

The Community Advisory Committee for Gifted and Talented Education
cordially invites you to attend our bimonthly meeting featuring

Dr. Lori J. Flint

(Asst. Prof. of Education, Ashland University Ohio)

Topic: motivating our gifted students

Tuesday, April 24, 2007, 6:30 p.m.

Location: I.U.S.D. Administration Center, 5050 Barranca Parkway, Irvine

COORDINATOR'S MESSAGE

Spring has sprung, and with the changing of the clocks and the rebirth of nature, this time of year also brings to mind *testing!* High school juniors and seniors are preparing for the SAT and AP exams, while the majority of school-aged children will soon be preparing for standardized testing.

Perhaps you have noticed in general, the concept of test-taking has become a staple of the academic environment. In fact, most teachers across our nation have been more focused on testing now than ever before.

The reality is that this increase of testing is here to stay, at least for a few more years, until the educational pendulum starts to swing in the opposite direction. Tests do provide a measurement of a student's knowledge of a particular subject, and some students are actually motivated to learn material because of the end result of a test. There are students, however, who have what folks in the educational world diagnose as *test anxiety*. It is important for parents and educators to provide students with the tools to learn how to be successful test-takers, especially since the results oftentimes determine important decisions for our students' futures.

Test-taking strategies are skills that help individuals with having more success when completing tests. The next few paragraphs are geared for teachers and parents to help their students have more success with taking tests.

1) The most important strategy is changing one's attitude toward taking a test. When taking a test, try to control the nervousness and try to remain positive. Adjust the mind to relax by using 'self-talk' to encourage a more positive mindset. Self-talk is literally telling yourself positive ideas, such as, "I know this material" or "I can handle

these questions." This strategy will allow you to tap into your mental capacities.

2) Plan your test time appropriately. Before answering any questions, take a couple of minutes to look over the entire section of the test. This will help to gauge how much time you might need to spend on each question while allowing your mind time to adjust to the test, which will help to foster a calmer state of mind. If there are different points for different items or sections, plan to spend the most time on the items that count for the most points. Save time at the end of the exam to review your test and make sure you haven't left out any answers or parts of answers.

3) Learn how to pick out the easy and hard questions without answering them right away. Always answer the easier ones first. By leaving the more difficult questions for last, you will have more time to think about those questions without worrying about finishing the rest of the test. Also, in responding to the easier questions first, you have provided a warm-up for your brain.

4) Develop the stamina to concentrate and focus for the entire time you are taking the test. Teach yourself this skill over time. Discipline yourself to concentrate on other tasks for a set amount of time then increase the length of time required to stay focused.

5) When computing math problems, make sure you have copied the problem accurately from the booklet. Line up the place value correctly on your scratch paper and make sure you have copied the correct answer from your scratch sheet onto your answer form.

6) On reading comprehension sections, always read the questions first. By doing so, you will know the questions you need to

(Continued on next page)

answer as you read. This allows you to work more quickly on the test and often provides clues to other questions.

7) Skip over questions that seem difficult to answer. Make the decision to skip an item quickly, not after several minutes of attempting to answer. If you decide to skip over a question, place a small mark on the skipped item next to the number on the answer sheet. This will prevent you from answering the next item in the wrong answer space. (Always remember to erase these small marks before you hand in the test.)

8) On multiple-choice sections, read each possible answer before marking your choice. Many students read only the choices "A" or "B," assume one is correct, and immediately mark it without reading all choices. This is a serious mistake that test-makers are aware of when creating the tests.

9) Knowing how to appropriately bubble in answers is an important skill. Machines usually score the answer sheets for standardized tests. Even small stray marks will lower an individual's score.

10) Lastly, plan ahead by getting plenty of sleep and eating a nutritional breakfast with an abundance of protein.

Learning how to be a better test-taker is an important lifelong skill. Essentially, we are faced with tests every single day. Some tests are basic, like deciding what route to take to reach a specific destination. Other tests are more difficult, like how to manage time appropriately when there are obstacles that interfere with meeting an important deadline at work or school.

Next time you are faced with an important test, think about these strategies and try to relax.

