

## Why Do Families Come To GRC From So Far Away?

It's the only place that gifted children can get what their parents realize they really need.

Penny Robinson, a fourth grader, has been coming to GRC's Learning Labs from Cape Girardeau for the past four years. "Although she's in a wonderful private school, Penny has been teased for being smart. Being around other gifted kids at GRC lets her feel normal for a while," her mother, Dr. Bambi Robinson, said.

"There are a lot of great classes she can take. When she started coming, she took only science classes because she loved doing science. She also loved learning the science of magic. Last year she took a ceramics course and made a couple of lovely things that decorate the living room," Robinson said.

"Cape Girardeau doesn't have enough resources to meet all of Penny's needs. Fortunately, St. Louis is only two hours away and I have a job that's flexible enough to allow us to travel there fairly often. We do GRC in the morning, and then it's off to other activities in the afternoon. We belong to the Science Center, we visit the zoo, we go to the art museum, the Magic House and City Museum. Penny loves it," she said.

"Penny asks a lot of questions, and the teachers at GRC don't seem fazed by them. Instead, they offer knowledgeable answers. So when she asks a serious question, she gets a serious answer. I don't know many other little kids who are conversant with Newton's Three Laws of Motion," she said. "Gifted kids need enrichment. When they don't have their needs met, all too often they stagnate, or become problem children or dropouts."

Hannah Willmore, now a first grader, has been coming from Edwardsville, IL, since she was a kindergarten student. After testing Hanna, psychologist Dr. Karen Preusser told her parents that Hannah would benefit from the classes GRC offered.

Hannah took *Patterns, Puzzles and Polygons* last fall and *Creative Concoctions* in the spring. "Both classes presented information through activities that Hannah found fun and challenging. She thoroughly enjoyed them because they offered subject matter that was different than what she may get in school. She also liked the interaction with other children in the classroom environment," her mother, Kelly Willmore, said. "I think these type of enrichment classes are great for gifted children."

Hannah attended *Jr. Science Searchers* last summer. "Again, this class provided an enrichment type learning experience through many hands-on activities," Willmore said.

"Hannah really enjoyed this class because there were so many hands-on projects that made learning about space and the oceans fun. She loved building a solar oven and lunar rover."

"Although the commute was an issue, we were willing to make the effort because she had such strong interest and enthusiasm for the class, and we thought the benefits from this type of educational enrichment far outweighed the inconvenience of the drive twice a day," she said. Hannah looked forward to this class with enthusiasm and wanted to take another two-week Summer Academy when it was done."

### Where do they come from?

All over. They come from Columbia, IL, in the east, Wildwood and Wentzville in the west, Hazelwood and Edwardsville, IL, in the north, and Barnhart, MO, in the south. Last year children came to the fall Learning Labs from:

104 schools  
26 school districts  
56 zip codes

## Dialogue with the Director

“Einstein’s Big Idea”, the PBS docudrama, which aired in early October, provided a fascinating glimpse into the lives and times of some of the world’s greatest scientists. I wanted to watch the program because I’ve long been intrigued by Albert Einstein, and I hoped to learn more about the man and the history surrounding the theory of  $E=mc^2$ .

Beyond Einstein and the magnitude of the science of this “most famous equation”, what intrigued me most about this unusual film were the other scientists who made such momentous contributions to the work of physicists throughout the world. I was especially gratified to learn of the work of several female scientists without whose contributions Einstein could not have achieved such renown. The discoveries of Emilie du Chatelet and Lise Meitner were all the more incredible given the circumstances and barriers of their lives. These were truly two women who pursued their passion for scientific discovery with intensity and unselfishness!

Fast forward to the year 2005... It is no longer an oddity for females to study science or math. Young girls can aspire to work in laboratories and teach at universities where their contributions to the world of scientific discovery will be acknowledged and appreciated.

And yet, do we as parents sometimes still

discourage those dreams of our daughters? Do we subtly (perhaps without intention) steer our female offspring toward more traditional fields of interest? How often are boys encouraged to take a science class, while girls are not?

We at Gifted Resource Council want to be clear in our declaration that science and math are areas of study that **MUST** be encouraged for all children...male and female. We offer an exciting array of science-based classes for students of every age. From Math, Marvels & More and Jr. Science Searchers for kindergartners during the summer to “Moving and Shaking”, an engineering exploration class designed for middle school girls during the fall Learning Lab, GRC encourages young girls (as well as

boys) to explore the sciences. Through the friendly competitions of Academic Challenge Cup, GRC enables young people to broaden their horizons in language arts, mathematics and creative problem solving. We want ALL children to recognize their unique gifts and to realize their ability to shape the future.

