

## Academic Challenge Cup to Expand Again!

After three successive record-setting years—and having to turn away many students—Gifted Resource Council has expanded its services to accommodate the increasing demand by schools wanting to enter teams in the friendly competitions of Academic Challenge Cup.

Last year 1570 children participated in Academic Challenge cup, and 20 teams were turned away because GRC could not accommodate them.

This expansion will enable GRC to serve more than 2,000 children next year.

### Washington University Assists GRC

In addition to the traditional four day sessions in March, GRC will add three days of ACC competition in January. Washington University has made the Wohl Student Center available during their spring break for the past 9 years. Now the University is assisting GRC's efforts to expand ACC by making Wohl Center available when its students are away during the winter break.

### Twenty Years of Competition

For almost 20 years, GRC has sponsored Academic Challenge Cup. The Academic Challenge Cup offers three separate challenges to meet the needs and interests of children of different ages.

ACC offers competitions in math, language skills and creative problem solving for students in grades 2-8. Teams may be coached by teachers or parents, and schools may send teams on multiple days. Children benefit from the practice for ACC which often begins in the fall.

### Creative Convention

Children in grades 2&3 will "compete" in Creative Convention over three days in January (14-16).

Creative Convention is designed to stretch their imaginations while helping them build teamwork and interactive skills. For example, the challenge this past spring reflected the 20th anniversary of Gifted Resource Council. The children were given a bag of supplies and asked to design and build a school of the future where children will thrive 20 years from now. Next year's challenge—which will only be revealed as the second

and third graders are ready to begin—will be connected to the 2004 festivities in St. Louis.

### Collaboration Essential for Creative Convention

Collaboration in planning, constructing the model and presentation are emphasized in the judging. Creative Convention requires no advance academic preparation. However, teams are encouraged to practice creative problem-solving and working as a team.

### LinguiSHTIK

Children in grades 4&5 and 6-8 will test their verbal skills on March 9. These young wordsmiths will compete in an open-ended language game involving many aspect of English—vocabulary, word functions, grammar, sentence structure and spelling. Players use letters on cubes to form words and make "demands" on other players.

### Equations

Children in grades 3, 4&5, 6, 7&8 will engage in mathematical competitions on March 10-12. They will play a game of creative math that provides players with practice in arithmetic operations and assists in developing an understanding of number concepts, number systems, factors and primes, order of operations and simple algebraic equations.

### Friendly Competition

Unlike some competitions designed to determine "who's best," Academic Challenge Cup is designed to teach children to work together for a common goal.

Although the games stretch the imaginations and hone the skills of students, emphasis is on cooperating with teammates and competing teams. Teams which reach a level of excellence are recognized, but they are not ranked.

GRC's emphasis on teamwork and friendly competition is very intentional. As a group, gifted children tend to be competitive with peers and over-focused on proving to adults that they are "the best of the brightest." This unhealthy focus on winning adult recognition for being "the best" means that they may

*Academic Challenge Cup, continued on page 4*

## Dialogue with the Director

Gifted Resource Council's Learning Lab envisioned as the "GRC Café"! This is the concept that Beverly Berla, one of the founders of GRC, so eloquently explained to teachers of GRC's current Learning Lab classes during an orientation meeting in September. Learning Lab as a Café...a concept worth exploring...

When you and I think of a "café", what comes to mind? Warmth, coziness, something to eat or drink, pleasant conversation with a friend or acquaintance? A taste of something new? Sharing of ideas? Valuable time spent in contemplation or reflection? All that and more...

Learning Lab as a Café? What is it that Gifted Resource Council offers to young learners through Learning Lab classes? **Challenge** of learning something new in a new setting with new teachers and acquaintances. Challenge of new ideas shared and presented and discussed. **Exploration** of a topic that may be a passion...or indeed may only turn out to be of fleeting interest... But exploration none-the-less, for our children whose minds are opening to the variety of topics to be explored and learned, whether it be chess or Russian or sharks or Shakespeare's works. **Affirmation of self** while learning with supportive and caring teachers who mentor and guide through example and encouragement. How better to learn than to discover new ideas while also discovering about oneself? **Friendship** with fellow learners who also desire to know more about a specific topic. Friends who in turn also hope to make connections with peers who possess similar interests.

