

GRC to Co-Sponsor Conference For Parents and Educators: April 5 – 6, 2000

Let's fantasize for a moment and say that tomorrow, you find yourself in the proverbial "Genie-In-A-Bottle" situation. Except that you only get one wish and it has to be for your children. What would you wish for? If you summed up the dozens of hopes and dreams you have, it would probably come down to this, "I just want them to be happy."

As we begin the new millennium, it is only natural that we perceive the future as a "fresh start," a new beginning. Next year's resolutions will seem to take on greater meaning as we see them more as wishes for a whole new century, rather than just for a year (or a few weeks, as the case may be). And we realize that the 2000s will be more our children's century than our own.

And we worry.

"Am I doing all I can for them?" "Am I giving them everything they need to survive – no – thrive?" "Will they be ready for the daunting task of taking our world into unknown, unforeseen challenges?"

Pretty scary stuff.

But calm down for a minute and remember your one wish, "I just want them to be happy."

It is fitting that the *Inquiring Minds/Responsive Teachers: Challenging Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom* Conference, co-sponsored by Gifted Resource Council, will be held in 2000: April 5-6, to be exact. It is also fitting that James Delisle, Ph.D., will be the conference's keynote speaker. With his academic and practical background, he has a pretty good idea of what gifted children really need.

Dr. Delisle is a professor of gifted education at Kent State University. He has written numerous articles and books about and for gifted children. When reading his work, what strikes one most about him is his very basic and rather "unacademic" belief: That the best gift we can give our gifted children is the ability to look in the mirror

each day and like – no – love what they see. "...One measure of success seldom mentioned by test scores or credential experts," he says, "Is the most vital statistic of all: the measure of personal fulfillment our children feel as they pursue their passions in whatever endeavors make them smile."

At the conference, and once inspired by Dr. Delisle's opening remarks, teachers and parents can choose from a variety of break-out sessions. Led by area experts, these workshops will provide participants with lots of usable ideas and a heightened awareness of the issues involved in creating quality gifted education.

Mark your calendar for April 5 – 6, 2000. Mark it in red with exclamation points. And tell everyone you know who cares about gifted children that Dr. James Delisle will be in town. Because no matter who you are or what your title may be: parent, teacher or administrator, if your goal is to help a gifted child begin the next century with a happy heart, this conference is for you.

Because when it comes to children, we are all teachers. And in Dr. Delisle's words, "Once a teacher, there is no turning back."

WHO: Parents, Classroom Teachers and Administrators

WHAT: *Inquiring Minds/Responsive Teachers: Challenging Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom*

WHEN: April 5-6, 2000

WHERE: University of Missouri - St. Louis

COST: Wednesday night – \$19
Thursday – \$39 Both Days – \$55

HOW: Complete details will be available in early January. Please call Brenda Shannon-Simms at UMSL: (314) 516-6911.

WHY: Because gifted children *are* more and *need* more!

“Each second we live is a new and unique moment of the universe, a moment that will never be again...And what do we teach our children? We teach them that two and two make four, and that Paris is the capital of France.

“When will we also teach them what they are?”

“We should say to each of them: Do you know what you are? You are a marvel. You are unique. In all the years that have passed, there has never been another child like you. Your legs, your arms, your clever fingers, the way you move.

“You may become a Shakespeare, a Michaelangelo, a Beethoven. You have the capacity for anything. Yes, you are a marvel. And when you grow up, can you then harm another who is, like you, a marvel?”

“You must work – we must all work – to make the world worthy of its children.”

Pablo Casals

Dialogue with the Director: You Are a Marvel!

“And what do we teach our children?... We should say to each of them: Do you know what you are? You are a marvel. You are unique...” So said Pablo Casals at least a half century ago.

Casals’ words were no less profound then than they are today. As we anticipate the advent of the year 2000, however, his ideas can take on even greater meaning. How do we communicate with our children that they are *unique*, that they can and do make a difference in the world?

How do we as parents and educators of gifted children help to prepare them for the 21st century and the challenges that each of them will surely face? We offer them experiences, both in and out of school, that expose them to new ideas and shape their moral fiber. We provide them with academic learning and emotional support. We encourage them to grow, to dream dreams and to reach for the stars.