No, we can’t all be “little Einsteins”, but we CAN nurture the love of learning and encourage every young person to explore the fields of science and mathematics and more. Bring your daughters and sons to GRC where each child is valued for their individual talents...



*Sue Flesch, GRC executive director*



*ECO Academy 'entrepreneurs' conduct water quality experiments on a stream in Forest Park.*



*A Math, Marvels & More 'scholar' prepares to test her scientific hypothesis.*

*Far Away, continued from page 1*

“Hannah is taking *Kitchen Math and Science* this fall. She said her first class was a lot of fun,” Willmore continued.

“The parent classes have also been really beneficial. They have provided us with a lot of information on how to approach educational topics with Hannah’s school. The speakers have been great, and it is nice to have this type of forum to help the parents of gifted children,” she said.

Graham and Abraham Markowitz also travel to Gifted Resource Council classes from Edwardsville, IL. “The kids refer to GRC as their ‘Science Class.’ They enjoy spending time with other children that enjoy the same things as they do—discussing math and science, doing experiments, and playing chess,” Lisa Markowitz said. “Graham and Abraham seem to fit nicely with the other kids at GRC. They always make friends, laugh, learn and have fun.”

“Discussions in GRC classes are more in-depth than in their normal classrooms. There seems to be so much review in their school classrooms,” Markowitz



*Hannah Willmore and fellow Learning Lab classmates work to solve a mathematical challenge.*

said. “Bill and I are satisfied with the classroom experience they receive at their school, but are glad we can supplement it with the GRC programs.”

“When you live in Illinois, commuting is a way of life. St. Louis has a lot to offer culturally, and my husband and I want our children to be exposed to as many educational and cultural opportunities as possible,” Markowitz concluded.

Parents clearly believe that GRC provides enrichment opportunities that benefit their children.



*A Creative Convention team contemplates the next step in problem solving.*



*GRC's Space Academy captains Dave Gentili and Al Russell demonstrate their proficiency in assembling an Aqua Port rocket launcher! ☺*

Gifted Resource Council 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.

## Gifted Resource Council 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 6<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 academically talented students.

### Renowned Presenter

The keynote speaker, Susan Baum, Ph. D., is an international consultant and acclaimed author who specializes in working with special populations of gifted students and students with learning disabilities. She has served on

the board of directors of the National Association for Gifted Children and is past president and founder of the Association for the Education of Gifted Underachieving Students.

Dr. Baum is a professor in the Graduate School at The College of New Rochelle. She has over 30 years of experience in the public schools as a classroom teacher, special education teacher, teacher of the gifted, learning-disabilities specialist and an educational consultant.

Dr. Baum has a special interest in helping gifted students who have learning disabilities.

"Students who are gifted, but who struggle with a learning disability or attention deficit are a strange paradox—they have special intellectual gifts, but are unsuccessful with certain basic learning tasks," she said. "Their potential is at great risk of going untapped and undeveloped because the major focus of educational intervention is on what these students do not know and cannot do rather than on nurturing their talents. These students require special attention,

and it is vital that schools pay attention to their gifts as well as their learning difficulties."

### 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.

Dr. Baum 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, Sue 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 interests of both parents and teachers in separate sessions," she said. "Participation will certainly pay dividends for their children. We urge all GRC parents to attend themselves—and to sponsor teachers of their 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

<p><b>Who:</b> Parents, Classroom Teachers and Administrators</p> <p><b>What:</b> Inquiring Minds/Responsive Teachers: Challenging Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom</p> <p><b>When:</b> March 1-2, 2006</p> <p><b>Cost:</b> Wednesday evening only - \$21 Thursday - \$46 Both Days - \$65</p> <p><b>How:</b> Call 314-516-5655 for an application</p> <p><b>Why:</b> Because gifted children <i>are more and need more!</i></p>
--

*Conference, continued on page 5*

*Conference, continued from page 4*

workable solutions to enhance success in the regular classroom.

- ★ Network with others and share insights.
- ★ Learn about resources in the St. Louis area.

#### **Student Participation**

Students will have a special opportunity to participate in exciting, hands-on educational experiences Wednesday evening, March 1. While parents are learning from the experts, their children will be engaged in structured, high-interest tasks developed by members of the UMSL Department of Education. Preschoolers to middle-schoolers will be welcome to participate in the special sessions at no additional charge to parents.