Sincerely,

Beth L. Andrews

Beth L. Andrews



El Camino Real (soon to be Woodbury) Elementary School

Gail Cady, Barbara Reynolds, Ann Yates, and Jana Ziese

El Camino Real's program for gifted and talented students officially begins in the fourth grade; however, the needs of advanced students are being met in a variety of ways from Kindergarten on. Throughout the day and week, the GATE and high achieving students are grouped for language arts and math instruction which target their levels of instruction.

Reading and writing skills are first assessed at the beginning of the year and plans are made to improve each accordingly. Frequently GATE students are several grade levels above typical students. Some teachers choose to read a novel with the whole class but use tiered assignments and open-ended assessment techniques to encourage the advanced students to stretch and grow. Others adopt the leveled reader approach and run groups with advanced readers enjoying a novel with higher level vocabulary and a more complex plot. Either way, the reader's skills are polished and extended. In both types of programs, questioning is focused primarily on the critical thinking skills of synthesis, analysis, and evaluation for both discussion and written work. The writing component is frequently connected to reading, and social studies. GATE students are routinely expected to use a more advanced vocabulary and describe characters and events in greater detail.

Beginning in third grade, the students are introduced to WordMasters. The program encourages growth in vocabulary and verbal reasoning. Over 4,200 school teams from 50 states participated last year. Unlike other language arts contests, which emphasize grammar and punctuation, this competition addresses higher level word comprehension and logical thinking abilities which help students learn to think both analytically and metaphorically. The competition does this by challenging students to solve analogies based on relationships among words they have studied. The first test covers 25 words, the second test selects from 50 words, and by the third test the students have studied 75 words. Examples of fifth grade analogies are:

EXCITEMENT : QUENCH : _____ : _____
a. prison : escape / b. music : amplify / c. fire : douse / d. baby : cuddle / e. food : eat

BEAUTIFUL : HANDSOME : : SVELTE : _____
a. rotund / b. amplified / c. ugly / d. lean / e. attractive

All students may participate, but only the scores of the top ten students per grade level count officially as the team's score. After each meet, the students' names and scores are sent to the WordMasters headquarters. Students study connotation and denotation and use higher level thinking as they expand their vocabulary.

In math all students are introduced to the grade level concepts in a whole class setting. For some, the concepts maybe an introduction, while others may already have some experience from another grade or outside tutoring. Once it has been determined where the GATE student's capability lies, the teachers work for vocabulary fluency and accuracy in all forms of problem solving. More time is spent with interpreting verbal problems at a more complex level. While the grade level students review and practice computation skills, those with high level math skills can work on extending and deepening their grasp. Some of this is provided by computer programs that allow the students to work at their own pace. At other times there are pull-out groups working with an aide, parent volunteer, or the teacher. The Hands-on-Equations program begun during 4th grade opens the door for extending understanding in algebra. Once the students have learned how to solve linear equations and recognize them in word problems, the talented math students can be asked to create verbal problems that fit specific equations.

Another fantastic opportunity for GATE and high-achieving students who need something more comes through the Renzulli Learning System. These students are provided the opportunity to utilize a specialized on-line program called Renzulli Learning. The Renzulli Learning System matches a student's interests and learning styles to many different opportunities designed to provide enrichment and challenging learning. The student uses the Renzulli Profiler, a series of questions, to generate an individual profile. From there, an individualized enrichment program is created, matching student interests, learning styles and preferred modes of expression. Teachers can also tailor topic areas to deliver resources to support specific classroom curriculum in fun, engaging ways.

CAC-GATE Chairperson Message

By Martha Biemann

This year, CAC-GATE was able to award seven mini-grants, totaling approximately \$5,000.00, to classroom programs. These programs were based on the recommendations of a parent and teacher review group. The beneficiaries of these mini-grants included elementary, middle and high school-level classroom programs throughout the district. Application for the grants was open to all teachers in the district. The requests were judged based on their ability to enrich the education of GATE and/or APAAS students using differentiated instructional strategies.

I would like to congratulate the following schools and teachers for their successful proposals and commitment to excellence in teaching.