Is there more that we can do, as the significant adults in these talented children’s lives, to nurture both them and ourselves? I would suggest

that the upcoming April conference, *Inquiring Minds/Responsive Teachers: Challenging Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom* with Jim Delisle as keynote speaker, may be just the inspirational boost that is needed to refocus our efforts on behalf of gifted children. Jim is known for his focus on the social and emotional needs of the gifted, as well as for his practical advice regarding how to meet those needs. I look forward to hearing him and other experts from the St. Louis area as we continue to search for avenues of challenge for the children who are the hope for



Sue Flesch, GRC executive director

our future.

To quote Casals once again, “...we must all work – to make the world worthy of its children.” Together let us strive to make the world worthy of its *gifted* children, now more than ever...

Our Experience with the Quechua Indians

by Susan Pelechek and Devin Tressler

Hiking, bird watching, hunting, panning for gold; all in a day of the life of the Quechua Indians.

In July 1999, a group of seventh graders from St. Louis, Missouri went to Ecuador through Gifted Resource Council and the Save the Rainforest organization. The purpose of our trip was to test soil in the rainforest for nutrients to help a reforestation project (replanting trees and giving farmers ways to farm without destroying the forest). While we were there, we visited a Quechua Indian village.

The Quechua Indians are descendants of the Inca Indians. The Incas were some of the first inhabitants of South America. Modern Quechuas mostly live in the mountains of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador and Peru. Many of them raise sheep and llamas for wool and food. Some use the wool to make clothing to sell in the cities. There are over 10 million Quechuas; they mostly speak Spanish and the language 'Quechuan.'

The name of the village we went to was "Chuva Urku" which means 'Mountain of the Spider Monkey.' Although we did not see any spider monkeys, the 'mountain' part of the name is true. Our hike there was almost all uphill. Actually, the first part of our journey was by canoe on the Rio Arajuno. The second part was hiking through the rainforest. Some of us thought we would never get there, but suddenly, the forest opened up into a clearing in which the village sat.

That evening, we had a birthday celebration (Quechua style) for a person in our group. It was complete with a crown made of rainforest plants, a fruit shaped like a bird's beak to fit on the nose, and a Quechua fish trap (called a wami). We also learned a little history on, and how to use the blowgun, which is used for hunting. The traditional blowguns are about ten or twelve feet long! We also played games like frisbee with them, taught them some card games and they taught us some of their games. We even taught them some English words. Later that night, some of the group

went on a night hike to see a few of the area's nocturnal animals. That night, we all slept (very well!) in the huts at the village. The huts all had beds in them and were made of straw. They were nice.

The next morning, some of the group went on an early morning hike to try to see some birds. It was an enjoyable hike with a lot of mud. We would hike for about fifteen minutes, and then stop and hold perfectly still. If somebody moved or made a sound, we would need to hike some more to find more birds. We didn't actually see any, but we heard many different sounds that we did not hear during midday. Some were birds and others were monkeys. For the rest of the day, about half of the group went on a hike to a sand cave, and the other half walked through the Quechua's medicinal plants garden. At the end of the garden walk, we learned about the Quechua method of panning for gold, or gold washing. We even were able to try it ourselves. It was hard work, but a couple of us found gold (although, not much). That night we were taught how to make a wami (a Quechua fish trap). It was really interesting. We also had a singing contest and a



A Quechua Indian graphically demonstrates their tradition of face painting.

shouting contest. We had dinner by candlelight because on the equator, the sun sets at about 6:00 p.m. The next morning, we hiked out to the Rio Arajuno, and took canoes back to where we were staying, at Jatun Sacha Biological Station.

Our stay with the Quechua Indians was an exciting experience with a culture different from our own. We learned that they are like us in many ways, but are different from us in many ways also. It was a great experience worth remembering and sharing with others.

Note: Susan Pelechek and Devin Tressler were among the 13 students who participated in the Amazon Rainforest Student Research Project in the Summer of 1999.

Feeling All Alone? Parenting Classes Provide Help!