Yes, all these elements can be found in GRC's Learning Lab:

**Challenge**

**Affirmation**

**Friendship**

**Exploration**

Indeed, Learning Lab is the GRC Café!

And the Café is open not only to children ages three through fourteen, but also to their parents. The



*Sue Flesch, GRC executive director*

GRG Café is a place where adults too can gather in Parenting Class sessions, or simply in small group conversation. Parents and teachers of the gifted all can benefit from the Café - by being challenged and affirmed, finding friends and exploring new ideas - while seeking the best for the children in their care.

Welcome to the GRC Café! Join us at Learning Lab...



*Gifted girls show their excitement at a GRC Summer Academy.*

## GRC to Co-Sponsor Conference For Parents and Educators of Gifted Students

Gifted Resource Council has joined with the University of Missouri-St. Louis, Gifted Association of Missouri and St. Louis Association for Gifted Education to co-sponsor an important conference designed to strengthen education for gifted students in the metropolitan St. Louis area. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> such area wide conference GRC has co-sponsored in recent years.

The conference, *Inquiring Minds, Responsive Teachers: Challenging Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom*, is designed to explore how regular classroom teachers, parents, gifted specialists and administrators can work together to maximize learning opportunities for gifted students.

### **Classroom Teachers Welcomed**

The conference will emphasize what regular classroom teachers—not just gifted specialists—can do to accommodate the needs of gifted students while integrating them into the classroom. Regular classroom teachers often have the most influence over a child's academic experience and growth.

Keynote speaker Sally M. Reis, Ph.D., has a special interest in helping regular classroom teachers acquire the skills they need to maximize learning opportunities for gifted children and to integrate them constructively into the classroom dynamic.

### **"A rare opportunity"**

GRC's executive director, Susan C. Flesch, encourages parents and teachers of gifted students to plan their schedules now so they can participate in the conference. "This is a rare opportunity for parents and teachers to learn from a renowned national expert and to interact with one another."

Care has been taken to address the special interest of both parents and teachers in separate sessions. Participation will certainly pay dividends for their children. We urge all GRC parents to attend themselves—and to sponsor teachers of their gifted children," said Flesch.

### **Renowned Presenter**

The keynote speaker, Dr. Sally Reis, is a child psychologist and nationally acclaimed author who specializes in working with special populations of gifted and talented students, including students with learning disabilities, gifted females and diverse groups of talented students.

Reis is a professor and head of the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Connecticut. She is principal investigator of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.

Reis was a teacher for 15 years, 11 of which were spent

working with gifted students on the elementary, junior high and high school levels. She has authored more than 130 articles, 9 books, 40 book chapters, and numerous monographs and technical reports.

Reis serves on several editorial boards, including the *Gifted Child Quarterly*, and is past president of the National Association of Gifted Children.

### **What to Expect**

Whether you are a parent, teacher, administrator or teacher of the gifted, you will leave this conference with an awareness of the current issues involved in quality gifted education and with concrete suggestions for practice. The conference offers you an opportunity to:

- attend concurrent workshops designed specifically for your role as a parent, classroom teacher, counselor or administrator.
- hear national and local experts offer concrete and workable solutions to enhance success in the regular classroom.
- network with others and share insights.
- learn about resources in the St. Louis area.

### **Keynote for Parents**

Although much of the material Dr. Reis covers will be valuable to everyone with gifted children, efforts have been made to address the special needs of parents at the Wednesday evening session, March 3, 2004, 6:30-9 p.m.

The keynote address is described as *A Conversation Especially for Parents: Advocate! Don't Alienate! —Successful Strategies for Parents*.

