

## Why Aren't Girls Getting the Educational Opportunities They Deserve?

Answers are difficult to come by. We can only speculate. Is it that parents think gifted girls do not need academic enrichment as much as boys do? Is it because girls don't "push the boundaries" in school as often as boys? Do girls not demand as much extra attention? Whatever the reasons—and despite some specific efforts to attract more girls—more boys attend Gifted Resource Council courses by a ratio of 2:1. There is an even greater disparity in math-science related courses. In the 2010 Summer Academies that could be considered "scientific," boys enrolled at a 3:1 ratio. The gender disparity for science course starts as early as Jr. Science Searchers (for Kindergarteners) and continues right through to Space Academy (through grade 8). Is it a cultural problem, making it more difficult for girls to perceive themselves as successful in math and science? Do girls not enjoy science? Do they not envision being successful doing science? Do parents and teachers fail to encourage them?

### Committed to Enrichment

Whatever the cause or causes of this disparity, Gifted Resource Council is firmly committed to providing enriching hands-on educational opportunities for young girls as well as boys. Since 2001, GRC has offered a special course designed to generate interest among girls for careers in science and engineering. Washington University professor Dr. Ruth Okamoto initiated this remarkable course, "Moving & Shaking," taught in Washington University science and engineering labs. She and her colleague, Dr. Shelly Sakiyama-Elbert, deliberately appeal to middle school girls and give them enrollment preference. "Middle school is the time that test scores and interest in science typically fall," Okamoto said. "Seeing all the career options and successful women in the field is invaluable."

GRC is committed to offering a wide variety of courses to meet the needs of both boys and girls from preschool through grade 8. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Fall and Winter Learning Labs that offer 40 enrichment courses a semester in topics ranging from ancient history to chemistry, from chess to math, creative writing to cartooning, robotics to the world of Harry Potter. These shorter (90 minutes, 6-week) courses are designed to help children sample a

special interest subject under a skilled instructor so they can decide whether or not it's something they would like to explore in more depth. Kindergartners learn why penguins don't fly, 5th graders design kaleidoscopes, while 6th-8th graders explore wind power and water treatment. Students may take one or two of these high-interest, hands-on courses each semester if they wish.



*Aspiring engineers in GRC's "Moving & Shaking" class proudly display their prototype of blades for a miniature vertical-axis wind turbine.*

### Getting Started Early

Gifted Resource Council offers enrichment courses for children as young as three in order to help parents nurture a child's intellectual curiosity at an early age, believing the sooner a child begins exploring her interests, the richer they will be and the further she will explore them. For example, her kindergarten teacher at Kennard Elementary School recommended that Penny Peck attend the 2010 Summer Academies. Penny's parents were very impressed by the teacher biographies in the brochure and excited about the class topics "because they sounded so interesting!" said her mother, Vicky Peck. "Penny really loved it from day one."

### Many Benefits

Penny's mother has nothing but praise for the experience. "I think the best part about the structure of the summer program, for any child, is the creative learning approach," she said. "It is not at all like 'school.' It's more like camp. The kids don't realize how much they're learning while doing all those fun activities."

She's equally excited about the outcome. "When we were at the Denver Aquarium while on vacation, Penny started talking about the stilt roots she saw in the rainforest exhibit! And already she's writing sentences in school about things she learned in GRC's Summer Academies and getting praise from her teacher for using scientific words! I have recommended the program to all the parents I have talked to this fall. I think it's a great value when compared to the other camps out there, considering the academic component and the quality of the teachers!"

*Educational Opportunities, continued on page 6*

## Dialogue with the Director

I recently read that young people today spend just four to seven minutes outside each day in unstructured play activities. But they spend more than seven hours each day “in front of a screen”! Those statistics were startling to say the least.

Seven hours each day “in front of a screen” is more time than the average child spends in school! (Although I do realize that part of that time in front of the screen may indeed happen during school hours.) Is this a positive result of the opportunities afforded by increased technology? Or does it represent mindless hours watching too much TV?