Remember! As a member of GRC, you can attend any or all of the parenting classes for free, even if your child is not involved in that activity. Non-members may attend as well, although a fee may apply.

Parenting classes are held during Fall and Winter Learning Labs and Academic Challenge Cup. Winter Learning Lab parenting classes will be held from 11:10 am to 12:40 p.m on February 19, 26, March 11 and 18 at CBC High School. Academic Challenge Cup parenting classes will be held March 7 – 10, at 9:45 am at Washington University's Wohl Center.

Parenting classes are designed to provide

useful, hands-on information to help with issues and concerns you may have with your gifted child. Past topics have included gifted children and self-esteem, how gifted girls are similar to and different from gifted boys and nurturing the social and emotional aspects of gifted children. During the classes, many parents have expressed relief to learn that the problems they have faced in their own families are normal and frequently experienced by others.

Specific Learning Lab parenting classes are listed in the Learning Lab brochures. Call the GRC office in February for information about Academic Challenge Cup parenting classes.

Mark Your Calendar

December 1, 1999 ▶ Amazon Rainforest Student Research Project Student and Teacher Applications Due

December 6, 1999 ▶ Annual GRC Phonathon

January 29, 2000 ▶ Summer Opportunities Fair at Whitfield School, 175 S. Mason Road

February 5 – June 3, 2000 ▶ Amazon Rainforest Student Research Project Coursework at the St. Louis Zoo and Missouri Botanical Garden

February 12 – March 25, 2000 ▶ Winter Learning Lab at CBC High School, 6501 Clayton Road. Parenting Classes will be offered.

March 7 – 10, 2000 ▶ Academic Challenge Cup at Washington University's Wohl Center. Parenting Classes will be offered.

April 5 – 6, 2000 ▶ *Inquiring Minds/Responsive Teachers: Challenging Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom* Conference at the University of Missouri - St. Louis

June 19 – July 28, 2000 ▶ Summer Academies

June 22 – July 5, 2000 ▶ Amazon Rainforest Project Ecuador Experience

Call GRC at 842-0666 for more information on any of these events.

A Challenge for Young Minds

Plans for Academic Challenge Cup 2000 are well underway. On March 7 – 10, 2000, Gifted Resource Council will host Creative Convention, Equations and LinguiSHTIK competitions at Washington University's Wohl Center. Second through eighth graders will engage in friendly competition, testing their abilities in creativity, mathematics and language. For information, call Gifted Resource Council at 842-0666.

Summer Snapshots



Ancient Academy students show off the Ancient Roman standard they made.



"Consumption Junction," a business ECO Academy students created. Students did research to develop pricing, then sold lemonade. They donated the proceeds to "U. City in Bloom," an area beautification organization.



A Space Academy student cuts out components for her rocket.

Spotlight on . . .

In this issue we are spotlighting two teachers, Kathy Lewis and Terry Umphenour. Kathy, longtime Summer Academies teacher, and Terry, creator and lead teacher of the Amazon Rainforest Project, are each filled with enthusiasm and energy about working with Gifted Resource Council students.

Kathy Lewis

Kathy Lewis enjoys working with the youngest Summer Academies students. For 10 years she has taught Jr. Science Searchers for children who have completed kindergarten.

“I really enjoy their enthusiasm,” she says of her students. “The kids that I’ve had are very curious students, very motivated to learn. They are so excited. Teaching them is really fun.”

A classroom teacher during the school year, Kathy has taught all grade levels, focusing on science and social studies. “I love teaching in GRC’s Summer Academies.



Jr. Science Searchers help Kathy Lewis celebrate her 10th year of teaching in Summer Academies.

During the school year I teach different subjects and different ages, so each year I view my Jr. Science Searcher classes with a fresh eye. I get ideas during the year of things I can use with my summer students. So each year, while we focus on the same areas, we do different activities.”

She enjoys the freedom Summer Academies gives her as a teacher. “I get to devise the curriculum myself. I can really enrich the study of what we’ve been working on. Every year we go on field trips. What better way to study the rainforest than to go to St. Louis’ own rainforest, at the Climatron? Or, sometimes we’ll go outside and explore the environment with magnifiers. One year we used refrigerator boxes to construct a model rainforest, focusing on the different strata and what is found in each.”

