120 range

How many teachers provide services: The gifted service coordinator serves for approximately 5 hours per week. Various classroom teachers serve a total of an additional 2-3 hours per week on average.

Outline what services you (or others) provide at the elementary level: Services provided are primarily for leading academic competitions and extensions-

Math Masters-Grades 5 and 6

Junior Great Books-Grades 1-3

Knowledge Bowl-Grades 5-6 and Grades 7-8



The coordinator also spends time meeting weekly with students in grades 2-4 after school for math enrichment activities. The gifted/talented coordinator also visits classrooms grades 3-5 to demonstrate enrichment websites and hands-on games/challenge activities. These are presented to all students. Some of these emphasize visual/spatial skills area of giftedness often not emphasized in the traditional curriculum.

Lego League, which is coached by a community member, is also an integral part of our program. This program pulls participants from both the elementary and junior high level. Battle of the Books is offered in cooperation with the school media supervisor for students in Grade 3-6.

It is the responsibility of the gifted coordinator to assess students for participation in enrichment programming as well as subject and/or grade acceleration. Consulting and assisting classroom teacher regarding concerns of individual gifted learners is also an important responsibility of the coordinator.

What is your identification process?

Maple Lake uses a multi-measure approach to identifying students for services. MCA's, teacher identification of classroom performance and some parental input is used to identify the most able learners.

If you would like more information about Maple Lake's program, please contact coordinator, Dorothy Kersten at kersten@maplelake.k12.mn.us.





MEGT Membership

Membership in MEGT entitles you to our newsletters, annual position papers (this year's topic dealt with Asperger's syndrome and giftedness), networking with others in the state involved in gifted education and legislative updates regarding gifted/high ability students. You'll also be among the first to receive information on the 2011 state conference. Our Keynote speakers have already committed; Joe Renzulli and Dianne Heacox!

To renew your membership, just send the form below along with the \$40 membership fee to Pam Pearson (see below).

Membership Form

Name _____

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City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Home Phone _____ District/Business _____

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Region: Arrowhead ___ Headwaters ___ Heartland ___ Homestead ___ Metro ___ MidMN ___

Riverbend ___ Prairie ___ Valley ___ If unknown, indicate your county: _____

Mark your focus: Elementary ___ Middle ___ Secondary ___ Coordinator ___ Administrator ___

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Send Membership Form and fee to: Pam Pearson (MEGT Membership), 7624 Terrace Dr NW, Alexandria, MN 56308

PRODUCT REVIEW

By Amanda Bremner

Spatial Reasoning: A Mathematics Unit for High-Ability Learners in Grades 2-4 (William and Mary Curriculum Units)

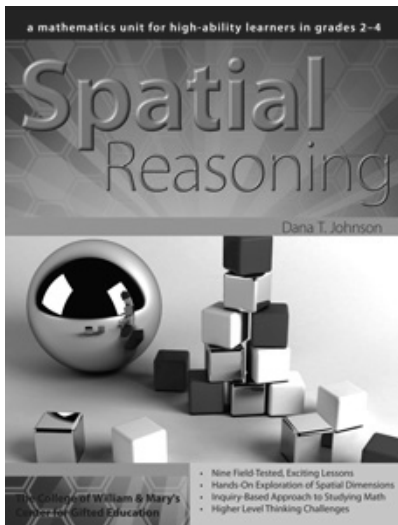
After my second grade students raced through the regular math curriculum and devoured each new challenge I presented to them, I was forced to rapidly wrap up my search for math curriculum and just try *something*. That something was a geometry unit from the College of William and Mary's Center for Gifted Education. Spatial Reasoning: A Mathematics Unit for High-Ability Learners in Grades 2-4 turned out to be just what I was looking for. Through the unit, my students (and I) were immersed in the land of dimensions. The familiar geometry concepts of flips, turns, reflections, symmetry, polygons and more were explored through inquiry as well as high-level questions. At the completion of the unit we all (my self included) had a deeper understanding of concepts that are often brushed over and taught in the same manner year after year in traditional math curriculums.

