



GAPAGT

Garland Area Parent Association for Gifted and Talented
Newsletter

April 2009

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President's Message

Jacki Hulm, President, gapagt@gapagt.org

As this school year draws to a close, I would like to express my thanks.

To the GAPAGT Board...

Thanks for your support this year, ensuring that we were able to meet the networking, educational, and social needs of our members. We accomplished most of our goals for the year, and have a good road map for next year.

To our Membership...

Thanks for your participation in the activities that we sponsored this year. We have had great attendance at our programs, and hope to build upon that next year. If you have suggestions for programs or events, please send your idea to our email: gapagt@gapagt.org.

To those of you who are not yet members, please consider joining for the upcoming year. We do have several 'perks' throughout the year for members only that you may want to take advantage of. You can find a membership form on the website as well.

Again, thanks for your support and participation this year.

Jacki

Camp GISD Scholarships!

Do you know of a child who wants to attend Camp GISD this summer but may have difficulty with the registration fee?

GAPAGT is offering scholarships to qualified students. Check our web site at www.gapagt.org to obtain an application.

Applications must be postmarked by **May 15**. If you have any questions, please contact Jacki Hulm.

From the Desk of the Coordinator...

Linda Phemister, Gifted/Talented Education Program & Magnet Program Coordinator

I was honored to be invited by TAGT to speak at the annual TAGT Leadership Conference in Austin, Texas on March 30-31. There were 258 administrators responsible for Gifted Education Programs in Texas in attendance. I was asked to talk about the Garland ISD Performing Arts Program and Endorsement. The presentation was well attended and the audience included the Director of Fine Arts as well as the Director of Advanced Academic Programs from the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Garland was praised for its leadership in this area and many expressed an interest in learning more about our program.

The following is an overview of the presentation.

Serving Giftedness in the Performing Arts

—Linda Phemister, Garland ISD

Garland ISD offers programming to academically gifted students as well as artistically talented students. The program for artistically talented students begins in grade 2 and culminates in the Performing Arts Endorsement (PAE) in high school. The PAE is a coherent sequence of courses designed for the artistically gifted/talented student, guiding the student through a specific path of academic study, performance criteria, and exposure to professional performance. It offers the opportunity to concentrate on Performing Arts and gain proficiency in chosen areas of concentration during the high school years.

District Eliminating 8th Grade EH English Course

GISD is planning to eliminate the 8th grade English I class beginning next year in an effort to comply with the new 4x4 high school requirements and encourage more students to take challenging English classes as seniors.

Local and state policies require students to have at least four years of high school English. For advanced students who take English I for high school credit in 8th grade, English V in 12th grade becomes an elective. District data indicates nearly 50% of students who took English I in 8th grade opt not to take English V as seniors and instead choose a less rigorous course to fulfill their requirements. In an effort to improve College Readiness objectives, and align our district with similar districts, the 8th grade class will be eliminated and all students will take English I-IV in high school.

This change will require the curriculum to be modified for next year's 8th grade EH English students, and high school credit will no longer be available in 8th grade for English I. In addition, students interested in the IB program at Garland HS, will now be required to complete the new Enriched Honors English class (which will replace English I) in 8th grade.



April Program Has Special Guest, Elections, and Summer Info – Free for Members!

Diana Cooley, Programs, dcooley@gapagt.org

Our final guest speaker program this year is **Friday, April 17th**. We are excited to bring special guest, Kathleen Fischer, to Garland to talk to parents about "Parenting Leadership Teens." This one-hour program focuses on the pressures and challenges high ability/leadership teens often face and parent's roles in helping them keep their balance.

Kathleen Fischer combines her passion for the adolescent years with observation and research on families and kids to create a very special presentation style. She is a registered nurse with a master's in health education and an endorsement in gifted education. Ms. Fischer has worked in public health settings and with the DISD, presented professional education seminars, taught at the university level, and continues to be a popular speaker in corporate, church and community settings.

Come early to network with other parents of gifted children at the potluck dinner and book swap beginning at 6:30 pm. We're trading fiction, non-fiction, adult and children's books at each of our monthly meetings. GAPAGT will also have materials available at this meeting for summer enrichment opportunities, including Camp GISD, Shake Hands with Your Future, SMU Summer Youth Programs, and iD Tech Camps.