Prior to the keynote address, parents have three enticing sessions from which to choose:

- *What's New in Understanding Intelligence Tests?*
- *Understanding Non-Conformity in Gifted Children*
- *Opportunities and Resources for Parents*

### **Teachers, Parents and Administrators**

The topic for the keynote address on Thursday, March 4, 2004, is *Educating the Gifted: Everyone's Responsibility*. The conference planning committee made a conscious effort to address the needs of diverse groups, including young children, middle schoolers, high school students, and students of poverty. Participants will be able to attend breakout sessions in a variety of topics ranging from real life connections to technology resources and more.

All in all, this conference offers anyone who works with a gifted child a wonderful opportunity to expand their understanding of how to challenge gifted students and to advocate effectively on their behalf. Call 314-516-5655 for more information or to request a registration form.

*Academic Challenge Cup, continued from page 1*  
 not develop appropriate social skills with their peers. This can be tragic.

All GRC programs stress the interactive nature of learning and the importance of developing healthy psychosocial skills. That's exactly what gifted children need most.

### Community Support

Gifted Resource Council receives support from Edward Jones, EMERSON and the Employees Community Fund of Boeing-St. Louis for Academic Challenge Cup.

Many wonderful volunteers make Academic Challenge Cup possible by creating the contests, coaching the teams, gathering materials, setting up and

cleaning up, inputting data and scoring results.

### Parental Involvement

Parents as well as teachers may serve as coaches or judges, provided they participate in the requisite training courses which are provided, free of charge, by GRC.

During the competition, parents may participate in interactive workshops conducted by educators and counselors who are experienced in working with gifted children and their parents. There will also be an Usborne book sale each day of the competition.

To register, inquire about dates and times of training sessions for coaches, or to purchase practice games, call the GRC office at 314-962-5920.

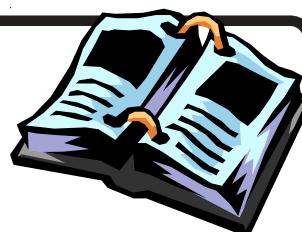


*Equations participants are intently involved in solving a mathematical challenge.*



*Second and third graders proudly present their Creative Convention masterpiece.*

## Mark Your Calendar



*November 20, 2003 – Annual GRC Phonathon*

*January 14-16, 2004 – Academic Challenge Cup’s Creative Convention at Washington University’s Wohl Center. Parenting classes will be offered.*

*January 31, 2004 – Summer Opportunities Fair at John Burroughs School, 755 S. Price Rd.*

*February 7-March 13, 2004 (Six Saturdays) – Winter Learning Lab at Wydown Middle School, 6500 Wydown Blvd. Parenting classes will be offered.*

*March 3-4, 2004 – Inquiring Minds/Responsive Teachers: Challenging Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom Conference at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.*

*March 9-12, 2004 – Academic Challenge Cup’s LinguiSHTIK and Equations Competitions at Washington University’s Wohl Center. Parenting classes will be offered.*

*June - July, 2004 – GRC’s Summer Academies at McNair School, 8136 Groby.*

**Call GRC at 314-962-5920 for more information on any of these events.**

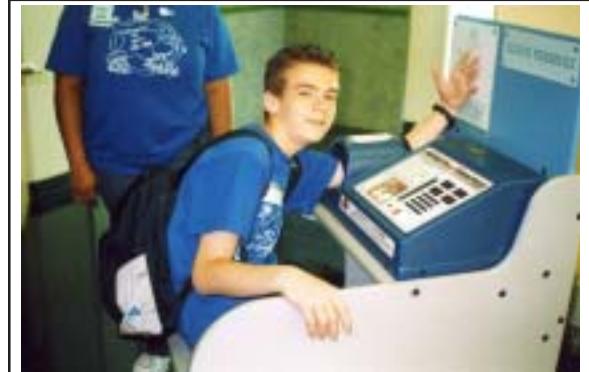
## Linda McCall Scholarship

Each year GRC awards a full, merit-based scholarship to one student in grades 6 through 8 to attend Advanced Space Academy in the name of one of GRC's founders, Linda McCall.