The author lays out easy to use lessons in this book. A pre-assessment is included, which helped me know exactly where to start. It is also simple to adjust for students needs. Parts of the

lessons can be left out or enhanced. Entire lessons can be omitted without abandoning the whole thing. With second grade students, there were several lessons that delved much deeper than they were ready to go. Though I have not yet tried the lesson with older students, I imagine fourth grade students are ready for all of the lessons and the greater depth the book offers. Checkpoint sheets and a post-assessment were great ways to measure my student's progress and make teaching adjustments as needed.

The book itself is relatively inexpensive, \$39.95 from Prufrock. However, to teach the lessons well, many materials are needed. Some of things you can probably borrow from math teachers in your building, or you may have yourself, but other items you will likely need to purchase, such as Patty Paper. The author suggests alternate materials, where possible, that help decrease expenses.

Overall, this unit was well worth the time I devoted to it. I am hopeful the other math units from William and Mary prove equally enlightening.





Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented Annual Convention, February 6-8, 2011

Designing Success for All: Inspiring Gifted Students



Literacy
Critical Thinking
Creative Thinking
Inquiry
Intuition



Use of Technology in Teaching
Gifted and RTI

Call For Proposals:

The MEGT statewide organization is seeking presenters to share their expertise/insights in the challenge of gifted students. Successful presenters, teachers, coordinators, administrators, parents interested in providing engaging sessions for participants are encouraged to send in proposals. **Proposals that focus on the topics bulleted above will take priority in acceptance. Proposals accepted will receive a confirmation and a request for a PDF version of the 2011 conference presentation they deliver at the conference. That file should be sent to the same email address by January 5, 2011.**

Please complete the form below and send it to the address at the bottom of this page. **Proposals will be accepted until November 15, 2010**

Presenter(s) _____

Address: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Telephone (h) _____ (w) _____

Session Title: (To be included in conference materials) _____

Description (25 words or less which will appear in the conference brochure)

Intended Audience:

Complexity Level: 1- Novice—4 -Expert

Presenter(s)' Background:

AV: Conference planners will provide overhead and screen for each session. All other AV needs is the responsibility of the presenter.

Bibliography of any materials that you would like made available through conference exhibitors:

Plan on providing 35 copies of handouts for each session you conduct. Proposals accepted will receive a confirmation and a request for a PDF version of the 2011 conference presentation they deliver at the conference. That file should be sent to the same email address by January 5, 2011.

Return proposal via email by November 15, 2010 to:

Bill Keilty
Spring Lake Park District 16
763-795-6686 (w) 651-485-2108 (c)
bkeilt@district16.org or microtubel@me.com



MEGT FOUNDATION

Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented Foundation

The Foundation continues to seek support to carry out its mission. In the effort to raise money for the Foundation teachers and their gifted students benefit. The fund is growing but it needs your support to reach all of those teachers. Programs have been cut across the state. Resource rooms have disappeared. Coordinators' positions have diminished. Gifted students are languishing. Teachers are challenged daily to provide for an ever growing wider expanse of talent in their rooms. Innovation is disappearing as teachers prepare for state mandated testing.

The Foundation wants to support the innovative teacher that is trying to meet the needs of his/her gifted students. But we need your help to build the fund that will support that innovation. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Foundation and click here www.megtfoundation.com today. It takes so little time. You will be supporting innovation in the classroom. Teachers will be able to carry out their work with your support. For as little as the cost of a movie with popcorn and a drink, you can make a difference for gifted students in Minnesota.



Friend of the Gifted Nominations Sought

Do you know someone who deserves to be recognized for many years of service in support of gifted education? Now is the time to nominate that person for the Friend of the Gifted Award. Criteria for nomination include long-term support of the gifted, broad-ranging impact, and s/he is currently a Minnesota resident.