Kathy continues, “I like to explore subjects that are of interest to the kids and myself. Then we go in different directions. Sometimes I don’t know where we’ll end up; we just see where the kids want to go. What excites them is always different.”

“Often kids who come to GRC programs have rich lives, including parents who actively support their learning. So they have a greater background knowledge than a kindergarten group as a whole,” she says. “The kids bring a lot to the class, and they also take a lot from it.”

Kathy, too, brings so much to the classes and children that she teaches. She is truly the epitome of a dedicated Gifted Resource Council teacher. Thank you, Kathy, for 10 years of inspired and inspiring teaching. We’re looking forward to many more . . .

Terry Umphenour

For Terry Umphenour, creator and lead teacher of the Amazon Rainforest Student Research Project, education is not confined by classroom walls. It seems you’re as likely to find Terry in the rainforest or on a mountaintop as in a classroom. “I had taken kids to the mountains of Colorado, an Indian reservation in South Dakota and volcanoes in Hawaii,” says Terry, so he was no stranger to innovative, out-of-classroom experiences.

Terry, who had previously taught in GRC’s Space Academy and Learning Labs, worked on developing the idea for the Amazon Rainforest Student Research Project for about two years. It represents an expansion of GRC’s program offerings for middle school students, and also develops programming that has a significant appeal to girls. “The



Terry Umphenour, at home in the classroom of the world.

Rainforest project is a great opportunity – both for the seventh graders who participate and for Gifted Resource Council,” says Terry. And for each of the two years of the program, girls have outnumbered boys in the program.

“We enlisted the help of the *Save the Rainforest* organization to plan with Jatun Sacha biological station in Ecuador. I was very impressed with Save the Rainforest. They put almost every dollar they earn back into the rainforest,” explains Terry.

“We decided on Ecuador for a number of reasons,” says Terry. “Ecuador contains the most biologically diverse rainforest in the world. *Save the Rainforest* has a connection with Jatun Sacha. And the Ecuadorian government is very stable.” All these reasons combine to provide an outstanding, safe educational experience.

“The kids are doing meaningful scientific research that no one else is doing,” says Terry. “And at the conclusion of the five-year program, the research will contribute to what we know about the reforestation of the rainforest. These kids know that what they’re doing really matters. They enjoy being part of something so important.”

And the participants have been wowed! Success stories of the last two years include numerous tales of

personal growth by the students. “No one has been homesick!” says Terry. “They love doing the scientific research and working with the researchers. They all want to stay longer and do more. I’ve never been on a trip with kids where they were so sorry to be leaving.”

Thank you, Terry for sharing your innovative passion for education with these talented seventh graders. GRC knows you’ve made a real difference in the lives of some very outstanding students.

Application deadline for participation in this year's Amazon Rainforest Student Research Project is December 1, 1999. Call the GRC office at 842-0666 for more information.

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: \$40

- * 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: \$60

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

Sponsor: \$100

- * 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)

Member Friend Sponsor Patron Institutional

Name (as you wish your membership to be listed) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

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

Please mail check to: Gifted Resource Council, 12225 Eddie and Park Road, St. Louis, MO 63127

GiftedResourceCouncil ☆ Fall 1999 ☆ Enhancing the potential of talented young learners

To register, call Brenda Shannon-Simms at
UMSL, (314) 516-6911.

This conference will explore how regular classroom teachers, parents and administrators can work together to maximize learning opportunities for gifted students. Dr. James Delisle, as keynote speaker, will offer ideas on how to help gifted children love what they see in the mirror. Whether you are a parent, teacher or administrator, you will leave this conference with concrete suggestions and an awareness of the issues involved in quality gifted education.

*Inquiring Minds/Responsive Teachers:
Challenging Gifted Students in the
Regular Classroom*
April 5 – 6, 2000
University of Missouri-St. Louis

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Gifted Resource Council
12225 Eddie and Park Road
St. Louis, MO 63127
(314) 842-0666
www.cybam.com/grc

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