And so you say, “What does that have to do with GRC?” We have no control over how most children spend their time each day. Yet, I am always compelled to consider how GRC acts as a countervailing force when appropriate.

Thus, I am more convinced than ever of the positive benefits that Gifted Resource Council offers to bright children – for opportunities to explore new learning through Saturday Learning Labs and Summer Academies. Not only do we offer experiences in a variety of academic areas, but GRC offers a warm and accepting environment in which to explore topics of interest with friends who share similar passions, guided by some of the best teachers in the metropolitan area. Not only do GRC’s teachers love their subject area, but they love their students and their inquisitive attitudes just as much! Not only do children learn new facts each day at GRC, but they also learn something about themselves and their interactions with peers, adults – even the world!



*Two of GRC’s Space Academy cadets enjoy working with LEGO robotics with their teacher, Captain Lisa Hummel.*

GRC offers children a place where they can “try out their ideas” in a safe, nurturing atmosphere that values divergent thinking. Where they need not fear of being ridiculed for being “too smart”. Where their friends might be of a similar age – or younger or older. Where girls who love science or math can feel accepted. Where girls as well as boys can stretch their minds and ambitions. Where adults might respond, “What if?” and then allow them to search further.

Yes, GRC is a place where students can collaborate with like-minded peers to hypothesize about solutions to world problems – or simply to enjoy the comfort of nurturing friendships with others who “think like they do”. Learning to play a game like Equations or LinguisHTIK can expand their knowledge in math or language, but it

also encourages teamwork and working toward a common goal.

Indeed, Gifted Resource Council’s programs stimulate children to be active learners through exciting “hands on” activities at every age level. We inspire them to continue to explore their interests through additional activities at home or school or in the community.

What can we do about that “four to seven minutes” spent outside each day? Realistically, not much. Except to encourage parents to provide time for unstructured activities on a regular basis. (And during GRC’s Summer Academies, we will continue to provide plenty of time each day for physical activities as well as academic ones. Because we believe that the mind and body grow and develop together.)

So join us in encouraging and nurturing our brightest young people by monitoring their time – as well as by allowing them time to consider the “What if?”... and to simply wonder....



*Sue Flesch, GRC executive director*

*Susan C. Flesch*

## Alumna Credits GRC for Career Inspiration

Kari Ward credits her participation in GRC programs with inspiring her to pursue a career in aerospace engineering at the Missouri University of Science and Technology at Rolla. “I’ve been interested in this field of study since the 2nd grade when I took my first GRC Space Academy class in the summer of 2000,” she said. “I came back every summer after that until 2006. What I loved most about GRC programs was that there was obviously learning going on, but it wasn’t in the traditional classroom sense with lectures and a textbook. Instead, I got to learn about things like the basic properties of thermodynamics of the space shuttle tiles through fun projects with a blowtorch and copper insulating wire.”

### Educational Imperative

“In part because of my experiences at GRC, I think it is imperative that girls should be exposed to more science and math related courses. It is painfully obvious how little interest there is in math and science among girls at Missouri S&T. The male to female ratio is 5:1. Within the aerospace engineering department, the ratio is even worse at 7:1. Sadly, I think this is because many young girls don’t participate in math and science simply because there is still so much stigma surrounding women in the sciences.

As a girl interested in rocketry and space exploration, I was all too often considered strange or abnormal.”

“I believe girls should take GRC courses not only to possibly help change the gender stereotype around science as a male dominated field, but also because knowledge of science and math is crucial to thriving in a society such as ours which revolves around science and technology. Even if they don’t grow up to be rocket scientists or chemists, knowledge of how things work is amazingly useful.”

### The Power of Modeling and Giving Back

“Sadly, I only had the chance to volunteer at GRC one summer, but I really loved it and I wish I had had another opportunity. I had so much fun as a student in GRC’s Space Academy program that I wanted to come back to help out and try to pass on some of what I learned in previous years in the program. My decision to volunteer was greatly affected by Mrs. Kathy Murphy who was GRC’s Space Academy captain in 2004 and then later my 7th grade science teacher at Ladue Middle School. Of every science teacher I’ve ever come across in middle school, high school and now in college, she still stands out in my mind as the best, and the chance to work with her was a large factor in my decision to volunteer at GRC.”