Any MEGT member may nominate a candidate for this award. You may contact a regional representative, or board member Marty Hartmann. The state board will review all nominations at the November meeting and determine who the recipient will be. Please take advantage of this opportunity to recognize someone from our area who is deserving of this award. Contact Gwen Briesmeister, gbriesmeister@delana.k12.mn.us.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

by Bill Keilty,
MEGT Legislative Liaison

School is off and running again. Funding is abysmal. Gifted programs have disappeared or diminished. Home schooling is growing. On line learning is expanding. Gifted students are suffering. When districts are faced with diminished resources, they are forced to turn to those areas of the budget with are extra and seek ways to reduce or eliminate it. Gifted Programs and those students has been the target. And is there help on the way? At the local level you know your district is trying to carry on with limited funding. At the state level, incoming candidates for governor are jostling for the best solutions to offset a \$6 Billion dollar deficit. At the federal level efforts are afoot to offset the elimination of the Jacob Javits' Gifted funding. Gifted students are an underserved population. So what can you do?

Find out the educational policies held by the candidates. My informed guess that a DFL governor

would serve education better and support the efforts of the legislature to bring to reality a education funding plan the would guarantee funding for gifted students. Locally elect DFL representatives and senators to support the efforts of current legislators as they try to refine the funding for all of education. Volunteer to sit on the endorsement committee of your local bargaining unit and seek out school board candidates who support gifted education. Develop questions that will reveal their support. Nationally contact your representative in Washington and get them to co-sign the Courtney-Gallegly letter, which urges the House appropriations committee to restore funding for the Javits' program. The Javits program is the only federal program that focuses on the educational needs of gifted students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The president has zeroed it out. For more information, go the www.NAGC.org and click Advocacy and Legislation to learn more about the Javits' program funding.

Vote for Gifted this fall.



ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT

Special Schools for the Gifted Network Meetings

A new network is in place for school leadership team members from districts that have special schools for the gifted or are exploring the possibility of creating one. Special schools for the gifted include School With-in-the-School models and gifted magnet schools. Monthly meetings provide the opportunity for leaders to discuss their roles and the use of best practices on a variety of topics. Monthly themes include program leadership and management, differentiation for gifted learners, social and emotional needs, identification and planning for twice exceptional learners.

Registration is required. Each full-day session will be held at the MDE Conference Center from 9:00 – 3:00 p.m. There is **no charge** to the participant to attend. Visit the MDE Calendar to view monthly topics and register in the sessions.

Gifted and Talented Reporting

The districts are required to report the staff development activities and expenditures for the district and their school sites. All districts, including those not reserving funds, must complete a program report. Gifted and Talented program data is reported by **site** in the Gifted and Talented Programs Online Staff Development Report accessed on MDE's district report page.



Scholar of Distinction Award Program 2011

Minnesota Scholars of Distinction program nurtures and recognizes distinguished achievement by highly motivated students. Each specialty area was developed through partnerships of educators, business and others. To earn this recognition, students must complete required work in Minnesota's Academic Standards, demonstrate mastery of complex subject matter and apply their knowledge to challenging projects.

For information about **new** criteria, timelines and the process of applying for a 2011 award cycle visit http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Academic_Excellence/High_School_Initiatives/Scholars_Distinction/index.html after October 1st.

For more information about the Special Schools for the Gifted Network Meetings, Gifted and Talented Reporting or the Scholar of Distinction Award Program, or other gifted education issues please contact Wendy Behrens, Gifted and Talented Education Specialist at 651-582-8786 or wendy.behrens@state.mn.us