#### **Keynote for Parents**

Although much of the material Dr. Baum 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 1, 2006, 6:30-9 p.m., when Dr. Baum will present *Supporting Gifted Children: Labels and Beyond*.

#### **Workshops for Parents**

Prior to the keynote address on Wednesday evening, parents will have four valuable sessions from which to choose:

- ★ Living with Your Gifted Child

★ Advocating for Your Gifted Child: The Home-School Connection

★ The Teen Years: Coaching Gifted Teens Toward Success

★ Empowering Parents: Models of District-Wide Parent Groups

#### **Keynote for Teachers**

The keynote address on Thursday, March 2, is designed to help classroom teachers find effective ways to respond to the exceptional needs of gifted students who may have learning issues as well. Dr. Baum will present *To Be Gifted and ????. . . Understanding and Responding to Dual Exceptionalities*.

#### **Choices for Teachers**

The conference planning committee made a conscious effort to address the needs of diverse groups, including young children, middle schoolers, high school students, and gifted students with learning disabilities. Participants will be able to attend three of twelve breakout sessions in a variety of topics ranging from highly gifted students to technology resources, and from Asperger's to planning for college.

All in all, this conference is a wonderful opportunity for both parents and professionals to expand their understanding of how to challenge gifted students, anticipate and deal with some of the challenges they face, and to help them fully develop their potential. Call 314-516-5655 for more information or to request an application form.

## **Mark Your Calendar**

*November 29, 2005* – Annual GRC Phonathon

*January 5, 6 & 9, 2006* – Academic Challenge Cup's Creative Convention at Washington University's Wohl Center. Parenting classes will be offered.

*January 28, 2006* – Summer Opportunities Fair at Whitfield School, 175 South Mason Rd.

*February 4-March 11, 2006* (Six Saturdays) – Winter Learning Lab at Wydown Middle School, 6500 Wydown Blvd. Parenting classes will be offered.

*March 1-2, 2006* – Inquiring Minds/Responsive Teachers: Challenging Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom Conference at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

*March 14-17, 2006* – Academic Challenge Cup's LinguSHTIK and Equations Competitions at Washington University's Wohl Center. Parenting classes will be offered.

*June -July, 2006* – GRC's Summer Academies

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

## How Should We Communicate With Our Child?

By Dennis O'Brien

Parents sometimes find it difficult to communicate with a gifted child. "She just doesn't tell me anything," they say. "Or he just gives one word answers, like 'yes' or 'no.' This doesn't really tell us anything."

Children who communicate like this actually are telling their parents quite a lot. Unfortunately, their parents aren't picking up on it. Children who shut down are telling their parents to back off. A child who won't share meaningfully about what's going on in his life is protecting himself from parents who seem too intrusive, too critical or too vested in their own agenda for the child.

Communicate.  
Don't interrogate.

Some parents fool themselves into thinking that communication is fine because they talk at length about academic things. But a narrow

focus, especially one centered on a child's intellectual prowess, may harm a child by emphasizing the wrong priorities.

Here are some tips to help you communicate more effectively with your child.

- ★ Keep your long-term goal in mind. Aim to nurture a healthy relationship so that your child can come to you with problems, learn from you and trust the advice and the values that you share.

The goal of a conversation should not be to learn all about what happened at school or in the rest of your child's day. Nor should it be to micromanage your child's academic career or to assure yourself that your child is preparing for the graduate school of your dreams.

If you find yourself trying to micromanage, spend some time with someone objective and try to separate your life from that of your child, your desires from your child's reality.

- ★ Give your child space. Children usually want some down time after school. They need a break. The last thing they want to do when they see a parent is to report about their school day, especially with a parent focusing narrowly on academics. Yet all too often parents pounce on their child with the "How did you do today in school?" question. Think about it. Is talking about work the first thing you want to do when you get home in the evening? "Hi, Dad. How well did you do at work today? Did the boss give you an 'A'?" You'd hate this. Give your child the same respect.

- ★ Communicate, but don't interrogate. Nothing turns a child off faster than a series of pointed questions about a topic of interest to a parent. Gifted children are sensitive. They read parents extremely well, and if it's clear that you

have a specific agenda in mind, your child may shut down. Children are most likely to share if a parent seems interested and relaxed.

Usually a good paraphrase of what a child has said will get you more additional information than a question. A good paraphrase communicates your interest and your understanding of what your child said. It invites your child to continue talking.

- ★ Use opened-ended questions to encourage conversation. Ask questions that encourage conversation. Think like a reporter. Ask questions that begin with who, what, how, when and where. Skip the "why?" questions, and avoid questions that can be answered by "yes" or "no."

