

# Developing Minds

## District 51 Gifted and Talented News



December 2017

Heather Baskin, Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Programming at D51

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### Important Dates

#### GT Scholarship Apps for 2nd window due

December 4 by 4:00 pm  
GT Office, Emerson Bldg  
East Modular

#### PSAT 8/9 can be taken by grades 3-6

Tests—Jan. 20 or Feb 10.  
Registration due by  
Dec. 18 to CBK.

#### Challenge Program Information Meeting

January 29 & 30,  
4:30-5:30 pm & 6-9:00 pm  
East MS Cafeteria

### Letter from the Coordinator:

We are almost mid-way through the year and I am amazed at how fast it has gone. The first half of the year has been busy with a lot of great things happening, and the second half of the year promises to be the same.

You may notice some changes within the newsletter this month because we have changed how we will bring you news. We have become more inclusive in what you will be reading for the rest of the year. The voices and writers within the newsletter will include many from our community (but we are always open to more). The GT Teachers have pooled together to bring you information and stories from the schools and students they work with every day. We are also working to bring you updates from local and state organizations working to support Gifted and Talented students. These changes came about from ideas, suggestions, and brainstorming to improve. Add your voice to mix by calling, emailing, or providing information through our online link (provided at the end of the newsletter).

Take time to enjoy the end of 2017 and welcome 2018 with a spirit of renewal!

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## Did You Know?

There has been an increase (again) regarding the discussion on what the “gifted” label does to students. Here is a response written by Paula Prober (Nov 13, 2017) on the website “Your Rainforest Mind” (rainforestmind.com)...

### What To Do About The G Word (#Gifted)

You don't have to use the G Word.

Even though, let's face it, you use it for athletes, artists and your quirky Aunt Millie.

But you do have to recognize that gifted children exist in your school.

Because they do.

I'm talking about the kids you know who, from a very early age, are faster learners, deeper thinkers and more sensitive feelers. Who ask questions you can't answer. Who correct your spelling. Who know more than you do about black holes. Who cry when other children are hurt on the playground. Who are overwhelmed at birthday parties. Who annoyingly hang out at your desk because they'd rather talk to you about Darwin than talk to the other six-year-olds about the letter A.

You know who I'm talking about.

This is not about loving these kids more or singling them out as superstars. They don't want that. That doesn't help them.

**If they're told things like: *You're so smart. You can do anything. You're so lucky. Or Why did you get that B? Learning should always be easy for you. Or Stop asking so many questions. Nobody likes a know-it-all. Or No, you can't read ahead. They'll get anxious.***

**They'll feel like they can't ask for help. Like they can't make mistakes. Like they have to know everything before they learn it. Like they'll disappoint you if they don't live up to your expectations. Like they have to hide their abilities and their enthusiasm.**

But, still.

You don't have to use the G Word.

But you do have to find ways to meet their academic needs and to understand their extra-sensitivities. Some of those ways are described in [this post](#) and [this one](#). It's not as hard as it seems. In fact, these kids will love you if you make the time to listen to them. Start an after school club for philosophers or mathematicians. Nourish their interests and let them read ahead! Don't assume that they aren't doing the homework because they're lazy or defiant. Get creative with your curriculum. Use [Carol Dweck's work](#) on mindsets to reduce the pressure on your (gifted) students. Explore Howard Gardner's [multiple intelligences](#) model if you want to help all of your students understand learning differences and abilities.

And one more thing.

I'm not saying that you *can't* use the G Word.

In fact, it could help.

One of my students, years ago, was relieved to hear that he was gifted. His response, *Oh, that's what's wrong with me*. He had his own label. Several of them: weirdo, alien, nerd, crybaby, loner, freak, crazy.

But. You don't have to use the G Word.

## Student Work



Color theory one point perspective drawing  
by *Evee White*,  
8<sup>th</sup> grade Redlands Middle School art student.

*Teacher: Thea Skinner*



*Evee White*

## What do you want in the Newsletter?

Do you have a topic that you want covered in an upcoming newsletter? Is there a student you know that would like to write an article? Want to share something great happening with gifted students in our district? Want to nominate a student to be featured in our “Many Faces of Gifted” section? Do you know of a student that has written an amazing poem/story or created a fantastic piece of art that we could feature? Have a question about gifted that you would really like answered? Please let us know at [bev.jebe@d51schools.org](mailto:bev.jebe@d51schools.org) or visit <http://tinyurl.com/D51GTIdeas>.

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# The Many Faces of Gifted



**Clinton Suskey**, 5<sup>th</sup> Grader, Pear Park Elementary, Identified student  
(Written by Janelle McGowan, GT Teacher)

C.T has been identified gifted for two years now and has consistently been my strong goal setter, he is a great example to all of the students in our group to see how to set SMART goals. C.T remains thoughtful in what he wants to accomplish and the tasks he can do to accomplish those. Along with his great goal setting, C.T is also a take charge student with a sense of humor; he has the ability to get the class on task, as well as take them on a silly detour. He is a great leader in training. I believe C.T has the ability to go many places in his academic career because he connects well to his education and its purpose as well as setting great expectations for himself.

C.T's answers:

What makes you unique? *My math skills, I'm very good at math and solving problems. I'm not so good at reading and writing though. I love hunting too, and fishing. I would like people to know that I'm smart, but I also play sports.*

What does gifted mean to you? *I think it means you have something special and unique.*

How does your school support your learning? *They give me challenging work and assignments, and they use different ways of thinking.*

What do you struggle with in school? *My ELA (English Language Arts), but I have grown a lot since last year.*  
If you had one wish for GT programs or GT students what would it would be? *Being able to do what we do best and to have more fun activities so we can have more fun and don't get stressed out.*

## GE-SAC

**Gifted Education State Advisory Committee (GE-SAC)** is made up of Parents, Educators, and Community members from each Congressional District in the State of Colorado, who advise the Colorado State Board of Education on matters related to Gifted Education.