This program is intended for parents only. Activities for school-age children are available in our Activity Room with advance reservations. To make a reservation, contact Diana Cooley at dcooley@gapagt.org by 9 PM the Thursday evening prior to the program. The program is \$5 for non-members.

G/T Round-Up

GAPAGT would like to invite you to a Gifted and Talented (G/T) Round-up where you will be able to mingle with other parents that are experienced with the GISD G/T program.

You can freely ask us all kinds of questions to help you prepare for next year. Some current G/T students will also be available to answer any questions your child has.

We will have activities available for your children, and will provide light snacks.

Date: May 7, 2009
Time: 7:00 – 8:30 PM
Location: Kimberlin Academy Cafeteria
1520 Cumberland Drive
Garland 75040



Book Review

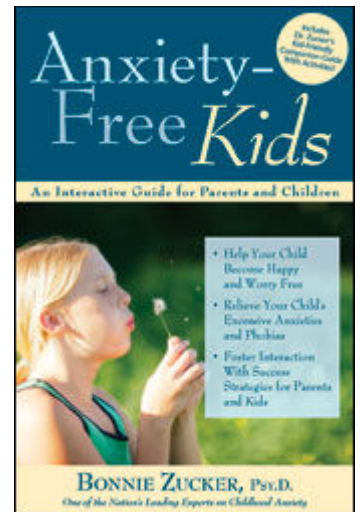
Anxiety-Free Kids

Bonnie Zucker, PH.D.

Anxiety-Free Kids offers parents strategies that help children become happy and worry free, methods that relieve a child's excessive anxieties and phobias, and tools for fostering interaction and family-oriented solutions. Using a unique companion approach that offers two books in one--a practical, reader-friendly book for parents and a fun workbook for kids--this solutions-oriented guide utilizes the cognitive-behavioral approach to therapy by integrating the parent in the child's self-help process.

Research has shown that if left untreated, children with anxiety disorders are at higher risk to perform poorly in school, to have less-developed social skills, and to be more vulnerable to substance abuse. The author employs cognitive-behavioral therapy, the most empirically supported treatment of anxiety disorders, along with a family approach to build a supportive team to help kids with anxiety successfully overcome their worries.

Covering the six most commonly occurring anxiety disorders in childhood--generalized anxiety, separation anxiety, specific phobias, social phobias, panic disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder--this book gives kids and their parents successful strategies for achieving relaxation, conquering worries, challenging faulty thinking patterns, developing positive self-talk, and facing one's fears.



A new **Gifted Education Podcast** has been posted to the Prufrock Press Website. Below is an updated link to the podcast episodes in iTunes.

This podcast includes an interview with Dr. Bonnie Zucker, author of *Anxiety-Free Kids* (see book review above). In this interview, she discusses the topic of helping children who suffer from excessive anxiety. Dr. Zucker addresses questions such as:

- When do a child's anxieties cross the line from typical worries to an anxiety disorder?
- How do you know if your child suffers from anxiety?
- What can you do to help a child cope with anxieties?

Dr. Zucker is a clinical psychologist who conducts therapy with children and families in both her private practice and at the National Center for Phobias, Anxieties, and Depression in Washington D.C.

[Click this link to view a listing of all of Prufrock Press' Gifted Education Podcasts](#)

Looking for something to do this summer?

Come to our next guest speaker program on April 17th and pick up information on area summer camps and learning opportunities. Summer is a great time to explore interests and hobbies you don't have time for during the school year. Take a class in something you've always wanted to learn how to do, or go in depth in an area of special interest.

For middle school and high school students, this is a great time to build volunteer experience and explore career options. Stay close to home or see what's like to live on a college campus for a few days or even weeks away from home. **Garland ISD is also offering the PSAT/SAT Preparation Academy for students who register by May 1.**

Here are some other web sites to get you started.

