

EXPANSIONS

A newsletter for the parents of gifted children

Fall 2009



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A Note from the Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Services

Dear Parents,

I hope that you and your child have experienced a positive start to the school year and are looking forward to a year full of opportunities and promise! There are some wonderful enrichment activities planned at each school this year and I encourage you to be a part of these events.

We will of course have Spelling Bee this year at the elementary and middle school levels and I am looking forward to visiting each Spelling team to see how they are progressing in this task. In addition, several schools will be sponsoring teams to participate in Destination Imagination, which is a creative problem-solving competition. We had one team from Dupont Elementary who advanced to the state level competition last year and I know they are planning to continue this tradition.

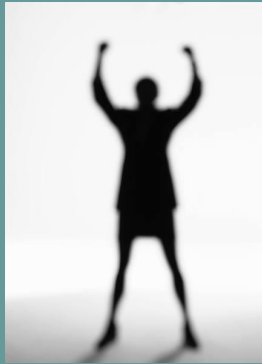
School conferences will be coming up before you know it; so I have included an article from Parenting For High Potential, which may prove very helpful in these conversations. Remember you are your child's first advocate and it is important to collaborate with the school on behalf of him or her.

Finally, we have a Gifted and Talented Liaison at each school who supports the needs of gifted learners. If you have questions or concerns about gifted programming or identification at the school level, please do not hesitate to contact them. And, as always, feel free to contact me if you have questions or concerns that have not been addressed at the school level.

Cheryl Franklin-Rohr

Coordinator, Gifted and Talented Services

(303) 853-3249



*“The future
belongs to
those who
believe in the
beauty of
their dreams.”*

*Eleanor
Roosevelt*

Parent Advisory Group

Several parents have expressed an interest in forming a parent group for Adams 14 identified gifted students. To start this, we need one volunteer to help organize the group, plan a parent night, and help create and distribute a survey.

Reward! You get to attend the Parent Institute, sponsored by the Colorado Association for Gifted and Talented (CAGT) on Monday night, October 5th.

If you are interested, please contact Cheryl Franklin Rohr at 303-853-3249 and we'll get started.

P.S. Also call Cheryl if you cannot help organize the group, but would be interested in attending parent group activities.

School News

As part of our reflection process for last year, I asked each school to share the ways in which their teachers met the needs of the gifted and talented students at each of their schools. The following are excerpts of their comments:

Adams City High School:

- We gave students the opportunity to accelerate into Algebra and Geometry classes by eighth grade. At the beginning of the school year, students can test out of classes successfully and take the math class which provides the necessary academic challenge.
- In English classes, we taught students to self-evaluate to make sure they are constantly growing in their knowledge. By connecting each assignment in our classrooms to a personal level we can produce creative, global-minded thinkers.
- We met with students to personalize the Advanced Learning Plan and to help them plan for their academic future and to learn to self-advocate.
- Two students from the 11th grade participated in the Colorado Association for Gifted and Talented (CAGT) Leadership breakfast; where they met with state level directors and administrators to share the importance of having access to gifted programming. Three students from 10th grade participated at the Colorado Association of Gifted (CAGT) Legislative Day where they shadowed state legislators, sat in on small sessions and listed to debates about laws being passed. Both of these events presented unique situations for our students to see, at the state level, how gifted programming is valued by the state.

Lester Arnold High School:

- Our staff works with students on an individual basis to identify their strength areas and to determine what their instructional needs are. All teachers have been designing and implementing lessons that raise the bar for gifted learners and push them to succeed.

Adams City Middle School:

- We had 85 students taking Algebra this year so that they would be prepared to take Geometry as a freshman at high school. We also sponsored after school clubs like MESA (Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement) so that students could develop their math and science abilities. Additionally, two students attended the Summer Enrichment Program.

Kearney Middle School:

- At the 6th grade level, the reading teachers used the information gathered from a Multiple Intelligence Survey to plan for the strength areas of the gifted learners and to provide project ideas and assessments which used their areas of strength.
- The students in IB classes had choices from a variety of projects to demonstrate their knowledge of the unit objectives. This allowed them to use their strength area(s) as part of their learning and to take ownership of their projects.