*A young cadet shows her joy over rocket building during GRC’s Space Academy 2010.*

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.

## Parents Ask: Our child is very bright and makes good decisions. How much extra responsibility should we give him?

By Dennis O'Brien

Perhaps less than you think. Children should assume as much responsibility for handling the details of their lives as they can effectively manage. Depending on his age, a child should handle routine personal tasks such as going to bed on time, getting ready for school, making his bed and keeping his room clean. He should also cooperate with all family rules and limits regarding use of television, phones, computers, family schedules and chores. This is true for all children, whether gifted or not.

Parents, of course, need to structure family life so that handling these responsibilities becomes routine.

Learning to handle personal tasks and family chores helps a child mature and gain confidence. Of course, there need to be predictable consequences when a child does not act responsibly, and parents must consistently enforce these consequences.

As for extra responsibilities? If homework requires minimal effort, assign additional learning projects, such as doing physics experiments or reading for pleasure for a half hour a day. Community service is another healthy option.

Unfortunately, parents who are overly impressed by their child's intellectual ability allow him to assume "responsibility" over areas that are neither appropriate nor healthy. Some compound the damage by not holding him accountable for handling age-appropriate responsibilities. Blinded by their child's "brilliance," they cede authority for decisions that are far beyond the child's ability to handle well. Gradually, the child assumes too much power and begins to subtly—or not so subtly—influence adult decisions. The result? An "entitled child" with too much power but without the life experience or emotional maturity to handle it responsibly. When parents are divorced, the entitled child can easily become the emotional partner collaborating with the parent he lives with. This makes it even worse.

**Determine if this destructive process is occurring in your family.** Ask yourself some tough questions and be honest with yourself. Is your child the one who decides what he wants to do, when he wants to do it, and with whom? Does he call the shots? Make decisions affecting family life? Does family life orbit around his preferences? Would you let any other 10-year-old have this much power? Talk to you this way? Give you orders? Did you have such power as a child?

One clear sign a child has too much power is when she is rude to her parents. "That doesn't make any sense. It's just stupid," a spoiled, entitled child will say. Children talk like this because parents allow them to. The entitled child becomes increasingly used to calling the shots and verbally smacks parents down when they don't cooperate fast enough.

**Acknowledge how self-destructive an entitled child can be.** The dysfunctional way of relating he learned from his parents soon contaminates other relationships, and the entitled child alienates teachers and classmates by being rude,

condescending or insulting to them. The resulting failure to develop appropriate social skills isolates a child and stunts social and emotional growth—often for life.

There are other dangers as well. Fast-forward a bit and the entitled child becomes the teen whose parents supply the liquor for teenage parties. A child with too much power also has difficulty learning to deal with disappointments and persist through adversity. He is more likely to quit when the world does not instantly reward him.

Another danger is that having too much power increases the child's anxiety level. Much as a child might relish the power, having to make adult decisions is a real burden, a psychological stressor that leads to other issues. Children handle this stress in different ways. Some stop trying because fear of making mistakes shuts them down. Others conceal their anxiety by becoming even more pushy. Some seek self-destructive rituals to give them a feeling of control, such as anorexia or the cutting behaviors that so many teens engage in.

**Resume the parenting power you have ceded to your child.** Begin making the adult parenting decisions yourself. Consult your child if a decision affects him. But if it's an adult decision to make, you and your spouse must be the ones to make it. Not your child. Here's how.

↔ Make a list of areas where you have already ceded undue power to your child. Discuss it with your spouse and make sure you have identified all the areas. Jot down several examples of each.

↔ Review your decisions to determine what motivated you at the time. Identify the buttons your child pushed and how you allowed yourself to be manipulated.

↔ Discuss each example and determine how you could have more effectively managed it in a way that limited his power to what was appropriate for a child and used your power as adults more responsibly. The point of this is not to increase your guilt, but to help you more clearly see the behavioral patterns you have fallen into so that you can identify ways to reverse them.

