

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

## Myron H. Dembo, Ph.D.

Topic: What Parents Need to Know About School Success

*Tuesday, January 27, 2009, 6:30 p.m.*

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

### COORDINATOR'S MESSAGE

It's difficult to believe that four months have already passed since we welcomed in the 08-09 school year. Since the last GATER, much has happened in the world of gifted education for our Irvine community, and we're only at the halfway point.

Each year, CAC-GATE provides mini-grants for teachers to purchase supplemental materials for their gifted programs. This year, several teachers were able to benefit from CAC-GATE's generosity. Some teachers were able to purchase Junior Great Books to help extend the depth of students' reading skills with advanced levels of inquiry. Other materials purchased include technology, advanced literature, and supplemental materials for higher-level learning skills. Adding to CAC-GATE's grants, the GATE Department funded several teachers' requests for additional materials to layer the learning for their GATE students.

On October 25th, OCC-GATE held its annual conference at UCI. Several Irvine teachers spent the day attending outstanding workshops, presentations, and sessions on differentiated instruction by experts in the field. Dr. Sandra Kaplan, the guru of gifted education in California, was the Keynote speaker with her address on "A Layered Curriculum: 8 Approaches to Differentiation." Dr. Kaplan also presented on the topic of "Gifted Middle School Student Dropouts: Socializing the Gifted to Their Giftedness" and "New Directions to Differentiate: Activating Gifted Students and Their Teacher's Potential." Dr. Myron Dembo spoke on the topic of "Tackling Underachievement." Irvine's parents were able to participate in the parent strand, which offered sessions on living

with and parenting gifted kids. If you were unable to attend this conference, you might want to attend CAG's (California Association for Gifted) conference held in Anaheim on February 13-15. A parent strand will be offered throughout the conference, with a full schedule specifically for parents on Sunday.

Our gifted programs are as strong as the teachers guiding the lessons; therefore, IUSD's GATE Department will be providing GATE funds to offset the registration fees for Irvine's teachers to attend CAG's conference. The conference is a wonderful opportunity for teachers to broaden their understanding of gifted children. Attending various presentations offers the chance to learn more about the strategies and tools that challenge our highly-able students. More information regarding CAG's conference can be found at [www.cagifted.org](http://www.cagifted.org).

Classrooms at Santiago Hills, Woodbury Elementary School, and Venado Middle School will open their doors to teachers and administrators attending the CAG pre-conference. Our teachers will demonstrate differentiated instruction taking place in both cluster groups and APAAS classes at several grade levels. We are proud and excited to be able to serve as a model of quality gifted education.

Sincerely,



Beth L. Andrews

# Rancho San Joaquin Middle School: Adventures in Learning

## RANCHO'S HUMANITIES 7TH GATE HIGHLIGHTS

What could be more adventurous than battling the elements to cross a desert, trying to survive the plague and creating your own Utopia on an imaginary island off of New Zealand based on the teachings of Sir Thomas More, 7th grade GATE classes at Rancho have the rare opportunity to travel back in time to the 500's, moving towards the late 1700's.



Reading historical novels such as *Shadow Spinner*, *Anna of Byzantium* and *Jackaroo* just to name three, complement this year of study, and help to engage students with the literature and history through a variety of art activities and simulations: the Black Death or Plague; the always stimulating Warlords of Japan; forming of Guilds of the Middle Ages; Medieval journalists practicing interviewing, editorializing and producing a newspaper; and the "Meeting of the (Great Medieval/Renaissance) Minds." The round table medieval banquet allows students to dress in costume for the famous personage about whom they researched and share the information over a feast of foods from around the world. The Black Death simulations allowed students to physically see through a secret plague victim how the epidemic could be spread throughout the community. Students also participate in an intense, long term, research project called National History Day; in which Rancho students' research then produce media projects demonstrating their understanding of the yearly theme. Each year Rancho students excel at the county level and many go on to represent the school at state.