Alsup IB World School:

- Students researched areas of interest, created independent projects and presented these to other students at their grade level. For example, at the 5th grade level, students participated in a simulation recreating the experience of an immigrant coming through Ellis Island around the turn of the 20th century.

Central Elementary School:

- After reading assessments, students were placed in reading groups to provide higher level skill and vocabulary development. Also, students spent at least one reading group per week working on self-directed research projects. In math, students were provided challenging activities based on their skills. In the area of writing, students learned to use rubrics in order to self-assess and improve their writing skills.

Dupont Elementary School:

- We are very proud of our Destination Imagination (DI) team that went to the state level DI competition in the Improvisational Acting category. In the classroom, teachers differentiated not just for students on ALPs, but for all students to help challenge them and empower them to reach their full potential.

Hanson PK-8:

- At the middle school level, students created a school newspaper to share their ideas and demonstrate the writing skills they have learned this year in Language Arts. Students in the 7th and 8th grade math classes participated in the Colorado Mathematics League Math Contest and competed against students throughout Colorado.

Kemp Elementary School:

- Our focus was to use higher-order thinking skills across all grade levels in all of the subjects in order to challenge our gifted and talented students to think critically about the world around them. We wanted to create in them a questioning attitude of "I wonder what would happen if..." or "I believe that this experiment will end this way because"

Monaco Elementary School:

- Students had the pleasure of exploring literature using Junior Great Books, a series which provides a framework for reading comprehension and critical thinking development. They learned to refine the skills of interpreting the book and effectively communicating their ideas to others. In math, students prepared for the rigor of middle school as they tackled algebraic concepts including positive and negative integers.

Rose Hill Elementary School:

- Students participated in student government, created a recycling program, participated in a book club, and learned the art of film making as well as other enrichment and extension opportunities. In cluster classes, students received differentiated instruction focusing on expanding and enhancing learning opportunities in the regular classroom.

CLA:

- The teachers worked with the GT Coordinator this year to identify students who needed instruction beyond the core curriculum and to write Advanced Learning Plans for newly identified students. We also cluster grouped students in the areas of math and reading so that they were working with peers on high level instruction.

How to Make Parent-Teacher Conferences Worthwhile and Productive

By Arlene R. DeVries

At the Conference, Use Positive Communication Techniques

Arrive promptly at the scheduled conference time. Enter confidently and shake hands with the teacher, giving your name and your child's name. Both parents should attend when possible or ask a relative, friend, or someone who shares responsibility for the child to accompany them. When possible, arrange to sit in an "adult" chair at eye level with the teacher. Listen actively. Be calm, diplomatic, and tactful. With your body language, show that you are interested in what the teacher has to say. If you feel you are leaving conferences with only surface information such as test scores and attendance records, ask some questions that will delve deeper into the child's school life.

For example:

- *Does our child seem happy in school? What are his or her special interests and strengths?*
- *How does our child interact with others (age-level peers, older children, younger children, adults)? Is he or she perceived as a "know-it-all" and made fun of, or do others seek him or her out?*
- *Does the academic work seem challenging, or is it done with little effort?*
- *Are provisions made for students to learn at their own pace? Are assignments altered to accommodate abilities and interests?*
- *If our child participates in special gifted/talented experiences, is he or she expected to make up regular classroom work?*
- *How does our child feel about trying new things or making mistakes?*
- *Are there opportunities for critical and creative thinking and for problem solving? How does our child respond?*
- *In what ways does our child show the ability to work independently, accept leadership roles, assume responsibility, and exhibit intellectual curiosity?*
- *What can we do to help our child develop his or her talents?*
- *Are there appropriate after-school or summer enrichment opportunities available for our child?*

Find ways to show appreciation for the positives that happen in the classroom. Avoid absolutes (always, never) and words describing your child that might have a negative impact on the teacher (bored, brilliant). Instead, use language such as, "My child seems to learn differently" or "needs less time and fewer repetitions to master the content." Express a willingness to help solve problems. The emphasis is on what you and the teacher can do together, not just what the teacher can do.

