

ABC PEEL NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: GINA HEISZ

This month I would like to invite parents, and kids, to submit new items for our Visual and Writer's Galleries! If your child has written a poem or short story, has completed a fun piece of artwork, has designed a cool science experiment, or has anything at all they would like to share, send it in to us! We won't identify them by full name, but we would love to show off their efforts!

Check out our website at <http://www.abcpeel.org> and click the email link to send in your child's submission!

Have a great spring!

BOARD UPDATES:

This April 12th through April 14th, 2007 the Peel Board of Education will be holding a workshop/conference in conjunction with the review of the special education delivery model. The 3-day workshop is based on the model of "Future Search" by Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff. Future search is a new model of conferences where groups are put together with a facilitator to effect dramatic change and strive to seek common ground where strategies and a commitment are made by the group as a whole, and then implemented.

A Steering committee has been struck and it has been decided which teams and members will be involved for this workshop. Approximately 72 people with 9 teams of 8 members from various stakeholder areas within special education will be invited to participate. Some of the key stakeholders identified are:

Administration, teachers/teaching assistants, special education/curriculum support services, SEAC members, Community agencies, non-academic departments, school council parents/students, and faith-based groups.

This conference will be facilitated by Sandra Janoff who is one of the authors of the book entitled "FUTURE SEARCH: An Action Guide to Finding Common Ground in Organizations and Communities". It is expected that some of the strategies agreed upon by the group will be implemented by September 2007.

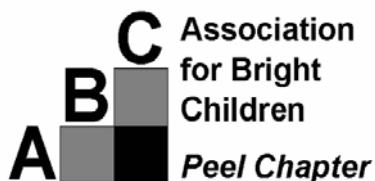
ABC ONTARIO ANNUAL A.G.M.

This year the annual general meeting for ABC Ontario will be held on April 13-14, 2007. The two day event will be held at the Michener Institute on 222 St. Patrick St. in Toronto, and will feature Dr. Karen B. Rogers as the keynote speaker.

The Friday session will run from 8:30am until 4:00pm and will be of interest to teachers and other educational professionals. The Saturday session runs from 9:00am until 4:00pm and is geared towards the ABC family with many interesting children's programs available in the morning and afternoon.

The fees for the Friday session are \$175 for members, \$225 for non-members, and the Saturday session is \$50 for members and \$100 for non-members. The actual voting session on April 14, 2007 is free for ABC members.

ABC Peel has organized the children's programs and will be providing 3 morning and 3 afternoon programs to choose from. They are: NEURON TICKLER by Spirit of Math, VERMICOMPOSTERS by Earthrangers, LEGO ROBOTICS by Little Scientist, WHIMZ an interactive animal program, STOKING YOUR CREATIVE FIRES by Penn Kemp, and HOW TO GET PUBLISHED by Gavin Stairs. The fee for the children's programs are \$45 for the 1st child and \$40 for each additional child in the same family. These programs are open to conference attendees and ABC members only, with priority to the conference attendees, since space is limited.



ABC PEEL NEWSLETTER

PARENTS' NIGHT THIS MONTH:

This March 29, 2007 we will have our annual "**CATHARSIS NIGHT.**" There will be a panel of 4 speakers that include Claire Zeller, Dr. Ed Blackstock, Lois McGinn and Lori D'Aquila. Claire Zeller is a retired math teacher who helped develop the entire gifted special education model for Peel over 20 years ago. Dr. Blackstock is a registered psychologist who was Peel's chief psychologist for over 10 years and now runs the Wings Development Centre in Toronto. Lois McGinn is currently a teacher at Glenforest Secondary who is also the gifted co-ordinator. The fourth member of the panel is Lori D'Aquila, a parent and ABC Peel executive member who handles the telephone and email support for ABC Peel. She also helps to write this newsletter.

This is a night for parents only to come out and vent about your concerns in gifted education in Peel. Please bring a friend. As always, you do not have to be a member to attend our meetings.

LAST MONTH'S PARENT NIGHT:

On February 22, 2007 our Parents' Night topic was "**The Cognitive Science and Artificial Intelligence Program at the University of Toronto.**" If you missed this evening you missed a great lecture given by Dr. John Vervaeke who is the associate director of the program at U of T. Dr. Vervaeke is a passionate and very interesting speaker who eloquently explained the program and what it hopes to achieve. Along with Najam Tirmizi, a 3rd year student and president of the Cognitive Science Artificial Intelligence Student Association they held the large turnout of approximately 50 people on the edge of their seats. We hope to have an annual event each February, where professors from different universities will join us to provide us with insights and answer your questions about their own university and particular programs.