Last year, Rancho's 7th and 8th grade Gold WordMaster teams won high honors in the nationwide analogy program.

**All activities and classroom instruction are geared towards exciting the students about the curriculum, reinforcing good work habits, outlining, study strategies, time management, and organization, while expanding essay writing and research skills.**

- Kay Gee, David Kingsbury and Kate Leavey



## SPOTLIGHT ON RANCHO'S HUMANITIES 8TH GATE

Rancho's energetic and dedicated GATE team have developed, and continue to develop, a curriculum that is both challenging and rewarding in order to prepare our students for their high school careers. Our curriculum concentrates on a thorough exploration and integration of the California Language Arts and History/Social Science content standards. Also emphasized are higher-level writing abilities, enriched vocabulary skills, critical thinking, and developing presentation techniques.

Using the vehicle of United States history, our students explore not only what happened, but why. Rebellions, revolution, development of governmental systems, citizenship, exploration, industrialization, immigration, interaction with other cultures – all are vital facets of the developing nation. 8th grade students also participate in the National History Day research and media project, continuing in a second year, the important skills of researching, writing and demonstrating understanding of history and making connections.

Through literature and both written and oral communication, students enhance their ability to think creatively and responsibly and then to relate their conclusions and ideas to others via writing and presentations.

All instruction is student focused to encourage a love of learning as well as excellent work and study habits. To be a part of the development of our next generation of thinkers, dreamers, and leaders is both a privilege and an honor.

-Shannon Van Dam, Dee McKay and Christine Alfonso

## Deerfield School APAAS Program



By Kathy Larson, Linda Heath, and Cheryl Yoon

The APAAS students at Deerfield are off to a flying start this 2008-2009 school year! Deerfield fourth grade APAAS students have adjusted well to a more rigorous academic program. They have learned to schedule their time and organize their lives to meet deadlines. Deerfield fourth grade APAAS students have been learning to write a multi-paragraph essay, as well as write narratives, responses to literature,

expository essays, poems, and informational reports. These students have learned to cite sources and use a variety of materials as an aid to their writing. Each student has already researched and reported on a California Native American tribe and on a California mission.

We will begin an exciting unit on the California Gold Rush, which will culminate with Gold Rush Day scheduled for March 2009. Through the use of simulations, arts and crafts, writing activities, and multiple resources, California history comes alive for each student.

Deerfield's fourth grade APAAS students are learning about the genres of realistic fiction, mystery, poetry, fantasy, folklore, fables, historical fiction, and biographies. Each student will be studying books and stories in these genres with depth and complexity. As they read, they are looking for common themes and literary devices throughout the literature. Students are working on writing their own book, complete with illustrations. These books will be bound and ready in May.

Every Deerfield fourth grade APAAS student has extensive exposure to computer use, which includes Internet research, cyberhunts and simulations, Power Point, Excel, Publisher, and Geo Buddies (via email) with Eastshore's fourth grade APAAS class. The students are very excited about our class blog! Student poems, creative writing, and essays are continuously posted to the class blog. Fourth grade APAAS students are invited to read each piece of work and then post their comments. Our class also has their own wiki on the Internet. From home, individual students are able to contribute their work to the wiki as part of a group assignment. They are then able to edit and improve their group's work to create a final product.

In June, Deerfield's fourth and fifth grade APAAS students will hold Box City. This economic unit provides real life, hands-on experience in planning and running a business. All Deerfield classes will be invited to visit and shop in the "city." Box City culminates with a parent and family night.

The Deerfield fifth grade APAAS class has completed their first trimester. They have gotten off to a fast start and are working hard already in the second trimester. They have adjusted to new scheduling and new methods of addressing classroom organization, and have become involved in various activities that will help them grow as individuals.