If you do not understand or agree with the teacher's suggestions, reflect on the possibilities and follow up later. After giving some thought to an idea or trying it at home, you may find it has value. On other occasions, you might conclude that you and the teacher need to look for a better way to proceed.

When making curriculum suggestions, be specific about a strategy that fits your child's needs and has been recognized in quality gifted programs. Show how it reflects the district's goals or policies and how you could help at home to make it successful. It is important that these suggestions be made first with the child's classroom teacher. Only when you have been unable to reach a mutual decision after several honest professional attempts should you take the issue to the principal or gifted education coordinator.

Finally, teachers appreciate follow-up notes thanking them for their time and interest in your child. School communication is a vital and on-going process. The more insights you and the teacher share about each other and your child, the greater the chances for educational growth.

Arlene DeVries is currently chair of the Parent/Community Division of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), co-chair of its Parent Institute Task Force, and a member of NAGC's Advocacy and Parent magazine task forces.

Gifted Student's Bill of Rights

Provided by NAGC

You have a right

- ...to know about your giftedness.
- ...to learn something new every day.
- ...to be passionate about your talent area without apologies.
- ...to have an identity beyond your talent area.
- ... to feel good about your accomplishments.
- ...to make mistakes.
- ...to seek guidance in the development of your talent.
- ...to have multiple peer groups and a variety of friends.
- ...to choose which of your talent areas you wish to pursue.
- ...not to be gifted at everything.

GT Liaisons 2009-2010

ACHS Grade 9 James Howat (303) 853-7779
ACHS Grade 10 Heather Nolen – 10th (303) 853-7765
ACHS Grade 11 Regina Stewart – (303) 853-7718
ACHS Grade 12 Lisa Garcia – 12th (303) 853-7771
LAHS Lindsey Abrams (303) 853-3304
ACMS Rita Rosenberger (303) 853-5456
KMS Emily Klein (303) 853-5541
Alsup Debbie Welner (303) 853-5736
Central Michelle Townley (303) 853-5608
Dupont Debra Neiswonger (303) 853-5757
Hanson Gerald Montour (303) 853-5823
Kemp Colleen Urlik (303) 853-5889
Monaco Tracy Morey (303) 853-5932
Rose Hill Sigrid Bowen (303) 853-5978

Summer Fun

We have an outstanding group of students who dedicated their free summer time in the pursuit of extending their knowledge and horizons.

- First, over 90 students registered for the first annual Adams 14 Elementary Summer Program that took place June 8-12, 2009 for grades 1-5. Students learned about Africa through different lenses and classes, creative writing and storytelling, dramatic dance, and an overview of the different tribes and cultural components of Africa. Some of the activities included drumming, cooking, singing, playing Makala (a game) and writing in Swahili.

We had guest performers who taught us how to dance and use African musical instruments, and students created their own original presentations and shared them with an audience on Friday. Please take a look at this website and see what fun we had! <http://www.flickr.com/photos/adams14/sets/72157619756359035/>

- Second, 14 students in grades 5-12 attended the Summer Enrichment Program and the Leadership Enrichment Program, sponsored by the University of Northern Colorado. The students had an opportunity to select different topics that are not normally offered through schools and pursue their own interests. Classes included robotics, animation, creative writing, music composition, and murder mystery. The camp was supposed to last two weeks, but was cut short due to a flu scare. All the students returned home safe and sound, but many were disappointed that they couldn't finish their classes.

*“Always bear
in mind that
your own
resolution to
succeed is more
important than
any other one
thing.”*

*Abraham
Lincoln*





Adams County School District 14
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Expansions is printed quarterly by Adams County School District 14. Your suggestions are welcome! Please send comments/questions to: Student Services (GT Program), 5291 E. 60th Avenue, Commerce City, CO 80022. You may also contact the District GT Coordinator at (303) 853-3249 or via email at cfranklin@adams14.org

2008-2009 Gifted and Talented Staff

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District GT Coordinator

Dawn Loge, Ph.D. (303) 853-3246

Director of Student Services

Arianne Burger (303) 853-3248

Assistant to the Director of Student Services

*Become an active
member of your student's
GT experience.....
Read together!*