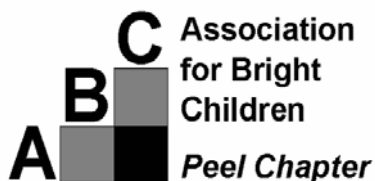
MYTHS ABOUT GIFTED:

Do you become concerned when talking to your friends, family or school staff that they just do not understand what your child is all about? Do you ever feel that there is just too much misinformation when it comes to our gifted children? Here is a list of some of the more common myths about gifted children and gifted education:

- Gifted students are all high-achievers who get good grades
- They are all nerds with social issues
- They don't need help-they can figure it out for themselves
- They are natural leaders
- Everything comes easily to a gifted student
- Clustering gifted students together will cause them to become elitist
- It is much easier to parent a gifted child
- All parents of gifted children *push* them

Many of you have probably heard these things in one form or another from many different people. When these myths are perpetuated and repeated, it creates a big problem. It then becomes harder for our children to get the proper education and support they need to flourish within the education system. This is why organizations like ABC exist. We try to help educate and spread the truths about giftedness and communicate the real needs of our children.

As parents of these children *you* know that gifted children do not always get good grades, or are natural leaders, and you certainly don't *push* them. These children *drag us* into whatever they want to learn. So, it is up to all of us to ensure that the myths are not perpetuated. If you hear someone speaking a mis-truth about our children, correct them. Tell them that our children are not freaks, they don't always get straight A's, and that they don't all have behaviour problems. Tell everyone that our children just learn differently and require support to help them reach their full potential, like any other student.



ABC PEEL NEWSLETTER

BOOK REVIEW: GENIUS DENIED How to Stop Wasting Our Brightest Minds

By Jan and Bob Davidson with Laura Vanderkam
ISBN #0-7432-5461-9 Published 2004, Simon and Shuster

(Editors' Notes: Excellent and thought provoking. This is the second article. The first appeared in the February 2007 newsletter. Please note that all quotations used here are quoted from the authors).

Can't Smart Kids Fend for Themselves?

A family can provide a source support to their children's creativity and intelligence. This kind of nurturing doesn't take fancy degrees or post-secondary degrees, but it sure takes a lot of energy and time. In fact- it takes a lot of time.

Few parents realize that that nurturing their children in terms of their interests, gifts, creativity, intelligence - *including* advocating for their children in their schools is an ongoing and time-consuming process. Parents whom are willing to be an advocate and are supportive can make the difference between a meaningful education and wasted years. "Yet, like many educators and society at large, parents of gifted kids often think their children can fend for themselves. Some can. But many can't".

A Different *Slant* on Underachievement

Underachievement is one of the most common problems that gifted kids face. Okay - we're heard this before. Often most of us think of underachievement as the student who gets C's and D's on their report cards, or as students who fail grade-level standardized tests. However - here is something you probably haven't considered. A child earning straight A's and scoring at the 99th percentile on grade level tests could also be underachieving. **WHAT???** This student could be in the same category if they are not having to work for these accomplishments.

Lessons in Life - Self-Confidence and Risk Taking

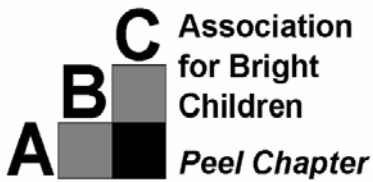
These students may be appearing to fend for themselves. Racking up honor roll mentions, great report cards, and acceptance into good Universities and Colleges. However, are we as parents thinking of the repercussions of these actions? By allowing our children to coast through school—often living on easy street - we are denying them one of life's most important lessons or joys. We fail to teach them, or for that matter allow them to learn how to set and achieve a difficult goal. How to pursue that goal, how to immerse themselves in what they need to do to get to their destination, and then to finally achieve their goal. These children never gain the opportunity to gain the self-confidence that comes from taking risks and stretching themselves. "Many become perfectionists. They've never been challenged, so they've never failed and are petrified by the idea".

Many gifted children and adults become depressed when they lack intellectual peers and appropriate educational settings and workplaces. Often being an outsider in a school or work environment that doesn't value someone's gifts can push that person dangerously close to the edge. There is a definite risk in being "different". Everyone wants to have some sense of belonging.