- Maureen Leong South Lake
- Craig Ritter Lakeside
- Kris Dayton Greentree
- Sue West & Kathie Wilhelm . . . Santiago Hills
- David Burke Stone Creek
- Eric Manchester Santiago Hills
- Henry J. Miller Sierra Vista

Choices and Challenges at Lakeside Middle School

By Stephanie Colby, GATE Coordinator



Ever since being founded in 1978, Lakeside Middle School has earned a stellar academic record. Part of this success is due to the fact that we think it's best to challenge all kids. We offer many enrichment opportunities within our regular school day as well as at lunch and after school. It's all part of living by our unofficial school motto, which is **"Doing What's Best for Kids."** For us that means not treating all students alike, but rather offering choices.

Enrichment Opportunities at Lakeside Middle School:

Creativity and curiosity are two hallmarks of the middle school student. For many students the middle school years are the last chance to sample areas of interest before moving on to the rigorous college prep track followed by students aiming for the best universities. Lakeside Middle School offers students chances to **explore and develop their special interests and talents**. Offerings include such things as:

- **Participation in National History Day.** We have close to 100 students participating. We have an outstanding record at the county and state level, and have had the honor of sending students on to compete at the national level. Last year out of the 31 Orange County students going to the state competition, 16 were from Lakeside!
- **Additional writing and art challenges such as Red Ribbon Week and the Holocaust Writing and Art Contest sponsored by Chapman University.** Our students have had the privilege to learn of history first-hand through meeting survivors of the Holocaust. We have had many finalists and four winners of \$500 prizes for the best art and writing in Southern California.
- **Academic Pentathlon.** Each year we field a team of 7th graders and a team of 8th graders for this challenging and fun endeavor. Students are coached by faculty volunteers and put in many hours preparing for the March competition. They compete in the areas of science, history, essay, literature and mathematics.
- **Extracurricular monthly book clubs and in-class literature circles.** Lakeside Book Club leaders choose six books each year. Students meet monthly to take a quiz and to discuss the themes of the works. Voluntary participation ranges from sixty to over one hundred students each month. The discussion circles are entirely led by student leaders.
- **Science Fair, Astounding Inventions, Toshiba Exploravision and the Sally Ride conference.** High achieving students are encouraged to participate in these events, which serve to prepare them for the challenges of the high school honors programs.
- **Instrumental and choral music classes.** We offer a full-range of music classes (including jazz band) and are well-represented in the district honors groups.
- **Partnerships with UCI** such as Career Day and Engineering Week.
- The opportunity to take high school classes (Spanish I and Geometry, with teacher recommendation) while in the 8th grade.
- A **full elective program** (with classes such as drama, art, ceramics, home arts, public speech and debate, media literacy, yearbook, journalism and law and society) enables students to investigate their unique interests and talents.
- Providing extra service to the school while **exploring possible future careers** by serving as web masters, media aides, office aides and teacher assistants.
- **Leadership** class enables students to develop confidence and to serve the school through planning events such as dances, trivia bowl, elections and spirit competitions.

- **National Junior Honor Society** provides opportunities for leadership and service, such as tutoring in our afternoon homework help sessions.

In core curriculum Lakeside places students in interdisciplinary language arts/social science classes. The goal is for teachers to keep their students for two years. In addition, students are assigned in such a way that the classes can meet for an extended "double-block" of time whenever desired. All students will write four "anchor essays" in English and three in history during the course of the year. Clusters of GATE/high achievers are placed in each block. Students will be regrouped according to ability to participate in special units such as literature lab. During "lit lab" a third teacher works with the teams to create smaller classes for the study of high-interest novels or short stories. Our goal is not only to develop the skills of literary analysis, but also to promote the love of reading.

The ability to take classes such as Algebra, Geometry and Spanish I puts our students in a perfect position to get on board with high school Honors and Advanced Placement courses. Math classes are grouped according to test results so that students' needs are met.

Our science program is highly interactive and challenges students to be independent thinkers and questioners. The team of five teachers works together to plan a comprehensive program that addresses all standards over a two-year period. Students are encouraged to become scientists, not just to read about science. Labs, hands-on projects and PowerPoint presentations are all part of the science experience at Lakeside Middle School.