Adem Konjevic, age 13, was the 2003 recipient of this scholarship. Konjevic, a student at Oak Hill Elementary came to St. Louis three years ago from Bosnia. Susan Flesch, GRC's executive director, described him as "delightful, very curious, very inquisitive. He made the most of every opportunity to learn new things."

May 1, 2004 is the deadline for applications for the 2004 Linda McCall Scholarship. In addition to an essay written by the child, recommendations from two adults are necessary.

For more information, call the GRC office at 314-962-5920.



*Adem Konjevic participates in GRC's Advanced Space Academy trip to the Challenger Center in Kansas City.*



*Ancient Academy "patricians" perform a modern-day version of Roman comedy.*



*Hundreds of GRC star stepping stones were produced by ECO Academy "entrepreneurs" during the summer of 2003.*

GRC needs your charitable support to continue providing talented children with special enrichment opportunities. Tax deductible membership gifts keep fees as low as possible and provide scholarship assistance to those who need it.

Please use the enclosed envelope to mail your membership gift today.

## How can my gifted child make more friends?

Making friends can be difficult for gifted children. Often they are not in class with other gifted peers and do not feel comfortable with children who do not share their intellectual focus. As a result, some gifted children fail to develop age-appropriate social skills, and this makes the task of forming friendships even more difficult.

Adults sometimes make it more difficult for gifted children to acquire the age-appropriate social skills and same-age friendships by encouraging a child's intellectual growth at the expense of the child's social development. As a result of these factors, many children who excel in academic areas are developmentally arrested in their psychosocial growth.

Here are some proactive things parents can do.

- Instead of focusing solely on intellectual prowess and achievement, make being well-rounded a goal for your child.

- Don't fall into the trap of serving as an approving audience for your child's one-dimensional focus on his or her intellectual abilities. Gifted children tend to seek adult companionship, attention and approval for their intellectual abilities and achievements. Parents and teachers who respond to this inappropriate approval-seeking unwittingly contribute to the arrested social development of a gifted child. This adult approval makes it less necessary for a child to communicate with same-age peers and to acquire appropriate social skills.

- Recruit your child's teacher to partner with you in promoting your child's psychosocial growth. She is probably aware that your child needs help in learning to interact with other children. But she is probably busy and may be reluctant to take it upon herself to help him improve. If she knows that helping your child develop the social habits he needs for success and happiness in life matters to you, she will be much more likely to help. Encourage her to not give attention to your child when he inappropriately seeks her approval rather than interacting with classmates. Ask her to keep you informed of how well your child interacts with classmates.

- Explicitly teach your child basic social skills. Teachers and counselors who work extensively with gifted children remark at how often these children do not make eye contact with others, fail to smile at others or say good morning, use other children's names, praise

others, ask "How was your weekend," or make intentional efforts to be pleasant.

Teach these skills explicitly. Roleplay them with your child. If you feel that you have taught your child how to do these most basic skills, don't take it for granted that she is using them. Ask your child how frequently she uses these skills each day. How do other children respond? Stay on top of your child until he or she habitually uses appropriate social skills with peers.

- Make it clear that you expect your child to learn to get along with all his classmates and to form friendships with some of them. There are many ways to do this. Tell your child how important being well-rounded, having social skills and making friends are to you. Look for opportunities to praise the character traits, skills and behaviors of other children. Avoid references to their intelligence. Instead, focus on traits like their ability to get along with others, their honesty, kindness, perseverance, cooperation, and their athletic, musical or performing skills.

- Push your child to form friendships with children who may not be her intellectual peers but have other things to offer. For some children, encouragement may be enough. For others, parents may need to arrange social occasions with other children at least once each week. You may need to coach your child on how to behave before these occasions and to follow up by discussing how she did behave. Gifted children can be so self-absorbed that they are unaware of how their behavior affects others.