Some gifted individuals take up dangerous activities to gain the social acceptance that otherwise eludes them. When their talents are denied, they end up frustrated and angry. Gifted people often struggle in a world that has little tolerance for those that are different. Gifted kids can't fend for themselves because as kids, they may not know how to. As well, they may not have legal rights of their own yet. Children shouldn't have to fend for themselves. All children need to be nurtured to grow into happy and successful adults.

The Myth of the Pushy Parent

Parents form the first line of defense against the obstacles that gifted kids face in a society that often doesn't value their abilities. Gifted kids need a secure environment where they can be comfortable with their differences.



ABC PEEL NEWSLETTER

GENIUS DENIED ... continued

They also need parents who support their thirst for knowledge and learning and who can help them figure out which areas interest them. "Yet, many parents simply trust the schools to educate their children, thinking that a child's complaints about being bored or ostracized are just part of growing up. These parents worry that they will be called "pushy" for advocating for their child".

Of course some parents demand unrealistic expectations or have their children involved in too many activities, such as taking them to lessons and various practices. However, according to the authors, their experience is more often that the gifted children themselves push their parents. The kids are the ones wanting the drive between trying extracurricular activities. They are the ones asking endless questions and probing further knowledge.

School Solutions

What do you think when you hear parents say "My son wants to do well in school because it's cool to be smart. He wants to do as well as his friends". This is a quote from the parents of a student attending the Charter School of Wilmington. Ronal Russo is the veteran principal of this school. He explains the encouraging environment at the school as the explanation as why so many highly gifted students keep praising his school. The schools' philosophy is simple. "The curriculum will challenge all students". When the students are all gathered in one place, the brightest will push each other to higher achievements than if they were spread out amongst many different schools. The culture of the school values the life of the mind. This culture will give these students a sense of belonging and accomplishment that many have never felt before.

One student found a "place where he fit in" on his first day of school. Something he had not found previously. He took the most challenging classes he could find. His

success made him a role model for other students rather than someone who was bullied for being different. He is able to take classes that stretch his mind and challenge him as well as having peers who want to do the same. This student no longer had to hide his intelligence and it can be nurtured. Going to this school changed his life. Instead of having to get through school and survive, he is able to fit in and be challenged.

This is why gifted students need schools where they can be challenged to the extent of their abilities while being surrounded by their intellectual peers. Peers don't have to be the same age to be peers. Without the allowing mental and personal growth, schools will continue to be responsible for the tragedy of wasted talent and time.

Even though most of the students at this school are gifted, the school still believes in ability grouping. Entering students take tests in Math and English which place them in one of three tracks or phases. Students can test out of classes by taking a challenge exam.

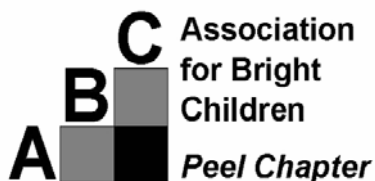
Teachers are hired whom are committed to continuing their own education and to help students learn and absorb all they can. Teachers salaries are higher than at other schools. One biology teacher is a licensed chiropractor. One student commutes 100 miles on a round trip each day. The principal himself has degrees in physics, law and business.

QUOTES FOR THE DAY:

"Always do what you are afraid to do." Ralph Waldo

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young." Henry Ford

"A turtle makes progress when it sticks its neck out" - Anonymous



ABC PEEL NEWSLETTER

FOSTERING PERSISTENCE:

How many times have you heard about a gifted child who experiences difficulty with persistence? This is a student who often gives up when unable to master a skill or solve a problem on the first attempt. When gifted students finally face a real challenge they are usually ill-equipped to deal with it. According to *Rob Bocchino* (*Baldwinsville, NY*), a noted author and instructional facilitator, persistence is teachable and can be taught as a set of strategies used to approach problems and challenges. The behaviours of persistence include the ability to:

- Define, refine, clarify and analyze a problem
- Develop and use a system, structure or strategy of problem attack
- Identify appropriate resources
- Collect evidence the strategy is or isn't working
- Recognize when a theory/strategy must be rejected and another employed
- Apply alternative strategies/theories when it is appropriate to do so
- Keep working toward solving the problem

The persistence 'triangle' (based on HABITS OF MIND by Art Costa and Bena Kallick) is a strategy used to help students acquire an approach to problem solving. Each corner represents a set of concerns that the student should consider before beginning to work on a problem. Each corner is described as follows:

Corner A—Parameters/resources related to the problem

Corner B—Ways of generating possible strategies

Corner C—How will I know it is time to switch strategies?