Camp GISD (new addition this year is Camp Invention!) for students completing grades 1-5. http://www.garlandisd.net/departments/gifted_talented/index.asp

Science Place Summer Camps (Museum of Nature and Science) in Fair Park, Dallas. ages 4 – 12, older students can earn volunteer credit hours. www.natureandscience.org

Mad Science camps for grades K-6. www.madsciencedallas.com

SMU's Summer Youth Programs (at Legacy-in-Plano campus) offers one-week courses throughout the summer. http://www.smu.edu/continuing_education/youth/summerfun/

SMU's Talented and Gifted (TAG) Summer Program, a three-week residential camp for academically gifted and talented middle school students (completing grades 7-9). High School students may attend the College Experience 5-week residential program (CE) to further explore career interests. http://www.smu.edu/continuing_education/youth/tag/index.asp

iD Tech Camps offers summer computer camps for kids and teens ages 7-17 at SMU in Dallas, the University of Houston and UT Austin. Register online at www.internalDrive.com

"Shake Hands With Your Future" at Texas Tech University, an academic enrichment camp for gifted and talented children in grades 4-11, offering a variety of classes to promote career exploration, www.ideal.ode.ttu.edu

Children's Chorus of Greater Dallas Summer Singing Camp.

One week session for children entering grades 4-8, M-F, morning or afternoon. www.thechildrenschorus.com

Garland Civic Theater

One-week sessions for ages 8 - 16, M-F, 9 am - 4 pm. Campers learn acting skills, movement and theater techniques while stretching their imaginations. Camps will be at the Garland Civic Theatre (108 North Sixth Street) on the square in downtown Garland.

www.garlandcivictheatre.org

UTD Summer 2009 Chess Club

Registrations for the June and July camps are at <http://chess.utdallas.edu/camp.htm>
[View the UTD Chess Camp brochure](#)

Texas Lawmakers' Plan Would Replace Standardized Tests

By Eva-Marie Ayala

eyayala@star-telegram.com

FORT WORTH — Two Republican lawmakers plan to introduce legislation next week that would replace the state's current school accountability system based on annual standardized testing of students with one based on charting an individual student's progress over time.

Under the proposal by state Sen. Florence Shapiro of Plano and Rep. Rob Eissler of The Woodlands, schools would get an accreditation for students' progress. Campuses also could earn "distinctions for excellence" in areas including academics, work-force readiness, second-language learning, fine arts and physical fitness.

A district's financial integrity also would be tied to its accreditation, under the bill. The state would send early warnings to identify potential financial problems and share best practices among districts with similar size and student makeup.

Because the current system is based on annual passing rates, teachers spend most of their time with students "on the bubble" of passing, Shapiro said.

High performers and low performers do not get the attention they need, she said.

"We just send them on their way because we don't have time for them," she said.

Shapiro and Eissler presented highlights of their proposal to the Star-Telegram's editorial board Thursday.

Support for proposal

Many educators want the current accountability system changed to one that gives them credit for making progress. The Fort Worth district listed it as a top legislative priority. It's overdue, Fort Worth Trustee Judy Needham said Thursday.

She hopes the Shapiro-Eissler proposal includes removing the state's power to close schools, she said. Currently, schools that fail to meet acceptable academic standards after five years are either closed by the state or placed under alternative management.

Polytechnic High School is in its fourth year of being rated academically unacceptable.

"Poly is making growth. It's making progress," Needham said. "It's just not enough to meet the standards."

Marcelo Cavazos, the Arlington schools' deputy superintendent, said he hadn't seen Shapiro's and Eissler's bill, but said he thought that a growth model, which is another name for their concept, would provide the public with a better picture of what is going on at a school and whether instructional interventions are working.

A growth model "lets you see the progression toward passing, but also lets you see progression beyond passing. The current accountability model is just a snapshot of student performance," he said.

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Texas Lawmakers' Plan, cont.

The system, developed in the early 1990s, rates schools as exemplary, recognized, acceptable or unacceptable based on a formula involving student scores on tests and demographic factors.

College, work readiness

Shapiro and Eissler said their goal is to reduce the dropout rate and ensure that graduating seniors are ready for college or with necessary skills to enter the work force, the two said. A recent study found that out of 100 Texas ninth-graders, fewer than 14 went on to graduate from high school, and another study found about 20 percent of Texas college students are in remedial courses, Shapiro said.

"I don't know that we're treading water," she said. "We're drowning here."

They propose phasing the new system in over 10 years beginning with the 2011-12 school year

The proposal would create three different tracks for graduation:

A recommended diploma, which includes a requirement for four years of math and science. A career and technical track, which would allow students to take math and science classes related to career fields, such as animal sciences or engineering, which would count toward the required four years of math and science.

An alternate standard diploma that would allow students to take only three years of math with parental approval.