Minnesota NUMATS

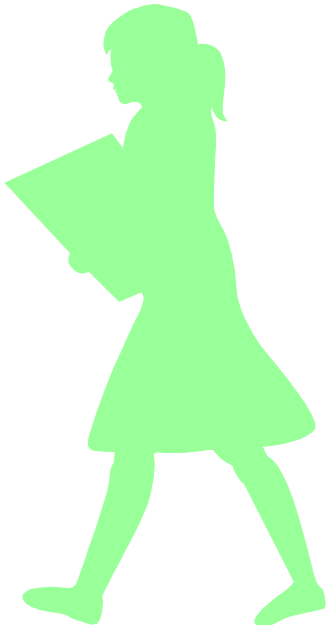
Bill Keilty, CTD Liaison for Minnesota

The third annual Minnesota Northwestern University Midwest Academic Talent Search (MN NUMATS) Award ceremony was held this past May at the University of St. Thomas. Over 120 top performing students in grades 4-9 were invited to the award ceremony for special recognition. Award winners from around the state had been identified based on their performance on the EXPLORE or SAT or the SAT. The intent of the Talent Search is to determine how high a student can perform on these out of level tests. In Minnesota we have extraordinary kids! The Center for Talent Development (CTD) at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL invites a number of Minnesota award

winners to an awards ceremony in Evanston in June.

The MN NUMATS event, held on the Minneapolis Campus, had as its invited guest keynote speaker, Dr. Art Costa. Author of the *Habits of Mind*, Dr. Costa shared with his audience of students, parents and teachers, the place the *Habits of Mind* have in our lives. Students had invited their teachers to the event for special recognition. A tea held in the Atrium at Murray Hall followed the awards portion of the event. Music provided by a student strings ensemble set a classic tone.

The event was co-sponsored by MEGT, MCGT, CTD, the University of St. Thomas, Free Spirit Press and Target Corp.





Reflections on Hormel Symposium

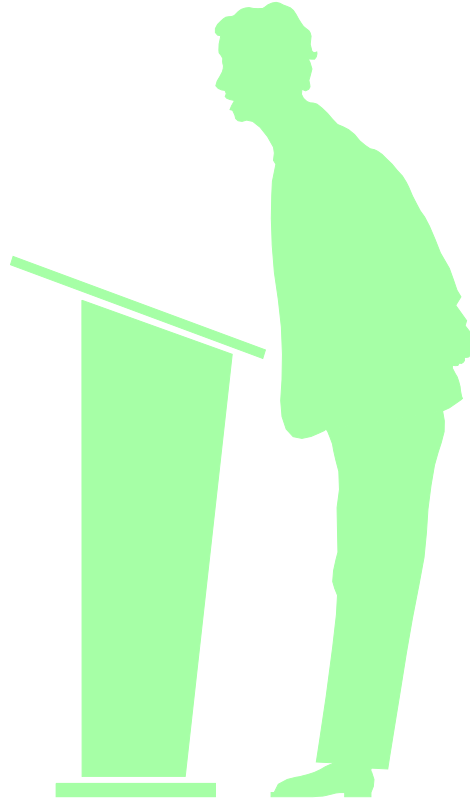
by Billie Riemer

I had just finished my first year as the elementary gifted and talented teacher/coordinator for my district, and had no idea what to expect as I headed to Austin, MN for the Gifted and Talented Education Symposium in June. To be completely honest, it wasn't exactly how I pictured my first week of summer, especially 6 months pregnant. On the other hand, I had only heard positive comments about the previous year's symposium. I figured I just had to keep an open mind. I am so glad I did, because the symposium provided excellent keynote speakers, breakout sessions, and social opportunities throughout the week. The knowledge, ideas, and experience I gained were well worth the time spent.

When I walked through the doors of Riverland Community College, I was impressed by the organized registration process and fabulous continental breakfast. From there it was time to hear Dr. Malik Henfield give his keynote address. He had a fascinating story to tell. It was an inspirational way to begin the week.

The breakout sessions were next. Participants were given descriptions of about 36 sessions from which we had to choose three. We would then attend the same three sessions for the next few days. For someone like me, who has a hard time making decisions, this was no easy task. There were so many interesting topics. It helped that some sessions were geared towards parents, others towards administrators, and yet others for teachers. Still, there were several sessions I wish I could have attended, but didn't have the time. Here is a brief glimpse into the three sessions I chose.

