



ABC PEEL NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: GINA HEISZ

This spring we are going to try something focused, and something fun. Come out to our Parents' Night meeting to discuss in 'focus group' format, what ABC Peel's goals are for the next school year. Some issues always remain the same, but we need to make sure that we are keeping our priorities in line with what our membership considers the most important to them. We usually do not have a June Parents' Night, so this year we are going to try something different; like a family gathering in a park or nature setting just to hang out and have fun.

Stay tuned for more information on time and location, but be prepared to bring a blanket and a picnic basket! If you have any ideas on good spots to meet in Peel, let us know at activities@abcpeel.org.

NEW CONTACTS MADE WITH THE DUFFERIN-PEEL CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD:

On Friday May 4th, I had the opportunity along with Gina Heisz, to attend a potluck dinner at St. Mark Catholic School in Mississauga. We were invited to give a talk about ABC Peel and what we can offer to members. Gina had a previous engagement but was able to attend the dinner portion of the evening.

The food was amazing and included such foods as lasagna, Swedish meatballs, many types of salads and breads. There were about 30 families in attendance with their children. The children organized a game where famous couples names were placed on your back and you had to find out who you were by asking others only 'yes' or 'no' questions. You then had to find your 'partner.' (It turns out I was Princess Diana, and the school principal Cornelia Gale was Prince Charles) After the meal I gave a short 20 minute talk about ABC and

why I became a member 12 years ago. I explained the importance of having a well run chapter and how representation on SEAC is very important. For the last year or so, there has not been a SEAC representative for the Dufferin-Peel Catholic board. The group was provided with some copies of our last two newsletters and everyone took home our ABC Peel flyer with attached membership forms.

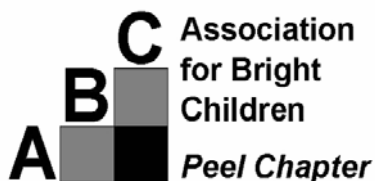
I would like to thank Liam Donworth and Natalie Chong-Tai for suggesting to the school's grade 5/6 contained class teacher Anne Paquin, that we attend this dinner. It was very enjoyable and was a great opportunity to meet with our Catholic counterparts. After my talk I was presented with an enormous bouquet of flowers which bloomed for over two weeks.

I would also like to thank Anne Paquin for her enthusiasm and passion about teaching gifted children. She attends many conferences around North America (sometimes out of her own pocket) and tries to keep up to date with what is happening in the gifted world. We have made many new friends and Anne Paquin has agreed to keep in touch and occasionally provide us with updates on what is happening in her school and board.

Thanks again to everyone involved at St. Mark!

PARENTS' NIGHT THIS MONTH:

This month, our Parent's Night will be held on May 31, 2007 and we will be having organized focus groups to discuss issues in gifted education, so that we may provide the board with input for the Special Education plan. We would like to gather information about testing, identification, teachers, the program in ISELP classes and contained classes, dealing with the school board, and is there anything that ABC can do to improve gifted education in Peel. We need to have a large turnout in order for us to track what is happening in Peel. Please bring your friends and anyone who is interested in gifted education.



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BOARD UPDATES: THINK BOWL

Throughout April and May the Mississauga West and Mississauga South Field Offices held their Think Bowl competitions. Think Bowls are open to junior and intermediate gifted children throughout Peel from grades 5 to 8. It is a creative problem-solving competition that involves solving a real life problem outlined in a written scenario. The second half of the competition is where the teams do a short dramatic presentation using props that are made by themselves, and then act out their solution to the problem.

The problem for this year's competition at the Junior level was, **"In recent years natural catastrophes have devastated various parts of the globe leaving cities and villages in ruin. Canadians, of all ages, have given money, supplies and their time to bring relief to people in need as a result of these tragedies. However, within our own city many children come to school each day from homes where there are inadequate funds to provide proper nutritious meals, appropriate clothing and other necessities required to meet the demands of growing up in Canadian society. Brainstorm possible solutions and the resulting implications to this problem."**

There were 17 junior teams from the Mississauga West Field Office that were divided into 2 groups including: Vista Heights, Thornlodge, Ruth Thompson, Lisgar, Erin Mills, Fallingbrook, Springfield, and Thomas Street. The winning team was Ruth Thompson. The other half included teams from Sheridan Park, Britannia, Osprey Woods, Kindree, Credit Valley, Oscar Peterson, a combination team of Willow Way/Russell Langmaid/Whitehorn, Plum Tree Park and another Whitehorn team. The winning team was Credit Valley.