One method for personal growth that was introduced at the beginning of the year was the study of manners. Students began by learning about proper introductions which included rules for hand shakes. Each of these were practiced in the community and signed off by parents as having been successfully done. Students also composed thank you notes and learned about proper telephone etiquette. A culminating event for our manners study was at our Thanksgiving feast where students were able to example what they had learned. Gentlemen held chairs for ladies, and few elbows were seen on tables. All of this information helped develop in our fifth graders a confidence in themselves.

## Eastshore Elementary Dolphins



By Sheila Claybourn

Teachers at Eastshore are designing engaging learning environments for our gifted and high achieving students. Students are encouraged to build upon core curriculum through activities which satisfy their need for novelty, acceleration and depth and complexity. Our teachers work together to provide enrichment groups. Students choose from a variety of topics which include French, cooking, a school newspaper, needlework and animation.

Learning another language is one way to learn from a different perspective and creates opportunities for discussions about culture, art and geography. Discovering a new language often stimulates further study and research. Kid's creativity finds expression when studying animation. Simple activities like making a flip book on how a ball bounces also teaches science concepts about gravity and physics. Cooking classes provide opportunities to apply math concepts when measuring and science concepts in chemistry. While making cookies, pancakes, and waffles students explore the chemical reactions that take place before eating these delicious treats. Needlework provides students opportunities to explore application and creative solutions to embroidery designs on paper. Geometry and detailed patterns extend math curriculum beyond the traditional paper pencil activity. The journalism group writes a school newspaper which often leads to in-depth research using the internet and other reference materials as additional ways of expressing new understanding. Here's a quote from the journalism group describing what they have accomplished this year thus far, written by our students.

“The journalism group made a school newspaper which required a little research, so they conducted research! There is also the Sports section, where the duo researched about the Lakers’ history. The kids made an advice corner, a puzzle division and comics section. All of these were inside the entertainment part. The newspaper team also interviewed Eastshore employees, like the lunch lady, Ms. Alene; Mrs. Naramore, a fourth grade teacher; and Mrs. Kadam, our principal.”

Eastshore Dolphin’s learn the language of each discipline which will prepare them for the academic life ahead of them. Our kids love enrichment activities provided with the whole class literature selection as well as delving into novel discussion in small literature circles using above grade level trade books. Curriculum such as Wordly Wise help develop vocabulary and essay response in the area of science and social studies and math skills require students to synthesize their learning. Math concepts are “stretched” into complex math simulations solving real world problems. Students observe trends, discuss multiple perspectives, and search for the unanswered questions. Eastshore is a learning community that strives to develop ethical sensitivity by promoting the awareness of respect, integrity and responsibility through our school wide R.I.R program. Serving the school community by participating in student government and organizing community efforts such as our recycling program, school spirit and gathering food for those in need are all ways our kids can experience problem solving. We are proud of the leadership our GATE and APAAS kids bring to our school.

## Woodbury Elementary - “Where Everybody’s Somebody”

By Barbara Reynolds



At Woodbury, our gifted students are cluster grouped with teachers who have either completed a program or are working to complete a program on meeting the learning needs and speeds of the children with high potential. Whenever possible, grade level teams bring these students together for higher level skill instruction and to examine concepts with greater depth. The Reading to Instruct (RtI) is one instructional program that does this nicely. The above grade level readers are group for an hour each day, and reading materials that extend their skills and thinking are used.

Mrs. Emmie Miller, a second grade teacher, works with the challenge group. “When I’m working with the high achievers and potential GATE students, I have some challenging vocabulary activities that I do with them. Since there is a direct link between vocabulary knowledge and comprehension, we spend an entire lesson working on vocabulary when it is introduced. We play a game called HOT SEAT where one student sits in a chair with their back to the board. The teacher or a student writes one of the vocab words on the board. The rest of the class has to use synonyms for the word or one word clues to help the person in the HOT SEAT guess the correct word. They only get three tries. This is sometimes very difficult depending on the words and definitely stretches them to come up with enough synonyms. Another challenging activity that I do is have them use their vocabulary words in sentences with a set number of words. For example, write a 7 word sentence using the vocab word. We progress to longer and longer sentences. I add location of the word within the sentence as well to step up the difficulty. (Write a 9 word sentence with the third word being the vocab word). I do this both orally and in written format.”