↔ Identify the priorities you want to address. Are there some urgent issues upcoming? What are the most inappropriate areas where you have ceded power? What ones affect the entire family? Which have the most serious consequences?

↔ Work with your spouse to develop a strategy for each issue.

↔ Make sure you and your spouse meet with your child together and present a united front. Do not negotiate or try to persuade your child. Simply explain your decision, acknowledge that he may not like it, and move on.

↔ Set appropriate limits, establish consequences, and enforce them firmly and matter-of-factly. Include consequences

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*Parents Ask, continued from page 4*

for being rude and disrespectful to you or others. An apology is not enough. He should lose privileges until he has made amends. For example, no television, computer or phone until he has done extra chores to help you out.

⇔ Welcome testing as an opportunity to show your resolve. Be prepared to matter-of-factly enforce the consequence, allowing no negotiating or promises about “next time.” Sure, your child may be angry because you are acting like a parent and expecting her to be a child—but that’s a good thing. It’s a child’s job to test the legitimate limits you have set. Her anger will pass. Your firmness is her pathway to maturity.

Bottom line: gifted children are still children. They need boundaries and guidance to grow emotionally and make good decisions. They need encouragement and support to do the things that do not come easily for them. They need adult parents. They don’t need too much power.

*Dennis O’Brien is a licensed clinical social worker, experienced educator and therapist. In addition to writing educational materials for the Washington University School of Medicine Dept. of Psychiatry, he writes weekly columns on parenting for the Suburban Journals, monthly columns for St. Louis Moms and Dads, and occasional columns for Family Connections and other publications.*



*Three “GRC business partners” present their business plan to fellow ECO Academy entrepreneurs during Summer Academies 2010.*

## GRC Earns Better Business Bureau Accreditation

Gifted Resource Council has earned the Better Business Bureau’s Seal of Approval as an Accredited Charity! The BBB Wise Giving Seal is awarded only to charities that meet the highest Standards for Charity Accountability. The BBB began the seal program in 2003 “to assure donors that their organizations are operating responsibly.”

GRC is one of just 150 local St. Louis charities to meet all 20 of the BBB Wise Giving “strong and comprehensive” standards for fiscal management, board governance, truthfulness, transparency and effective focus on its mission. The BBB standards go far beyond a simple review of financial information that other “accrediting agencies” such as Charity Navigator focus on.

“Earning the BBB seal is a significant accomplishment for a small nonprofit with limited resources trying to achieve great things for children,” said GRC Executive Director Susan Flesch. “It assures our supporters that their gifts will be effectively utilized to promote the mission they support: bringing together resources of the community to help bright and talented children achieve their potential.”

The BBB report shows that 80 percent of GRC revenues are expended directly to support its programs, a remarkably high figure for charities.

Visit [www.stlouis.bbb.org](http://www.stlouis.bbb.org) to learn more about GRC.



[stlouis.bbb.org](http://stlouis.bbb.org)

*Educational Opportunities, continued from page 1*

### Why Not More?

So, when girls like Penny benefit so much from GRC's stimulating, hands-on courses, what accounts for the fact that twice as many boys as girls take advantage of them, year after year? "I can only surmise that the disparity is at least partly due to parental priorities," said GRC Executive Director Susan Fleisch. "It certainly doesn't reflect a difference in intellectual talent, and I know girls really enjoy the GRC courses they take. Nothing would please me more than to have a 50/50, boy/girl enrollment of Kindergartners in Jr. Science Searchers for Summer Academies 2011."



*Boys and girls alike revel in the thrill of a performance during Ancient Academy 2010.*

### Summer Enrollment Grows Despite Economy

Gifted Resource Council's Summer Academies 2010 grew by more than 20 percent over previous summers, despite a downturn in the economy. "Unfortunately, due to decreased education monies at the state level, many school districts were forced to reduce their summer enrichment programs," according to GRC Executive Director Susan Fleisch. "Conscientious parents are looking for opportunities to supplement the education their children are receiving, and GRC is a terrific resource for them." It is expected that enrollment in GRC's eleven two-week-long Summer Academies will continue to increase in 2011 and beyond.