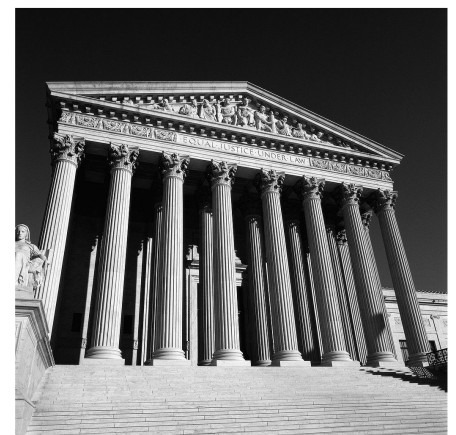
The proposal eliminates physical education as a high school requirement and allows high school students to select up to eight electives.

Senate OKs Cap in Top 10% Law

Reprint from the Dallas Morning News

State Sen. Florence Shapiro's bill that limits the top 10% law for automatic college admission to 60% of the incoming freshman class at State Universities was approved by the Senate and is moving to the house for approval.

Under the legislation, states universities could admit no more than 50% of students automatically based on class rank. Then, the next 10% would come from the top 10% students, but other factors like test scores and extracurricular activities would be considered. After that, universities would have total discretion on admissions.



Brainworks Camps Create Success

During the summer months, Brainworks “shifts gears” in both its schedule and scope of programs offered to students in grades 1-12. Using the same strategies that have made the Brainworks curriculum successful for 28 years (one-on-one peer tutoring, customized lesson plans for each individual student, and constant monitoring by certified teachers), students achieve intensive academic skill building, in addition to sharpening social and communication skills.



Gifted students who need enrichment outside of their regular classroom, students who have high potential but struggle to keep up academically, and students who need practice with social skills and positive behavior choices are all students who excel in the Brainworks curriculum.

To register for our summer camp, [please click here](#) to complete the forms and submit your deposit by May 15, 2009 for Session I and May 29, 2009 for Session II and Session III.

The incredible success of the Brainworks summer program is a result of several factors. First, each student is given an in-depth diagnostic evaluation, which includes assessments for twenty-six different processing skills. Results of the evaluation are used to create a customized learning plan tailored to the strengths and limitations of each child, including gifted and remedial curriculum. This individual plan allows for a compacting of curriculum, meaning that time is not wasted on skills the child has already mastered, but the focus is on those skills that present new challenges for the student.

Each lesson plan contains 16 different activities that the child completes in 15-minute segments throughout the day from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. This constant movement through the activities decreases the boredom often associated with longer study sessions and provides a chance for the child to work with different peer instructors every 30 minutes.

One-on-One Instruction

Certainly, one of the keys to Brainworks’ summer success is the individual attention given to each student. Each child receives one-on-one instruction throughout the day, which accelerates the learning process and allows the opportunity to build rapport with the student instructor. These instructors, who are gifted high school and college students, lead the child through their customized lesson plans. Not only does the child get individual attention from the student instructors (SIs), but certified teachers are also always monitoring the students’ progress and assisting the SIs.

At the end of the summer session, parents and students receive personal feedback on the academic and social achievement made by the students through post-testing, detailed progress reports, and parent conferences.

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Brainworks Camps, cont.

As the summer days fly by, the students quickly become comfortable with being members of the "Brainworks family." Indeed, students who initially might be resistant to giving up their "free time" to attend these summer sessions invariably discover that active learning and achieving **can** be more fun than staring at daytime television or playing endless rounds of video games!

Call Becky at 972-416-9410 for further information or to schedule testing. The results will determine your child's curriculum during the camp.

Less Stress on TAKS Results?

Reprint from the Dallas Morning News

Bills have been introduced to change approach towards standardized testing in elementary and middle schools, allowing districts to devise their own promotion standards, including TAKS results, course grades, and teacher recommendations.

Testing will continue in high school, where students would need to pass at least 2 of 3 end-of-course exams being developed in the four core subject areas.

House Public Education Committee Chair Rob Eissler, R-The Woodlands and Senate Education Committee Chairwoman Florence Shapiro, R-Plano are supporting these changes.

The bills would also eliminate the current performance ratings for schools and campuses - "academically acceptable", "recognized", etc.

Schools would be evaluated on students' test scores, dropout rates and financial integrity, and get one of three ratings: accredited, accredited-warned, and accredited-probation. Schools doing poorly for multiple years would lose their accreditation and state funding.