Other arenas offer challenge as well. For example, our physical education teachers have developed units focused on twenty different sports/activities. Each year students experience ten. By the time the students leave Lakeside they will have had the opportunity to learn Frisbee golf and ping-pong and many other activities, as well as the more traditional sports. The PE program places great emphasis on personal fitness and healthy choices.

Lakeside also has implemented an electronic learning program called SuccessMaker from Pearson Digital Education Technologies. Although this program is aimed at struggling students, we sometimes find high-achieving students with "holes" in their basic skills. We are working to help our students remedy such deficits. We also offer an after school drop-in homework help program. Students receive help from high school and honor society tutors. A certificated staff member is also available to provide help.

The middle school years are truly a bridge between the more sheltered haven of elementary school and the bigger world of high school. Here at Lakeside we do our very best to always stay focused on our students as individuals. We challenge our students, but we also give them choices.

Although we are proud of our academic standing, we are more proud of the confident, happy and enthusiastic students we send on to high school. Our alumni look back with great fondness on their Lakeside Middle School years. Wonderful parents, awesome students and dedicated staff members who go the extra mile in "Doing What's Best for Kids" are the true ingredients of our success.



Sierra Vista GATE

Sierra Vista's GATE and Honors students have numerous opportunities to stretch themselves academically and creatively. Focused on providing the highest quality and balanced education possible, the staff works diligently in developing learning experiences designed to prepare students for the possibilities that the future holds.

Mr. Clark's 8th grade U.S. History class wrapped up its study of the Constitution by arguing cases before the "Supreme Court" of the United States. Students were divided into legal teams and assigned to argue an actual case that appeared before the court. They were instructed to thoroughly research their cases and develop their own arguments using their knowledge of the Constitution. The class acted as the Supreme Court and issued a ruling on each case. As a follow-up activity, students were required to write a formal legal opinion on one of the cases presented in class.

The next project for these students will be a historical re-creation of the 1845 debate in Congress concerning the annexation of Texas. Students will be assigned roles of Congressmen who held positions either in favor or against adding Texas to the Union. In order to complete this activity, they will have to have a thorough understanding of "Manifest Destiny" and other issues dividing our country during this period of history.

Mrs. Crowley and Mrs. Ralston's history students, in culminating their study of Samurai/Feudal Japan unit, provided oral presentations on a myriad of topics; such as the Tea Ceremony, or baseball, or Sumo wrestlers. The students' posters were prominently displayed in the Media Center to share with others.

In March, the students began their study of Medieval Europe. During this unit, students designed an individual medieval coat of arms complete with Latin mottos. These coats of arms will prove to be important representatives for families to treasure for years to come. For literature, the students were exposed to Chaucer's Canterbury Tales to deepen their understanding of the era. Our next stop on this literary journey will take us to England where we will spend some time with the Bard of Avon, otherwise known as Shakespeare.

In motivating our gifted students, Sierra Vista invites all students to test their academic strengths through friendly competition. When students use their abilities in competitive environments, they are challenged academically, as well as provided the opportunity to develop leadership and collaborative skills. Two such competitions are MathCounts and WordMasters.

In February, the Sierra Vista MathCounts team, coached by Mr. Zuercher, battled valiantly against eighteen other teams from Orange County Middle schools and came in 4th place! The team, Sara Kim, Ninad More, Aaron Harris, and Steven Chen, earned our school a beautiful glittering, triangular hardware piece to display proudly in our trophy case. One of the team members, Ninad More, finished 11th overall out of all the competitors, and earned himself a spot as an individual competitor in the state competition. The dedication of the MathCounts team in preparing for this competition truly paid off.

Sierra Vista is also very proud of the accomplishments our GATE students have achieved in this year's WordMasters competition, an annual language arts competition entered by over 240,000 students nationally. Through the WordMasters competition, and instruction by Mrs. Crowley, Mrs. Ralston, and Miss Turner, students need to analyze high level vocabulary and think critically as they study the relationships between words. Sierra Vista's students have been successfully competing at the "gold" level, the most challenging level available. At this time the students are busily preparing for their second competition for this year.

With the age of technology, Sierra Vista's Video Production class, taught by Kris Linville and Carlo Grasso, provides students with the experience and training in directing, editing, and reporting. Students produce six videos that air throughout the school. Each

video runs three to five minutes and is written, produced, directed, edited and filmed solely by the students. The next Steven Spielberg could be one of these gifted videographers.