### Reader Survey

*mindwonders* strives to serve our readers as best we can. We would like to hear from you about how well we are doing and what we might improve. Let us know by fax (314-962-6269) or email us as [info@giftedresourcecouncil.org](mailto:info@giftedresourcecouncil.org). Feel free to respond to one or more of these questions. Some areas we would like to hear about include:

- ▶ Do you look forward to receiving the GRC newsletter?
- ▶ Does it consistently contain more than one piece you read?
- ▶ Do you find the Dialogue with the Director column informative?
- ▶ Do you find the Parents Ask column helpful?
- ▶ Do you enjoy reading about what GRC alums are accomplishing?
- ▶ Do you enjoy reading about GRC classes?
- ▶ Do you enjoy getting to know more about GRC teachers?
- ▶ Do you use the Web site for program information?
- ▶ How old is your child?
- ▶ Has your child attended: Academic Challenge Cup? Saturday Learning Labs? Summer Academies?
- ▶ What topics would you like to learn more about?
- ▶ Any other suggestions?

Thank you for taking the time to help us improve our newsletter.

## Mark Your Calendar

*January 29, 2011* – Summer Opportunities Fair at MICDS,  
101 N. Warson Rd.

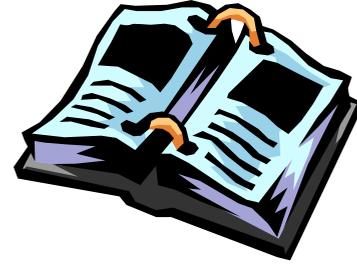
*February 5-March 12, 2011* (Six Saturdays) – Winter Learning Lab at  
Wydown Middle School, 6500 Wydown Blvd. Parenting Classes  
will be offered.

*February 28 & March 2, 2011* – Academic Challenge Cup's  
**Equations** Competitions at Crestwood Court, 109 Crestwood Plaza.  
Parenting classes will be offered.

*March 1, 2011* – Academic Challenge Cup's **LinguiSHTIK** Competition at Crestwood Court,  
109 Crestwood Plaza. Parenting classes will be offered.

*March 3 & 4, 2011* – Academic Challenge Cup's **Creative Convention** at Crestwood Court,  
109 Crestwood Plaza. Parenting classes will be offered.

*March 15-17, 2011* – Academic Challenge Cup's **Equations** Competitions at  
Washington University's College Hall. Parenting classes will be offered.



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

## 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:

### Gifted Member: \$60

- ★ Priority registration for all programs
- ★ *FREE parenting classes (\$160 value)*
- ★ Use of GRC Library

### Intelligent Friend: \$100

- ★ All of the above, *plus*
- ★ \$10 discount off two Learning Lab registrations

### Sharp Sponsor: \$150

- ★ All of the above, *plus*
- ★ Additional \$25 discount off a Summer Academy

### Talented Patron: \$250

- ★ All of the above, *plus*
- ★ Additional \$25 discount off a Summer Academy (\$50 total)

### Brilliant Benefactor: \$500

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

### Wise Philanthropist: \$1,000

- ★ All of the above, *plus*
- ★ GRC logo lapel pin
- ★ The undying gratitude of gifted children throughout the metropolitan area

### Imaginative Institution: \$100

- ★ For schools and other not-for-profits

Gifted Member  Intelligent Friend  Sharp Sponsor  Talented Patron  Brilliant Benefactor  Wise Philanthropist  Imaginative Institution

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**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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**Enrollment information about GRC's Winter Learning Lab**, which begins February 5, 2011, can be found at [www.giftedresourcecouncil.org](http://www.giftedresourcecouncil.org) beginning January 1. These 90-minute high-interest courses offered on six Saturdays in the fall and winter offer a wonderful, economical way to enrich a child's educational experience and aspirations. Last year nearly 500 students took advantage of this opportunity to interact with other children who are their intellectual peers while being challenged by an exciting, hands-on curriculum.

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.