



GRC Trivia Night

Date: Friday, September 19, 2003

Time: Doors open at 7:00 pm
Trivia starts at 7:30 pm

Cost: \$12.00/person
8-10 persons/table

Refreshments: Popcorn and soda
supplied, other snacks may be
brought by participants

Prizes:

- ☆ Attendance Prizes
- ☆ \$100 to the winning table
- ☆ 50/50 drawing

Location: Bethel School,
7001 Forsyth (northwest corner of
Big Bend and Forsyth)

Call (314) 962-5920
to reserve your table.
Space is limited!

Dialogue with the Director

“Good job!” “Thank you.” “You are special...”

Are these words of affirmation ones that are spoken to children? To parents? To teachers? Surely all of us know the power of words. We recognize that comments of encouragement can have an empowering effect on the recipient of those words. We are frequently reminded to say positive things to children, employees, co-workers, a spouse. But how often do we remember to speak those encouraging words?

As Gifted Resource Council celebrates its twentieth anniversary during 2003, my thoughts turn to speaking words of thanks and encouragement to a very special group of people. These are a group of adults whose numbers are many. Some have worked with GRC for nearly all of its twenty years. Others have played an important role in our work with bright and talented young people for only a year or two. Some are seasoned veterans of educational institutions with advanced degrees and many years of experience. Others are young, untested beginners with enthusiasm for “making a difference” in the life of a child. Who are these people so clearly deserving of words of affirmation? These special people are teachers!

Gifted Resource Council is and has been many different things to many different people through the course of twenty years. GRC has meant Space Academy and the chance to build a rocket. Ancient Academy with togas, mosaics and Ancient Roman culinary delights. Jr. Science Searchers and kindergartners turned on to the need to preserve the world’s tropical rainforests. Learning Labs with wonders of scientific experiments, intricacies of chess or mysteries of mythology. Academic Challenge Cup competitions with unique creations to solve a problem and teams working together in language or math challenges.

But through these twenty years of Gifted Resource Council programs for gifted children, one constant has remained...outstanding teachers who share their expertise in a particular subject area along with their passion for learning and life, and who care deeply about individual children. These GRC teachers have truly gone “above and beyond” what is frequently expected of the teaching profession. They have inspired young people to explore and expand their horizons. They have affirmed students with their own words of encouragement. They have been a significant mentor for a child who “is more” and sometimes “needs more”. These teachers are truly gifted and have been themselves a gift to many.

For all these teachers, we say: “Thank you!” “Great job.” “Keep up the good work...” “You are appreciated!”

Why not share words of encouragement with the important people in your life too? Take time to thank a teacher. Notice something good about your child. Speak a word of affirmation today! Words do have power...



Sue Flesch, GRC executive director

Susan C. Flesch

Special GRC Programs, continued from page 1

✧ “Perfectionism—Definitions, Perspectives and School Strategies,” by Nancy Bonn-Winkler, a counselor at the Center for Creative Learning.

✧ “Recognizing and Working with the Asynchronous Development of Gifted Children,” by John Yunker, a psychologist in private practice.

Important topics like these presented by such highly qualified professionals reflect the commitment GRC has shown over the past two decades to enrich the lives of gifted children by providing learning opportunities for their parents and teachers. Workshops, conferences and informative articles in *mindwonders* (See the “Parents Ask” column on page 6.) are some of the ways that GRC has fulfilled this part of its mission over the past two decades.

Creative Convention/Academic Challenge Cup

Nearly 1600 students, grades 2-8, crowded into the cafeterias of Washington and Fontbonne universities for five days of friendly academic competition involving their creativity, math and language skills. All of them had a great time, and all of them learned that they were participating in Gifted Resource Council’s twentieth anniversary.

Participating teams in the Creative Convention phase of Academic Challenge Cup were asked to design and build a prototype of the transportation system which would convey children to school twenty years from now. Given time restraints, a bag of supplies and the challenge to think creatively, ecologically and scientifically, the results were amazing. The teams concluded their activities by making visual and

verbal presentations of their prototypes to other teams and judges. Cooperation and teamwork, rather than specific products, ranked highest among the qualities on which teams were evaluated.

Summer Academies

The twenty-year anniversary theme will be carried into five of the ten Summer Academies.

ECO Academy students will design, market and sell a product related to GRC’s mission of helping children as they “reach for the stars.” These third through eighth grade entrepreneurs learn about the economy by creating a company, manufacturing and marketing a sellable product—hopefully for a profit—while remaining ecologically friendly.

Space Academy will challenge students to anticipate the next twenty years of space exploration based on a review of key challenges, failures and achievements in space exploration over the past twenty years. Of course, they will also build, launch and evaluate their own ‘anniversary rockets.’

Twentieth Anniversary Trivia Night

Gifted Resource Council will host a Family Trivia Night next fall. Ten questions in each of ten categories will, of course, center around events of the last twenty years—in topics best left to the imagination of participants. Children in grade 5 or above are welcome to join their parents and other adults for an evening of family fun on September 19, 2003. Popcorn and soda will be supplied. A 50/50 cash drawing and other surprises will be part of this memorable evening.