Sierra Vista's gifted musicians, under the guidance of Henry Miller, are offered five different courses. Two courses, Symphonic Band and Chamber Orchestra, are designed for the highest caliber of musicians interested in performing the most challenging music available to middle school students. This year, fifty-two Sierra Vista students were selected to play in the IUSD Middle School Honor Band and Orchestra, and nineteen participated in the All-Southern California Honor groups.

Adding to our musically talented students with guitar, chorus, and musical theater classes is Rebekah Scott. Mrs. Scott's vocalists demonstrate their musicianship in performances and learn a variety of authentic musical literature including Classical, Folk, Spiritual, Broadway, Patriotic and Foreign Language.

The musical theatrically gifted students, just completed their outstanding production of *Once Upon A Mattress*.

The Honors Chorus and Honors Instrumental students were able to fully demonstrate their talents at the annual Irvine Unified Honor's performances held in March.

Sierra Vista's GATE and Honors program provides for students with academically challenging curriculum that includes competitive avenues as well as depth and complexity within and across the disciplines. Creatively gifted students are able to excel with video production, instrumental performance, and/or dramatic output. Sierra Vista provides a balanced program for all of our students.



Westpark APAAS

By Kristin Farnsworth

Westpark's fourth grade APAAS is moving right along. Students continue to progress and adjust to the new schedule, expectations and challenges. We are currently rounding out the introduction of fractions, which were examined through the Rational Number Project and hands-on activities. Students continue to fully understand concepts and practice writing for math skills when explanation of problems solving is required of them on a weekly basis.

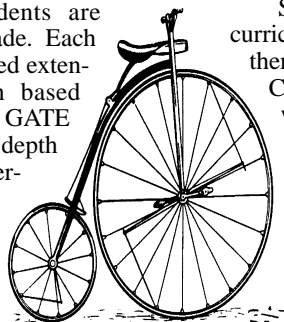
Writing skills also bridge into the personal narrative/summary-like journal writing that is completed on a daily basis while reading *By the Great Horn Spoon!* Students are continuously developing their multi-paragraph response to literature writing skills at the completion of each novel study. Other writing concepts consistently developed and practiced are narratives, summaries, informational reports, essays, etc. Informational reports on both Native Californian tribes and California Missions have been completed thus far. Students are anxiously awaiting their assignment of counties for the upcoming California County report.

Coinciding with our novel study and continuous development of writing skills is the study and simulation of the Gold Rush. The exciting simulation allows for students to experience life and adventure in a frontier mining camp. Students learn about gold and gold rushes through lecture and reading assignments, and learn how to outline material and take notes while improving their listening skills. As members of mining teams, students must overcome common obstacles miners faced as well as make group decisions. Cooperation and high-level thinking skills are required to be successful in gaining important knowledge and experience a challenging, but successful outcome. A fourth grade Gold Rush Day is enjoyed by all in after the spring break.

Northwood GATE Activities

By Dr. Lydia Wells

At Northwood Elementary the GATE students are clustered into classes in the 4th, 5th and 6th grade. Each teacher who teaches a GATE cluster class has received extensive training in differentiated instruction, brain based learning and higher level thinking skills. Within the GATE cluster classes GATE students participate in in-depth projects and other assignments to broaden their understanding of concepts and topics. In addition, GATE students participate in a GATE Science Enrichment Program. The program design is on a three year cycle. The first year, students participate in the study of the ocean and life at sea. They culminate their unit of study with a trip on the Spirit of Dana Point where they participate in life at sea in the 1800's. During the second year students narrow their focus to the study of animal sea life. At the end of their study students take a trip to the tide pools and marine museum. In the third year students once again narrow their focus of study to whales. Upon completion of their study students go whale watching and to the Long Beach Aquarium. GATE students share their knowledge with all Northwood students by presenting lessons to classes, participating in assemblies, submitting reports for library checkout and sponsoring Science Field Day. Other activities GATE students participate in are "A Day at College" at UCLA and USC.