In fourth, fifth and sixth grades RtI program, the Junior Great Books Curriculum is being used to challenge gifted students as they develop strong language arts skills. The Junior Great Books Curriculum supplements core curriculum to enhance reading instruction and meet the instructional needs of our high achieving students. What is unique about the Junior Great Books program is its distinct emphasis on critical thinking skills and verbal expression. Through the curriculum, students develop reading comprehension and listening and speaking skills as they read challenging, thought-provoking stories. Students engage in reading, questioning and interpreting meaning from stories read and participate in what is called Shared Inquiry Discussions. Through Shared Inquiry Discussions the teacher guides students to work together to analyze character actions, draw inferences and extract important details as they grapple with discovering the meaning in each story. Students are highly motivated by Junior Great Books and work extensively with each other and the text as they practice active reading and reasoning skills.

Another vocabulary and critical thinking program used in fourth through sixth grades is The WordMasters Challenge, which is a fun and mind-stretching classroom competition for language arts students in grades 3 – 12. This competition addresses higher-level word-comprehension and logical abilities which help students learn to think both analytically and metaphorically. The competition does this in two ways: 1.) It challenges students to solve analogies based on relationships among words they have learned, and 2.) It draws these analogies from special vocabulary lists, which students have multiple weeks to study before each meet. In October, the first 25 words arrive for study. All definitions, related forms of the words, and parts of speech are learned. The different types of analogies are studied. Relationships between the words are discussed. Finally a test in analogy format is taken. This happens three times a year so by the third test seventy-five words are in the mix. All students at a grade level take the test, but only the scores of the top ten students count officially as the team’s score. After each meet, the students’ names and scores are sent to the WordMasters Headquarters. The administrators of WordMasters, in turn, send a report revealing the national median team score and other statistics for the contest. The report also announces the names of the ten highest-scoring schools and individuals nationwide. After all three meets, cumulative statistics are published. Our goal is to be listed in the top ten. Last year’s sixth graders reached that goal twice. This year’s group is out to beat that record.

## Differentiating Instruction for Our Students

By Barbora Stejskalova  
Sixth Grade Teacher – University Park  
Elementary School



Differentiating instruction to meet the needs of each student is a high priority at University Park where a very diverse student population exists. This year we have taken a considerable leap in differentiating our instruction to meet the needs of our students by implementing the RTI model for our English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum at all grade levels. The purpose of this program is to deliver instruction to every child based on his or her need. All GATE students are placed in a group with other high achieving readers for a portion of daily ELA time. These students are taught grade level reading standards through high level reading materials such as Junior Great Books or novels. Smaller and more homogenized ability groups allow teachers to accelerate instruction, delve into more complex analysis and deepen student understanding of literary themes.

In addition to ELA differentiation through RTI, teachers offer a variety of academic challenges for our students. For example in fourth grade students are given choices for extra credit science projects such as posters, writing stories, creating a new organism, writing a commercial, doing an experiment. Also social science is an area rich in content which naturally lends itself to a wide array of project suitable for every type of learner. Teachers engage students in activities such as role playing famous explorers, simulating a westward bound wagon train to Mason Park, creating a game that may have been played by the Native Americans, building a model of a boat from ancient Egypt, and creating a three dimensional maps of river systems.

Math is the subject in which most teachers strive diligently to achieve differentiation, understanding the wide range of needs of our students. In fourth grade Mrs. Cone and Mrs. Asnon do a Problem of the Week, where the students are broken into groups based on ability levels with the gifted mathematicians the most challenging problems. Each Wednesday at lunch, Mrs. Cone’s class has a Math Lab in the classroom where gifted students come for extra problem solving opportunities. In sixth grade, differentiated assignments and assessments are available for all students, as well as higher level thinking activities (e.g. logic, estimation, and mental math puzzles), cooperative learning groups and projects, and special events such as Math Olympiad. Mrs. Mary King, an excellent mathematician and instructor, works with higher level math groups in fourth as well as sixth grade.