Kaye Wergedal, one of the Co-Chairs of our District 51 **GTAC - Gifted Talented Advisory Committee** - was appointed to **GE-SAC** for a three-year term, beginning September 2017. The **GE-SAC** meets 4 times each calendar year, unless called into action more often by the **SBE**. Meetings are generally held in the Denver Metro Area.

Under review and in-discussion at the September 2017 meeting, were:

**Parent and Family Partnerships** need to be happening in school districts, and individual schools throughout the state. CAGT is an important piece of this effort. The need for effective leadership by parents is crucial, in every district, and every school!

**ESSA** – the Federal Government's **Every Student Succeeds Act** - and its impact on Colorado's schools' gifted education programming and access to appropriate learning experiences for gifted students - is key to what monies will be available to implement the new law, which goes into effect as of January 1, 2018.

**State Testing** - The questions of who, what, and when address how to achieve meaningful results, both district and state-wide for ALL Colorado students. Does the Colorado State Legislature need to get involved in this?

**House Bill 103** – how to recruit and retain good teachers in a time of shortage?

Respectfully submitted by

Kaye Wergedal, Community Representative for Congressional District 3

## School Highlight: Grand River Academy

By Brenda Chinn, GT Teacher at GRA

Grand River Academy is a blended education school for grades K-12 where students have an opportunity to work both online and in a classroom on varied days throughout the week. Through Grand River GT support, students have had the opportunity to work collaboratively in engaging STEAM projects which meet individual extension needs. These projects have promoted students growth socially, emotionally and academically in problem solving and creative ways.

Primary grades have been busy understanding and exploring the impact and importance of agriculture! This understanding came through involvement in weaving, looking at the diversity of apples, exploring seed types and even following the process to get ice cream to their tables! Students now have a deeper knowledge of the steps, jobs needed and multiple contributions agriculture brings to them. Students also had an opportunity to create their own leaves and see the diversity of not only how leaves are physically different, but also how diverse the paths they take may be...just like how each of them are diverse and special in their own way.

The first semester intermediate elementary grades designed simple machines out of common materials to implement simple tasks like dividing M & M's among friends! With high school students' assistance, they then designed, constructed and raced wooden cars and the track to race them on. These elementary students continued with creating their own creatures and characteristics to go with them. It is exciting to see what second semester will bring!

Middle school students were engaged in taking apart and comparing older and newer components and the technological changes of machines. Once they were apart, mechanisms were sorted and joined together as they created new possibilities with "old" parts. The process was as exciting as the end results. Middle school students are now involved in developing scale models and presenting improvements in their new versions. One team is developing a new and improved downhill mountain bike track!

High school students have been great mentors to our younger students. Some high school students are currently involved in writing a play for younger students to perform as well as casting and directing their play. Some students are being matched within our community to job shadow professionals. We really appreciate those in our community for providing this opportunity for our students. The students are excelling in their academics and are driven to see if their career dream is truly the right career path.

The amazing part of all of this, is this is an opportunity of choice. I am amazed with the interest, drive and self-determination students have when they are given choices! Not only have they chosen to be a part of all we do, they also have developed the ideas we are exploring. So many students have diverse gifts and talents and these extensions allow students reach their full potential.

# GTAC

## D51 Gifted-Talented Advisory Committee (GTAC) Update

By Jen Schumann, Gifted-Talented Advisory Committee Co-chair

The GTAC work is focused on two areas this year: 1) analyzing how D51's Learning Model (PBL) initiative meets the needs of Talent Pool and Gifted-Talented learners in our community, and 2) the under-served population of Talent Pool and Gifted-Talented learners and how D51 schools move to intentionally grow in meeting their needs. If you're interested in following the work of the committee this year, here is GTAC's website:

<http://d51schools.ss13.sharpschool.com/cms/One.aspx?portalId=81872&pageId=518995>.

Additionally, if you'd like to attend one of our meetings as an observing visitor, our meeting dates are on the website. Each year we review our member roster for balance of membership (students, parents, community, D51 employees) between roles and demographics represented. At this time, our committee is looking for membership interest from those who serve as teachers in D51. If you're curious about whether we have an opening for membership for the demographic area you would represent, please email me ([jenniferschumann1@gmail.com](mailto:jenniferschumann1@gmail.com)) or my GTAC Co-Chair, Kaye Wergedal ([kwerger@gmail.com](mailto:kwerger@gmail.com)).

Support for Talent Pool and Gifted-Talented youth at local, state, and national levels is crucial for so many reasons. For one, the label itself has caused debate for decades. Second, there are many misconceptions about gifted-talented youth held across **all** stakeholder groups. When you add those two factors to the truth that there are currently 14 different areas in which youth can be identified as GT in the state of Colorado, and that traditionally AND nationally, we've been more practiced in serving two of those fourteen areas.... Bridge-building discourse which leads to action is vital to forward progress. GTAC invites everyone to consider how they are using their unique voice and background in this discourse which seeks to serve our Talent Pool and Gifted-Talented youth better each day.

## Want More Information?

D51 GT Website <https://connect.d51schools.org/sites/shared/gt/Pages/default.aspx>

CDE's Gifted Parent's Corner <https://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/parents>