By Aric and Ryan

We have done many things in the GATE class here at Northwood Elementary. The GATE class has experienced a great time with Mr. Watson so far. He teaches us tons about the marine ecology and keeps it fun. Mr. Watson includes several activities for us to do in our lesson plan. He even used to teach at Northwood years ago. The purpose of the class is to teach us, the leaders of the future, to care about the environment and make a difference for the future.

Some of the activities we've done with Mr. Watson, include whale watching, going to Doheny Beach, and we'll be experiencing the reenactment of life on a whaling ship in the 1800's. Before we go on any of these special field trips Mr. Watson tells us about the sight which we will visit.

For the whaling ship trip we will be expected to speak some of the sailor language of the 1800's. Some of those words are "Aye aye which means yes, avast means stop, port means the left side of the boat, starboard means the right side of the boat, green hands means the newbies whom everyone picked on, and skipper means the second person in charge below only the captain." The people posing as sailors from the past will test us on this and how well we obey orders. We will also be singing some sailor shanties such as "John Kanaka," "Gloucester Girls," and "Leave her Johnny."

In conclusion, Mr. Watson has shown us how much the environment has suffered and how we can make a difference for future generations. There is still a chance to fix the wrong that has been done. It will take the cooperation of many people around the world and the power and vision of a cleaner, better world. The light at the end of the tunnel is only a pin point now, but the journey toward a better world will be worth the efforts we make today. Mrs. Watson could give his challenging and thought provoking program at your school, too!

Fourth Grade Gate

This has been a busy year for the fourth grade GATE students at Northwood Elementary. The students are currently working in their WordlyWise booklets to further increase and expand their vocabulary and comprehension. Additionally, some of the students are participating in an unofficial monthly contest to see who can read the most pages each month from their Reading Counts lists.

Since California history is the focus of our Social Studies curriculum, the students have been busy studying California both thematically and in-depth. They began the year designing a California brochure. Their assignment: to pretend that they worked for an advertising agency and their job was to design a brochure of California that highlighted the state's economy, various physical regions, its major cities, and popular geographical landforms and tourist attractions.

The second trimester focused on the Spanish period of California history. Students have just completed a research report on one of the 21 California missions. In that report, each GATE student was required to summarize the purpose for Spain's establishment of the missions, compare and contrast how their mission was unique and different from the others. Additionally, the students also put together/or created a replica of their mission to hand in along with their reports.

As you can see, these students have been hard at work all year long. It's been a pleasure working with them.

Fifth Grade GATE

Our fifth grade gate students have been stepping back in time to write a newspaper from the time of the American Revolution. "The Revolutionary Times" covers the accomplishments and contributions of Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, Paul Revere, John Adams and George Washington. Students also wrote their own screen play for a well-loved novel, *Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell. Students participate in the WordlyWise Level 3 vocabulary program, but also contribute to their classmate's bi-weekly Wordly Wise 2 Word War. Our students have been participating in the Science Days with Mr. Watson, and soon will be reading two novels *The Great Wheel* and *The Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*. Students will compare and contrast the immigrant experiences of the two cultures represented in these novels. One of our students is a "guest scholar" in the sixth grade math class.

Sixth Grade GATE

By Jenny Lee and Joanne Oh

Here at Northwood Elementary, we do a variety of activities from math to social studies, which are all fun to do. They all help increase our knowledge.

For social studies, the GATE students prepare power point presentations to help our class study for upcoming tests. In this process, we need to use our creative ideas to make the power points more appealing to the eye. We also must do a good job of picking out the most important information to prepare us for the test.

In math, we take a pretest each chapter to see if we are in the wizards or magicians group. Each group is assigned work to help them advance in their skills. For example, we had to decide the cheapest way to build a bookcase. It was complicated because there were many ways to purchase the wood and to cut the shelf. Our class also designed a "mosaic tile" wall using only a straight edge and compass. Our latest project was to design paper quilts to demonstrate symmetry, congruence through translations, reflections, and rotations of that shape.

We have also read several novels this year which increases our comprehension and vocabulary skills. For our independent novel, we each selected what we wanted to read and our teacher gave us a packet to go with that novel.

Overall, GATE for the sixth graders was very helpful for preparing us for middle school by teaching us to think for ourselves and to be responsible. Since middle school will be a challenge, these skills will come in handy.