GRC Earns Media Attention

Gifted Resource Council was recently featured in a KMOV-TV 4 news report, a wonderful *St. Louis Post Dispatch* story and two “Family Matters” columns in the *Suburban Journals*. Perhaps it was GRC’s 20th anniversary which attracted this attention, or perhaps it was the tremendous job GRC does year after year, program after program, for gifted child after gifted child.

Another GRC Teacher Honored

Barb Wnek was selected third place winner in a national contest to identify the Dole Company’s “Creative 5-a-Day Teacher of the Year” for her health curricular activities which motivate students to eat 5 fruits a day. Wnek has shown unusual creativity while teaching physical education in GRC’s Summer Academies for the past 17 years. Congratulations, Barb!

Thanks to . . .

. . . the following individuals who made financial contributions to Gifted Resource Council from May 2002 through April 2003. We apologize for any names which may have been inadvertently omitted or misspelled.

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SENG Conference Comes to St. Louis

A special conference - The Many Faces of Giftedness - will bring nationally known experts on giftedness to St. Louis July 11 - 13. Topics include strategies for developing self understanding and growth, establishing parent support groups, enhancing social and emotional awareness and the mis-diagnoses of gifted and talented children.

Part of GRC's mission is to promote educational programs for parents and teachers about issues affecting gifted children. This conference is a valuable opportunity to learn more about the social and emotional health of gifted children.

The conference will be held at the St. Louis Marriott Pavilion Downtown. For more information or to register, visit www.senggifted.org.

Should I encourage my child to compete?

By Dennis O'Brien

When parents are deciding whether to encourage or even allow a gifted child to engage in competitive games, it is important to be clear about the goals of the competition, how it will be structured, the mind-set of the coach and what experiences the child needs in order to become more well-rounded. These variables will determine whether competition will enrich or damage a child's healthy development.

★ Make sure the competition stresses teamwork, not individual prowess. If the event is structured so that helping children learn to work together for a common goal is paramount, it can be a valuable learning experience.

However, if the competition is designed to determine "Who's the best," it will probably be harmful. This type of individualistic competition reinforces the notion that being special means somehow being the best at something.

An unhealthy emphasis on being the best may cause gifted children to narrow their focus to venues in which they excel, to avoid participating in many healthy age-appropriate activities, to compete with peers rather than cooperate with them, and to feel badly about themselves if they cannot demonstrate they are "the best." Children should not be allowed to participate in events organized to produce these outcomes.

On the other hand, competitions which stress teamwork and the fun that everyone has just by participating help children grow in healthy ways.

Gifted Resource Council, for example, stresses the "friendly competition" of its Academic Challenge Cup, structures the event to maximize learning to work as a team and cooperating with others, and does not rank teams which achieve a "level of excellence." Elements like these make a competitive event healthy for children.

★ Evaluate both the coach's articulated philosophy and actual behavior. Highly competitive, winning-is-the-only-thing coaches are as damaging to children engaged in academic competitions as they are to children involved in sports. Children under the direction of dysfunctional coaches become focused on the wrong values (being the best, winning at all costs) and have their self-esteem diminished when they cannot live up

to unrealistic expectations set by the coach and internalized by them. These coaches may be using children to play out their own issues involving unfulfilled dreams or feelings of inadequacy.

Healthy coaches emphasize having fun, teamwork and mastering the fundamental skills necessary for competent performance and longterm success. They encourage rather than criticize, explain rather than demand, and involve the whole team, not just the stars. They teach children to lose gracefully and to get their satisfaction from the activities themselves rather than the outcome.

★ Assess how competitive your child is. Being emotionally intense and competitive are characteristic of many gifted children. Often these traits need to be tempered.

If your child tends to be competitive, make sure that he or she gets many opportunities to learn about sharing, having fun, participating on a team, and *not* being the best. It is often valuable to involve children in activities and competitions which have nothing to do with academics. Gifted children sometimes learn more about life and become more well-round and likely to succeed by participating in activities in which they are just average, like sports or the performing arts. Parents should encourage their competitive children to be involved in these types of experiences.

★ Examine your own attitudes about competition and what you want for your child.

Parents of gifted kids sometimes model many of the unhealthy traits their children exhibit and unintentionally send children the wrong message.

Unexamined attitudes cause competitive parents to push children too hard to achieve recognition which they missed out on. Unexamined attitudes also allow adults to rationalize the devastating pressure they put on children to excel in a narrow area of their lives.

★ Articulate healthy values to your child and reinforce your child's efforts to become well-rounded, cooperative and a graceful competitor whenever opportunities arise.

Begin by making clear that you are *not* interested

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in seeing your child prove that he or she is best at something. Explain that you are interested in seeing your child learn to cooperate with others, to have fun and learn new skills. Emphasize that you value cooperation, good sportsmanship and being persistent when things don't go well.

★ Keep in mind that your child's participation in competitions can help develop important traits of a well-rounded person provided the competitions are designed to promote healthy values.

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

Academic Challenge Cup Happenings...



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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:

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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**

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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
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www.cybam.com/grc

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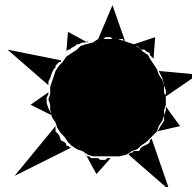
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Summer Academies

June 16 - July 25
will be held at
McNair School
8136 Groby
(just east of the Innerbelt)



Still a few openings!
Call 314-962-5920 for details

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.