When this model/system is used, we help students, parents and teachers develop a more useful understanding of what it means to be persistent and they learn how to approach a problem differently.

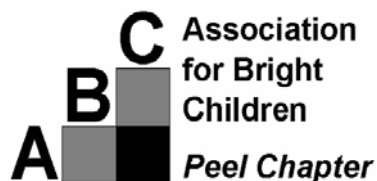
STUDY INDICATES THAT PRAISE CAN BE DANGEROUS:

According to a study done by Carol S. Dweck in 1999, when praise is not handled properly, it can become a negative force and can actually destroy the self-esteem of our children. The article was printed in the "American Educator" digest in the spring of 1999, and, along with other studies and articles by Dr. Dweck, she goes on to say that intelligence praise can undermine motivation and performance of gifted children. In her study she studied 400 fifth grade students and examined the effect of praise for intelligence. The students were divided into three groups. Each group was given a task involving puzzles that were easy enough for all children to complete. The first group was praised for their intelligence and told "Wow, you got X number correct. That's a really good score. You must be smart." The second group was praised for effort and told, "You must have worked really hard." The last group was praised for their performance only and not told why they were successful.

Follow-up questions were asked of all of the children and all of them responded that they enjoyed the task, were eager to do more and were confident about future tasks. In a second trial the students were given a choice of different tasks. They could either try a challenging task, or an easy task. The majority of the students who received praise for intelligence chose the easy task. Almost 90 percent of students who were praised for effort chose the challenging task. The third group who were praised for performance only were equally divided amongst the challenging and easy tasks.

The findings suggested that when we praise for intelligence we are telling children, "look smart and don't risk making mistakes." However, praising effort and hard work motivates the children to keep engaging and they are not concerned with how smart they may, or may not appear.

Dr. Dweck concludes that when we focus students on their potential to learn and give them the message that effort is the key to learning, we give them responsibility for, and control over their achievement and self-esteem. A very valuable lesson indeed.



ABC PEEL NEWSLETTER

HUMOROUS DEFINITIONS:

From Mensa Invitational: Take any word from the dictionary and add/subtract/change one letter and come up with a new definition:

REINTARNATION— coming back to life as a hillbilly

BOZONE (noun) —the substance surrounding stupid people that stops bright ideas from penetrating

DOPELER EFFECT—the tendency of stupid ideas to seem smarter when they come at you rapidly

GIRAFFITI—vandalism spray-painted very, very high

SARCHASM—the gulf between the author of sarcastic wit and the person who doesn't get it

CATERPALLOR—the colour you turn after finding half a worm in the fruit you are eating

MEMBERSHIP ISSUES:

Our membership is growing! We have 10-12 new members this year. Please tell your friends with bright/gifted children about ABC Peel and what we can do for them. We need more members to help YOU more!

Remember to renew your membership each year as it comes due. You can bring a cheque or cash with you to one of our Parents' Nights, or mail your cheque to ABC Peel at P.O. Box 10010, Watline Postal Outlet, Mississauga, Ontario, L4Z 4G5. Please make your cheque payable to ABC Ontario. The Peel chapter receives \$15.00 out of the \$40.00 membership fee.

If you wish, you can renew your membership online at: <http://www.abcontario.ca/payment.htm> You can use Visa or Mastercard, or provide your banking information. The website is secure and your personal information will not be sold to a third party.

WEBSITES OF INTEREST:

<http://www.happychild.org.uk/>

This is a British site that links children from all over the world with educational resources, facts, worksheets, help with languages and an accelerated learning area.

<http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/pages/ed.gifted.html>

This is a link to articles about gifted children with ideas and guidance on how to educate and parent them.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~gifteduc/resources/articles.html>

This is a list of Canadian articles about giftedness written by the staff of the Centre for Gifted Education at the University of Calgary.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Telephone support: * 905-230-8281 (new number)

E-mail support: support@abcpeel.org

Website address: <http://www.abcpeel.org>

Membership Information: membership@abcpeel.org

Parent's Night Information: activities@abcpeel.org

Children's Programs: activities@abcpeel.org

Webmaster: webadmin@abcpeel.org

Communication Team (Newsletter):
abcpeelnews@hotmail.com