"How was your day?" is always a good opener. Because it is so open-ended, it gives your child freedom to move in many directions. Be sure to follow. Other possible openers are: "What's going on at school?" or "Who did you hang out with at lunch?" or "What did you guys do at recess?"

- ★ Encourage often, but be careful about what you show approval for. It's easy to fall into the trap of worshipping at the altar of your child's intelligence. Gifted children are bright, and that's an advantage. But they need a lot of other skills and experiences if they are to be happy and successful in life.

When parents give too much attention to a child's intellectual prowess, the child learns to seek approval for that instead of moving on to develop social skills, positive character traits and other abilities.

Your goal should be to form a healthy relationship with your child, not to micromanage your child's academic career.

- ★ Share your experiences tactfully. It's okay to talk about your experiences. Your child may be able to learn from them. However, it's not helpful to push your advice on your child. Instead, try to get your child involved in a problem-solving process.

- ★ Focus more on social interactions than academics. Gifted children usually need support forming healthy relationships with their peers. Support can range from simply asking, "Who are the classmates with whom you have common interests?" to arranging out-of-school social ac-

*Communication, continued on page 7*

*Communication, continued from page 6*

tivities. You might need to blend encouragement with a little coaching about cooperation, topics to talk about at lunch, letting others have some say in choosing activities, or how to say nice things to someone.

★ Be careful about automatically taking your child's side in conflicts with teachers or friends. Really bright children can alienate others by communicating—in any number of ways—an air of superiority or even a disdain for others who may not be as bright. This can lead to conflicts, and unless your child learns to handle differences and relate to others in a constructive way, he will not develop the social skills necessary for success in life. Getting a good description of who did what and when is always a good start, and it slows down the rush to judgment. As you listen, try to imagine how the other person might feel if your child was doing or saying what he did. Then ask your child how he thinks the other person felt. Ask what he might have done differently had he known how he was affecting the other person.

Use open-ended questions; focus on social interactions, trying new things and making an effort - not only on academic success.

★ Communicate your support for your child's efforts to take risks and grow. But don't focus on the results. Gifted kids tend to be too results-oriented, usually because their parents are. This narrows their focus to their areas of academic excellence and constricts their life experiences. Parents need to encourage their gifted child to take risks, experiment and be part of a team. Help them develop resilience and coping skills by participating instead of trying to dominate. Learning to make mistakes is a healthy part of life. So be sure to communicate your acceptance and encouragement when your child tries and fails.

*Dennis O'Brien is a licensed clinical social worker, experienced educator and therapist, who writes educational materials for the Washington University School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry.*

### 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)

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, 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.

**Gifted Resource Council**  
357 Marshall Ave. Suite 6  
St. Louis, MO 63119  
314-962-5920  
[www.giftedresourcecouncil.org](http://www.giftedresourcecouncil.org)

Susan C. Flesch  
*Executive Director*  
JoAnn Hetisimer  
*Administrative Assistant*  
Linda Sher  
*Editor*

**Fall 2005**

---

Non profit org.  
U. S. Postage  
PAID  
St. Louis, MO  
Permit 4757

---

or current resident

Enhancing the potential of talented young learners

# Gifted Resource Council

## **Gifted Resource Council Board of Directors**

Larry K. Harris, President  
Margaret W. Cohen, Ph.D., Vice President  
Richard Heuermann, Secretary  
Christopher Dadian, Treasurer

### Directors

Mary E. Angert  
Robert Coulter, Ed.D.  
David Drebes  
Lars C. Gacad  
Mary Gismegian  
John M. Jennings  
Kelli Jordan-DeDeaux  
Sandy Kalin  
Agnes Meyo, Psy.D.  
Alice K. Richter  
Ken Stocker  
Mulugheta Teferi  
Carol Thudium  
Atia Thurman

### Advisory Board

Beverly K. Berla  
David Blasingame  
Karen Levin Coburn  
Sherman George  
Donn Johnson  
Pudge Landau  
Joy Melman  
William T. Moore  
Stephen C. Murphy  
Linda H. Smith, Ph.D.  
M. Frederic Volkmann

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

**Who:** Parents, Classroom Teachers and Administrators  
**What:** Inquiring Minds/Responsive Teachers: Challenging Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom  
**When:** March 1-2, 2006  
**Cost:** Wednesday evening only - \$21  
Thursday - \$46  
Both Days - \$65  
**How:** Call 314-516-5655 for an application  
**Why:** Because gifted children are more and need more!

*See inside for more information.*

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.