

The Gateway

SEPTEMBER
2011

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IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:

Monday, Sept. 5 - No School - Labor Day

Monday, Sept. 19 - Lego League 4:00-5:00 for younger group

Wednesday, Sept. 21 - 12:20 dismissal - NO PM GATE

Thursday, Sept. 22 - Lego League 4:00-5:00 for older group

Friday, Sept. 30 - No AM or PM GATE - Homecoming Activities - 1:30 dismissal

The school year is off to a great start. It has been a fun week getting to see the students again and having them share what has happened in their lives since we were together last May.

Lego League will begin the week of Sept. 19th. There will be two teams again this year - one for the younger students and one for the older. The younger group will meet from 4:00-5:00 on Mondays and the older group on Thursdays from 4:00-5:00. There is a limit on each team. Contact Mrs. Soucy if your child is interested.

The 3rd graders will be taking a field trip to the Lake Poinsett Museum on **September 13th** during their regularly scheduled GATE time. Please have them dress appropriately for the ever-changing fall weather.

Due to budget constraints, there will be no after-school enrichment classes offered through the GATE program this year.

If your child is absent from school, please also call Garfield if it is a GATE day for your child.

If your child has any allergies, please let us know as we try to provide a snack for them each day.

GATE follows the Kindergarten schedule for early dismissal days and weather related issues. If there is no morning K, there is no morning GATE. Likewise, if there is no PM Kindergarten, there is no afternoon GATE.

Merely Bright--or Brilliant?

Finding out whether your child is gifted is the first step in getting her the challenge she craves

Award-Winning article from Sheri Ziemann



Is your child truly gifted, or are you just one of those pushy, "stage mother" types who thinks his or her bright child is really a genius? "Parents' observations of their own child's gifts or special talents are the greatest indicator," says Linda Kreger Silverman, who is director of the Gifted Development Center in Denver. "If your child's teacher says your child isn't gifted, and you feel certain that he or she is, seek testing. Of the 3,000 or so children we've seen at the center, 84 percent of the parents who thought their child was gifted were right; and 95 percent had a child gifted in some area, even if their total IQ did not fall into the gifted range."

Parents of gifted kids are often gifted themselves, so they tend to think their child is not different from other children. (More than 2.5 million children, or 2 percent of the total number of children in the U.S., have been identified as gifted.) The Institute for Behavioral Genetics at the University of Colorado has identified the genetic markers related to giftedness, and there have been numerous articles in *Scientific American* on the subject. Thus, if the parents are exceptional, having children who are highly intelligent is the norm -- for their household, anyway.

Here's the catch when it comes to giftedness: It's well known that children's early development sets them on the path for future learning. Some gifted children begin school just like every other child, when they're 5. By definition, giftedness is "out-of-step" development. That is, intellectual, physical and emotional development occurs at different rates -- higher, faster growth that's out of sync with the norm. So a child who is 5 years old may read at a 10-year-old level, understand math at a 7-year-old level, and be socially adept at a 4-year-old level.

In her book "Counseling the Gifted and Talented" (Love Publishing, \$45), Silverman points out that gifted children are two standard deviations from the norm, or the top 2 percent of the population, just like those children who comprise the lower 2 percent of the population. Gifted children have tremendous difficulty learning within the structure of a "normal" classroom, she writes; they require a special sort of education in order to meet their unique way -- and speed -- of learning.

If we were TV sets, some of us would only get five channels. Others are wired for cable -- the general population -- and some of us (the gifted) are hooked up to a satellite dish. That makes these gifted children capable of making connections that others don't even know exist!

"Teaching those types of voracious minds in a regular classroom without enhancement is like feeding an elephant one blade of grass at time. You'll starve them."

Gifted kids seek stimulation. They need to choose their own interests -- passions, really. If these children aren't challenged, their behavior deteriorates. Their minds have to be occupied at a high level for all their lives to run smoothly.

There are factors that may hide or "mask" giftedness in a child, particularly when the parents and/or teachers don't know what to look for or when learning disabilities and giftedness exist within the same child. Those children are considered "twice exceptional" and can languish in a public school setting without the proper identification and support. Experts point out that gifted children can have an enhanced nervous system, which translates into a boundless supply of curiosity and physical energy. It's a common mistake to assume a child like this is hyperactive. Hyperactive children tend to lack voluntary control of attention and behavior, such as interrupting and then losing the thread of the conversation. Gifted children who are high in psychomotor energy are simply very active, with few other symptoms of hyperactivity. They are capable of focused attention and intense concentration when they are interested; aimless activity seems to occur most often when there is insufficient mental stimulation

Surviving on less sleep than their "normal" counterparts, gifted children are capable of multiple focusing (watching TV, talking on the phone and doing their homework), and in fact may find working on one task at a time more difficult than "multiplexing." It's like asking them to nail Jell-O to a tree -- these children need more to sink their teeth into than one simple task at one time..

FINDING SIGNS OF GIFTEDNESS

These are some of the early signs of giftedness:

Has curiosity about many things.

Asks thoughtful questions (why, how, what if).

Has an extensive vocabulary.

Solves problems in unique ways.

Has a good memory.

Exhibits wit.

Has a sustained attention span.

Is very observant.

Shows talent in making up and telling stories.

Sheri Ziemann is a freelance travel writer; her work has appeared in numerous local, regional and national publications. She has written everything from brochures and ad copy to multi-million dollar proposals.

The article "Merely Bright--or Brilliant?," has won her the first-ever International Mensa Press Award in 2000. The article appeared in the Chicago Tribune on September 19, 1999. She was also awarded a journalism fellowship at Vanderbilt University in 1999, on Technology in Education, which boosted her interest in distance learning, particularly for the gifted. My Tribune story, "Tapping into Technology can Energize a Child's Desire to Learn a Language" was one of the offshoots of that experience.