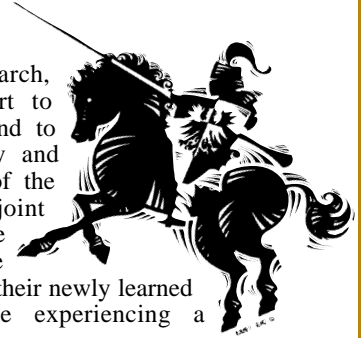
A View of VENADO

By Julie Campbell

Clearly focused on providing the highest quality education possible, the GATE staff at Venado works diligently to develop curricula that meet the special needs of our bright, gifted students. Seeing that California standards need to be the foundation for the skills to be taught, we have designed our language arts and social science classes to offer the acceleration, the depth, complexity and novelty so necessary for a viable, dynamic GATE program. The mission of Venado's GATE program is to have our students experience positive, accelerated academic growth in a nurturing environment and to facilitate an easy transition from the middle school gifted program into the high school honors classes. At our site we homogeneously group the students into a two-year program taught by integrated language arts and social science teams.

In the 7th grade, our focus is world history and literature. The language arts teacher, Julie Campbell, starts the year with studies in the classical literature of the Greeks and Romans, interwoven with the Fall Frolics writing project, in order to teach figurative language and literary elements. *Tales from the Arabian Nights* later complements the social science curriculum and incorporates story telling with narrative and persuasive writing. Soon after, an interactive Bestseller's simulation begins. Students get a glimpse of the business world as they fervently write persuasive business letters, interview as book agents, and promote novels using persuasive speaking techniques. Following winter break, *The Samurai's Tale* is read and discussed, then analyzed through essay writing and an illustrated timeline, and celebrated with haikus. The scene changes once again to the medieval world of ballads, a coat of arms, and tales of King Arthur. Next, the students are introduced to the Renaissance era and the study of the Elizabethan language and Shakespeare with the reading of *Julius Caesar*. Finally, 7th grade language arts culminates with the reading of *Animal Farm* and a "World" simulation in which students create fanciful countries complete with constitutions, flags, and national anthems. Next door, Trish Wimbrow, the 7th grade social science teacher, excites her students by cleverly incorporating those needed enrichment activities with the state standards to maintain interest and to provide maximum learning. Students participate in a "bead" economy, which integrates the life skills of earning salaries and paying rent, utilities, and taxes into classroom management. Cultural universals are woven into curriculum through the studies of the Middle East, Africa, the Far East, and Europe to connect the commonalities. During their journeys through the various sections of the world, students engage in role-playing, mind

mapping, simulations, research, group presentations, and art to accelerate further learning and to provide that needed novelty and complexity. The highlight of the seventh grade year is a joint language arts/social science field trip to the Renaissance Faire where students practice their newly learned Elizabethan language while experiencing a realistic historical period.



The classrooms of Joan Dann, 8th grade language arts, and Roger Walden, 8th grade social science, are also places where learning and laughter can be observed regularly. Language arts centers on an appreciation for American literature with discussion and analysis of works by Ben Franklin, Thomas Paine, Washington Irving, Emerson, Thoreau, Lincoln, Twain, and O. Henry, to name a few. In addition, students are exposed to the timeless poetic skills of Poe, Longfellow, Whitman, Dickenson, Frost, and Sandburg. Writing also becomes a central focus of study, as various essays of persuasion, exposition, and analysis are required. In social science, Mr. Walden begins his year with an in-depth study of our constitution. Later, as the Industrial Revolution is discussed, students build their own factories and learn valuable information about labor, resources, costs, and financial planning. Then as the Civil War study begins, the John Brown Trial goes into full swing. Debates, position papers, and much more become a vital part of this energy-packed unit of study. The year ends with the VOTES simulation. Working in conjunction with Mrs. Dann, Mr. Walden places students into four political parties and sets up a truly thrilling simulation that allows students to become familiar with the election process as they debate the issues, write position papers, perform rallies, and encourage students to vote.

Mixed in with our rich, challenging curriculum, we have included heavy doses of laughter, compassion, and concern. We are so proud of our students who daily demonstrate a zeal for learning and give us so many reasons to smile each day. We consider ourselves fortunate to be able to teach such outstanding students.