Keeping Your Child's Interest in Math Alive, K-12

Richard Rusczyk

Founder of The Art of Problem Solving (www.artofproblemsolving.com), which provides interactive online programs for avid math students. He is also a USA Mathematical Olympiad winner, Princeton graduate, director of the USA Mathematical Talent Search, and author of numerous math textbooks.

If your advanced math student doesn't want to show his or her work, try to get the teacher to give more challenging problems.

Many advanced learners understandably balk at showing their work on simple math problems. If they can get the answer by doing the work in their heads, it just seems like busy work to write down the steps for the teacher. But if they're given harder problems, they'll need to show their work for their own sake, in order to get the right answer. This will help them understand why it's important to be able to show their work for complex problems.

Parents should expose students to problem solving through math competitions as early as 3rd or 4th grade.

"The most important function of math instruction is to teach problem-solving skills. The actual math is secondary—it's the way of thinking that is so important." Too often the math curriculum emphasizes rote skills that can be performed better by a computer. As Richard succinctly states, the math curriculum "doesn't differentiate kids from machines, and kids will never be able to beat machines."

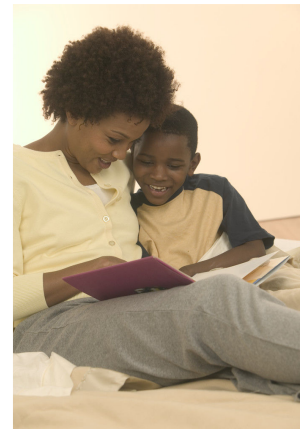
Generally, the first place kids are encouraged to think creatively in math is through competitions such as Math Olympiads for Elementary and Middle School (<http://www.moems.org/>) which advanced learners can tackle as early as 3rd or 4th grade. Competing in these contests requires young students to solve problems without a lot of advanced tools, and without using "textbook recipe solutions." Math competitions are available from elementary school through high school.

Richard notes that when he was at Princeton, many students who hadn't participated in math competitions—including those who graduated from strong academic high schools at the top of their class—dropped out of math and science classes because they weren't prepared for creative problem-solving challenges. Richard credits the problem-solving skills he learned in math competitions with making it easy for him to do well in all of his college classes, despite attending an average high school.

Enthusiasm for math needs to come from mom and dad.

People generally don't become elementary school teachers because they want to teach math. Usually they're more interested in, and enthusiastic about, teaching reading or art. Also, if teachers are afraid of math, kids pick that up. Particularly at the elementary school level, parents need to convey enthusiasm for math at home.

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Keeping Your Child's Interest in Math, cont.

Try to arrange for your advanced student to work on math independently during the school day, particularly in middle school and high school.

Richard suggests that you work with your school to see if your child can take the year-end math test at the beginning of the year. Students who get an A on that should be able to spend their time doing independent study at their level, rather than sitting through lessons on topics they've already mastered. This is particularly important as students get older and have less time outside of school for independent math study.

Rather than simply accelerating your child through the high school math curriculum, expose them to math outside the standard curriculum.

Okay, this tip doesn't come from our interview with Richard, but rather from an excellent article he wrote, "The Calculus Trap." Helping talented math students develop their abilities requires more than merely accelerating them through the high school math curriculum and then sending them to the local community college when they've exhausted their high school's offerings. "Developing a broader understanding of mathematics and problem solving forms a foundation upon which knowledge of advanced mathematical and scientific concepts can be built. Curricular classes do not prepare students for the leap from the usual 'one step and done' problems to multi-step, multi-discipline problems they will face later on."

(http://www.artofproblemsolving.com/Resources/AoPS_R_A_Calculus.php.)

Advanced math students need to work with other advanced students.

Richard also writes that, "Students of like interest and ability feed off of each other. They learn from each other; they challenge and inspire each other. Going from 'top student in my algebra class,' to 'top student in my [community] college calculus class,' is not a great improvement. Going from 'top student in my algebra class' to 'average student in my city's math club' is a huge step forward in your educational prospects. The student in the math club is going to grow by leaps, led by and encouraged by other students."



For more tips from mathematicians about keeping your advanced math student engaged and challenged (including fun and interesting math activities for car rides!), please go to www.LearningStrategiesCenter.com/resources.html