University Park is known for its culturally and ethnically diverse community, which has given us considerable practice with diversifying our instruction. With the RTI model being put into place, we have embarked on a new phase of differentiation.



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JANUARY, 2009

Community Advisory Committee for Gifted and Talented Education  
I.U.S.D., 5050 Barranca Parkway, Irvine, CA 92604, (949) 936-5120

## CAC-GATE Chairpersons' Message

By Terry Freedlander

As 2009 approaches, the GATE Community Advisory Committee looks to continue to support our parent community with great speakers in the area of gifted education, as well as to provide opportunities to IUSD GATE teachers with mini-grants for use with unique, challenging curricula. Mini-grants were approved for video podcast development, Write Source reference texts, timeline software, Junior Great Books purchase and use, Math Tiles, Math Problem of the Week, and ALEKS program support. Over \$6,000 was provided for mini-grants to 12 IUSD schools.

The next GATE CAC Parent meeting is on January 27 at 6:30 at IUSD Offices, at 5050 Barranca Parkway in Irvine featuring Dr. Myron Dembo of USC. I heard Dr. Dembo speak at the recent UCI OCC GATE Conference in October. He is insightful about gifted students, enjoyable to hear speak, as well as a national expert in the field of gifted education.

Dr. Dembo is the Stephen Crocker Professor of Education in the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California. He is a fellow in the American Psychological Association, associate editor of the Elementary School Journal and on the advisory board for the Journal of College Reading and Learning. He also has served on the Board of Examiners of the Educational Testing Service to write the Advanced Education Test of the Graduate Record Examinations. Professor Dembo specializes in the areas of learning and motivation, with special focus on teaching students how to become more self-regulated learners. He has written three books and over 75 research articles on the teaching-learning process. His most recent book is Motivation and Learning Strategies for College Success: A Self-Management Approach (2nd. ed.) This text is designed to help students become more self-regulated learners.

Lastly, as we close out 2008, we must give thanks to Wendy Bennett [GATE Administrative Assistant] and Beth Andrews [GATE Coordinator] for making the IUSD GATE Department a well managed, student and parent-focused resource.

## CALENDAR FOR 2009

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|-----------------|--|
| January 24      | <i>SAT and subject tests – register by December 26, 2008</i>   |
| January 27      | <b>Community Advisory Committee (CAC-GATE) Meeting</b> – Administration Center, 5050 Barranca, Irvine, 6:30 p.m. – <b>Guest Speaker</b> – Myron H. Dembo, Ph.D |
| January 31      | Astounding Inventions of the Future – Irvine Valley College (Grades K-8)   |
| February 13-15  | <b>CAG (California Association for Gifted) 47th Annual Conference</b> , Anaheim  |
| February 23     | <b>APAAS Parent Orientation</b> – Oak Creek Elementary, 6 - 7 p.m.   |
| March 11        | <b>District Science Fair</b> – Northwood High School (Grades 6-12), all day  |
| April 28        | <b>Community Advisory Committee (CAC-GATE) Meeting</b> – Administration Center, 5050 Barranca, Irvine, 6:30 p.m. – <b>Guest Speaker</b> – Dr. Sandra Kaplan    |
| April 28        | <b>Honors Vocal and Instrumental Concert</b>   |
| May 2           | <i>SAT and subject tests – register by March 31, 2009</i>  |
| June 6          | <i>SAT and subject tests – register by May 5, 2009</i>   |
| June 29–July 24 | Summer School – Grades K-8   |

*All Dates Are Not Confirmed and Subject to Change*

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR APAAS Orientation Night

Date: February 23, 2009  
Time: 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.  
Place: Oak Creek Elementary