Join us for more information at the GATE parent night scheduled for Monday, April 30th at 6:00 P.M. You will have the opportunity to meet the GATE staff, as well as some of our students, and to learn about our special summer school class, entitled Introduction to GATE, offered to all in-coming Venado GATE students.



GATE ENRICHMENT DAY

Mark your calendars!

Monday, October 15, 2007

Flyers will be mailed to homes of GATE and APAAS students in grades 4-6.

GATE at Greentree

By Kris Dayton



The Greentree GATE students recently had the opportunity to take our school wide art program to a new and different level. Our 4th, 5th, and 6th grade GATE students participated in one of Disneyland's Youth Education Series (Y.E.S.) programs called *Animation Magic* where they were introduced to the very old art form of animation. The students took part in a three-hour program led and taught by two wonderful Disney facilitators. During Disney's *Animation Magic*, students learned how animators use character development, the animation pipeline, and storyboarding to help design and create a story for an animated feature. Students learned about the history, creativity and innovation of the animation process and how the vision of Walt Disney influenced the history of animation. The students enjoyed a drawing session with a Disney artist where they applied simple geometric shapes and proportions to the task of creating animated Disney characters. They created early animation devices using their own creative individual art work. Students were divided into competitive groups to plan and design their own storyboard cartoon and pitch their ideas to an audience. It was a fun filled and educational day!

All GATE students participate in computerized math enrichment programs as well as the Scholastic Reading Counts program. Our library has purchased several great books, which meet the Lexile needs of our advanced readers. A variety of leadership and extra credit opportunities across the curriculum are offered throughout the year to challenge and enrich the learning experience of our GATE clusters across the grade levels.

In sixth grade, our students are writing creative short stories so they may have the opportunity to have their stories published in the 2008 edition of the *Anthology of Short Stories* by Young Americans. The students' story topics include; A curse that overcomes a village and only children can solve the mystery of this curse, an African family that is dealing with the death of the mother due to the aids epidemic, a child's memory loss, a dysfunctional time machine, and other interesting and creative ideas. Sixth graders also read *Shipwreck at the Bottom of the World*, the true story of Sir Ernest Shackleton and his grueling adventure through the Antarctic. After completion of the book, they were treated to a presentation by Mike Godfrey who experienced a sailing adventure that followed a similar course to that of Sir Shackleton. He presented slides, pictures and a first hand account of his adventure to tie in with the story.

In fifth grade our parents are given an overview of the year's activities for their GATE child at parent conferences. One of the described projects is the Historical American Leader presentation. Each child is assigned a complex research question comparing fictional and non-fictional story accounts of their assigned Colonial leader. On the presentation day, the students are dressed as their famous person and lead their group as they dramatically read (in first person) to an audience of students and parents. Fifth graders are working hard this year to publish the monthly GATE GAZETTE magazine. This group meets weekly with the help of a parent volunteer. They include such things as current events, student of the month, interviews with teachers and students, book reviews, interesting facts in history, creative writing, cartoons, etc.

Another popular project our fifth grade enjoys is corresponding with scientists and engineers in the commercial satellite industry. Through their research and correspondence, our GATE students teach their peers, using posters and presentations, about the satellite industry. They have the opportunity to watch launches via internet. The project ends with a visit from one of the engineers for a PowerPoint presentation and a question and answer session.

Fourth grade is also very busy with a differentiated program which is embedded in many areas with opportunities for students to explore ideas in depth and with varied degrees of complexity. The students worked very hard on their research projects learning about the California Indian tribes in different regions of the state. Their projects included an oral presentation of their information, complete with wonderfully created posters for visual aides. The students also took their information to share with other classes at lower grade levels. This gives our primary students a glimpse of what they have to look forward to in upper grade GATE clusters. The students are challenged weekly word problems that enhance their critical and analytical thinking skills.

Greentree students look forward to another stimulating year of creativity and scholarship. Our parent group is encouraged to review the hall bulletin boards reserved for GATE activities and displays in all grade levels. Additionally, throughout the year various leadership opportunities will continue to be offered to challenge and enrich the learning experience of each GATE student.