My first session was with Karen Westberg, who focused on "Identification of Students for Gifted



and Talented Services". We looked at the **best practices** in identifying students for gifted services. I found her handouts and ideas for testing instruments to be especially helpful.

"Differentiating Math and Reading for Gifted Elementary Students" with Mary Slade was my second session. With the story telling ability of a standup comedian, Mary Slade had us rolling as she talked about the four basic components of a re-designed curricula: 1) academic rigor, 2) advanced content, 3) elevated expected outcomes, and 4) a layered approach. I filled several notebook pages with ideas for enhancing reading and math curriculum for gifted students, which I look forward to implementing this school year.

Diane Heacox led the third session I attended titled "What's Different about

Differentiation for Gifted and Talented Learners?" This breakout session was much more interactive as participants worked together to provide real examples of how we differentiate. We used several different handouts that will help the differentiation process in the classroom.

Tuesday's keynote address was a panel of professionals that dissected scenes from the movie *The Breakfast Club*. The panel helped identify gifted characteristics in each character that I'd never noticed before. From this new perspective, the movie took on a whole new meaning. It was quite fascinating and led me want to watch the entire film with a new frame of mind.

Instead of a keynote speaker on Wednesday, we chose a mini breakout session to attend. Once again, there was something for everyone's needs. With my elementary background, I found Super STAR Reading: Selecting Texts for Advanced Readers to be an appropriate choice.

Besides interesting keynote speakers and breakout sessions, there were several optional social gatherings to attend. Options included a SPAM museum reception, tours of the Hormel Institute, and a banquet held at the Hormel Historic Home. All the events were well organized and the food was fantastic. The entire week provided attendees a chance to socialize with other professionals from the GT community and share ideas, thoughts, and experiences.

On the last morning, Mary Slade gave her keynote address focusing on *The Impact of Flexible Grouping on Differentiated Learning*. With her stories, humor, and expertise, it was a positive way to conclude the symposium.



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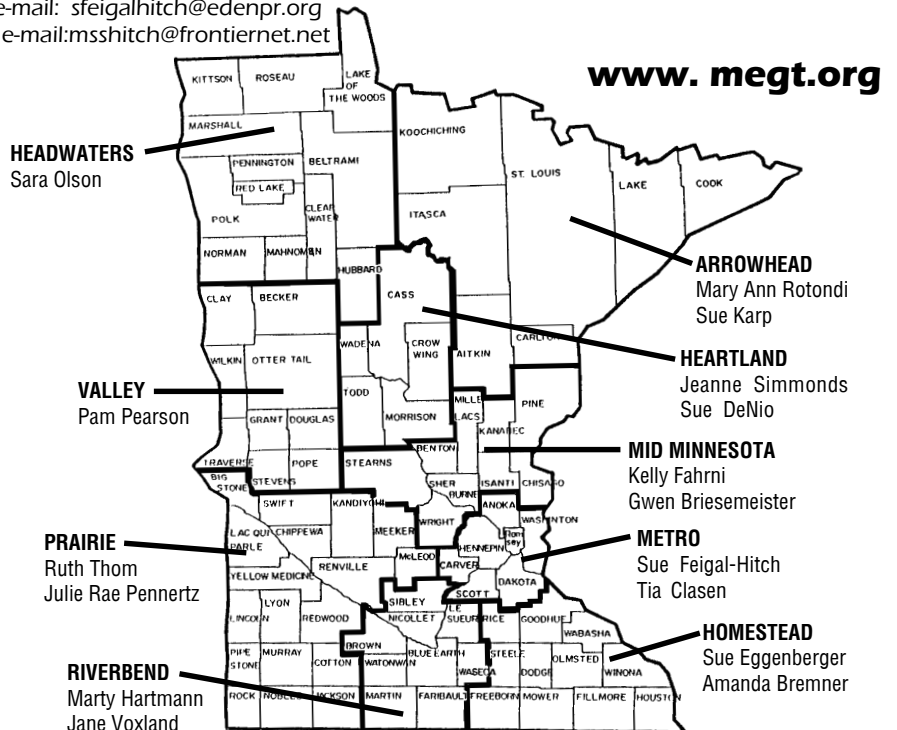
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INDEPENDENT STUDY