- Involve your child in extracurricular activities that promote teamwork and cooperation. Team sports are excellent, as are activities like theater, band or Scouting. Avoid intellectual competitions unless they are the rare kind like GRC's Academic Challenge Cup which promotes teamwork and does not recognize individual winners. Activities which stress cooperation with teammates and fair play with opponents will help your child develop social skills.

Insist that your child be involved in at least one such activity year round. If your child complains—as many gifted children do—that he is not good at the activity, so much the better. Participating on a team in which his performance is average or below average

*Make more friends, continued on page 7*

*Make more friends, continued from page 6*  
will help a child develop empathy for others who do not excel at school.

□ Examine your own social skills. A disproportionate number of parents, much like their gifted children, lack social skills and fail to model healthy social development. Parents like these value the intellectual development of their child above all else, are highly critical of teachers and programs, belittle other children, and insist on getting special advantages for their children. Often they micromanage their child's academic progress. Does this describe you? How often have you complained that your child was being held back by others, not challenged enough or not recognized by teachers for his academic prowess? How often do you thank teachers for the good job they are doing? How often do you encourage teachers to promote the psychosocial development of your child?

□ Make use of Gifted Resource Council programs. Gifted Resource Council only sponsors programs which go beyond academics to promote growth in interpersonal skills.

Not only are GRC programs themselves designed to do this, but GRC teachers are hired with this in mind and then given further training in inservice workshops to enhance their abilities to promote this type of growth.

Even the academic approach of GRC programs is special: the process is not only based on teamwork, but creativity, and a focus on the process rather than the result, along with an interdisciplinary approach, are built into every class. In short, the academic challenge is broadening rather than restrictive, the approach is based on cooperation, and the goal is to strengthen the interpersonal skills of students while challenging them with an enrichment program unlike those in their home schools.

Parents who intentionally use strategies like these can help a child with the social skills and peer friendships so essential for being well-rounded and successful in life.

*Dennis O'Brien is a licensed clinical social worker, experienced educator and therapist, and executive director of KidzLink, an organization serving medically fragile children.*

#### BECOME A MEMBER OF GIFTED RESOURCE COUNCIL

Now **you** can participate in shaping America's future by becoming a member of **Gifted Resource Council**, a not-for-profit education agency serving bright and talented young people. Your tax-deductible contribution will enable us to improve existing programs, extend offerings and reach more children. Your membership will not only benefit gifted children, but also entitle you to receive the following:

**Member:** \$50

- Priority registration for all programs
- \$10 discount off a Learning Lab registration
- *FREE parenting classes*
- Use of GRC Library
- Free registration at selected workshops and lectures

**Friend:** \$75

- All of the above, *plus*
- \$10 discount off a Summer Program

**Sponsor:** \$125

- All of the above, *plus*
- Additional \$25 discount off a Summer Program (\$35 total)

**Patron:** \$250

- All of the above, *plus*
- One FREE Learning Lab course or
- Learning Lab scholarship in your name at your request

**Institutional Membership:** \$100

(for schools and other organizations)

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I am also interested in helping as a volunteer. Please contact me. □

Please mail check to: Gifted Resource Council, 357 Marshall Ave., Suite 6, St. Louis, MO 63119-1827

**mindwonders**

informs the public about activities of Gifted Resource Council and about issues relevant to the development of bright and talented children and youth.

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**Enhancing the potential of talented young learners**

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## New Summer Academy for 2004

Watch for Gifted Resource Council's latest offering during Summer Academies 2004. A "new for 2004" program is being planned for young elementary grade students. This special 2-week day camp, which will be held in July, will find new ways to tap into the creativity, historical interests and verbal skills of gifted youngsters.

Parents have been surveyed to help determine which options their children might most enjoy and benefit from.

Look for specific details by early February....

Gifted Resource Council is a not-for-profit education agency serving the greater St. Louis Metropolitan area. Its purpose is to bring together the resources of the community, the schools and parents to help bright and talented children achieve their potential.