Contributed by Gwen Briesemeister

Independent study is one of the most frequently recommended instructional strategies for differentiating and individualizing instruction for gifted students. It seems easy to do, just let the student find a topic, go to the media center to research and report back what was discovered. If you live in a bubble, that may work out for you; but most of us understand that developing an independent study unit with students requires a great deal of guidance, feedback and mentoring along the way. Independent study can be a great experience for a gifted student, but without a guiding hand, it can turn into a missed opportunity. The pull out pages in this issue will help you, the guide and mentor, develop a meaningful experience for the independent researcher as well as provide excellent feedback to parents regarding the process and final product.

There are many things to consider when helping students develop independent studies and I would suggest that you check out the abundant resources available through Prufrock, Dandy Lion, Engine-Uity Creative Learning Press, etc. The following information provides the basic steps to help you develop independent studies with your students.

Step 1 - Selecting a Topic

Students often don't have enough world and life experience to conjure up topics beyond the overused and tired...earthquakes, dinosaurs, whales etc. Students will need time to explore in the library in order to find topics of interest. I often rely on Susan Winebrenner's *Topic Browser* (Teaching the Gifted Child in the Regular Classroom) to help students discover what resources are available in our media center and the Internet. There are several idea lists on line that you may want to make available to help students envision the possibilities as well.

Step 2 - Developing the project

Before a student can be expected to produce an effective independent study, a well-organized plan needs to be developed. The teacher needs to assist the student in this part of the project. It is the student's responsibility to have selected an appropriate topic and be able to articulate what ideas they have for conveying their information. Provide the student the product list to help them see the possibilities. *(pull-out page)* If you need more help, Engine-Uity has some great products to help the student explore product ideas. The next step is to assist the student to complete the Independent Project Planning Guide. Project development is an essential step to a successful independent study. The teacher needs to help the student decide how the project will look and the process that should be followed to see the work to completion. The project planner is a great way to keep parents informed of the individual attention that you have given to their child.

Step 3 - Research and Development

The student will be working independently at this point and should be expected to follow through on the work. Keeping a daily log will help the student focus on their work for the day as well as give the teacher feedback on their progress. *(pull-out page)* The daily log is intended to be completed before the student leaves the room to work. This insures that he/she has an effective plan for each day. It then becomes their responsibility to follow through with their plan. The daily log is a great record of the progress that their child has made on the project.

The three steps listed above are meant to provide basic a framework to begin assisting students to develop meaningful independent studies while providing feedback to parents. If you want more information about independent studies check the session, "A Toolbox of Differentiation Strategies" at the MEGT state conference to be held in February.



PULL-OUT PAGE



Independent Project Planning Guide

Student Name _____ Planning Date _____

A. Curriculum Area: _____

B. Title of Project _____

C. Describe what the project will look like or be when it is completed-as now "seen" in the mind of the planner (Continue on reverse side if more space is needed.)

D. Plan/Procedure to complete the project.

Student Signature

Date

Teacher Name

Date



PULL-OUT PAGE



INDEPENDENT STUDY ACTIVITY LOG

Student _____ Teacher _____

Date	Daily Plan	Self Evaluation (What did I accomplish today?)
		I rate the quality and progress of my work to date: 1 2 3 4
		I rate the quality and progress of my work to date: 1 2 3 4
		I rate the quality and progress of my work to date: 1 2 3 4
		I rate the quality and progress of my work to date: 1 2 3 4
		I rate the quality and progress of my work to date: 1 2 3 4
		I rate the quality and progress of my work to date: 1 2 3 4



PULL-OUT PAGE



PRODUCT LIST

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ANNOTATED
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