The Mississauga South junior competition had 18 schools including: 2 teams from Lyndwood, Fairwind, Champlain Trail, Huntington Ridge, Forest Glen, Barondale, 2 teams from Thornwood, Ashgrove, Clarkson, Garthwood, 2 from Hillcrest, Mineola, Munden Park, Owen Wood and Whiteoaks.

The winning teams were from Lyndwood and Hillcrest.

The North Field Office junior teams included: Balmoral, Calderstone, Cheyne Middle, Fletcher's Creek, Helen Wilson, Meadowvale Village, Burnt Elm and Bridsdale. The winning team was Fletcher's Creek.

At the intermediate level this year's problem was, **"In 2005, Ontario's workplace Safety and Insurance Board recorded more than 12,600 young workers between the ages of 15 and 24, injured to the extent that were unable to work for at least one day and an additional eight young people killed as a result of work-related accident or injury. Brainstorm possible problems and solutions to this problem."**

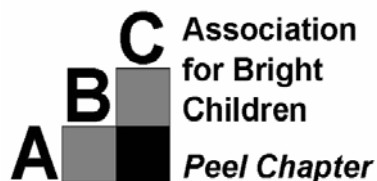
There were 13 teams in this year's intermediate competition in Mississauga from Lisgar, Ruth Thompson, Homelands, Edenwood, Thomas Street, Bristol Road, 2 from Camilla, Fairwind, Hillcrest, Hillside, Lyndwood and Queen Elizabeth. The winning teams were Thomas Street and Camilla.

The North Field Office intermediate competition involved 6 schools: Caledon Central, Caledon East, David Leeder, Greenbriar, RH Lagerquist and Royal Orchard. The winner was David Leeder Middle School.

The Peel Regional finals will be held on June 12, 2007 at the Peel District School Board offices.

LAST MONTH'S PARENT NIGHT:

Last month we held a very informal parent night where approximately 15 parents discussed IPRC's and the issues surrounding them. Each parent discussed their own situation and asked questions of the executive members present. It was obvious that many of you are facing the same issues within Peel. When the parent questionnaires for the Peel Board Gifted Review are released sometime in June, please provide as much information as possible about your concerns. You will also have the opportunity to say what has worked for you on the questionnaires.



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ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS: Skills for Life

Here are a few definitions of the word "ORGANIZATION", according to the Encarta dictionary:

1. Group (a group of people identified by shared interests or purpose)
2. Coordination of elements (the coordinating of separate elements into a unit or structure)
3. Relationship of elements (the relationship that exists between separate elements arranged into a coherent whole).

Some students and people are organized and some are less organized or are not organized at all. Often we learn these skills by watching others, and/or asking those that are organized to share their wisdom. However, some do not figure out what it takes to be organized on their own. Being able to organize our thoughts, our activities and organize our priorities is a crucial life skill that can serve both parents and their children well. Organizational skills are rarely taught directly in the classroom, so we must teach these skills at home. First of all try to be a little bit relaxed about this subject. The organization shouldn't be the entire or end goal. Focus instead on the play, the work and on the project. The organization of the project (and the clean-up afterwards) should be a necessary part but not the focus. How do we reinforce this ability?

Getting a Head Start

A great place to begin teaching organizational and research skills is when children are young. Picking up their toys after they are finished with them and putting them away is an ideal place to start. Sorting of toys into categories such as stuffed toys versus toys with wheels, will help teach the relationship between elements. A trip to the library is an excellent place to learn some research skills. Select a category to investigate and then pick out books from both the childrens' and adults' sections.

Make sure you include videos or magazines if there are any on your topic. Doing this demonstrates how to coordinate the various elements into a whole unit or structure.

Learning how to organize our lives is difficult. For some it is a daunting task. That's why there are so many companies and organizations whose purpose is to help people organize their homes, their work and their lives.

It certainly isn't easy. It all starts with learning to put toys back in the toy box.

There is a wealth of information out there on organizational skills, time management, and how to be effective. What this tells me is that those of us who aren't organized, or need some help to become better organized are not alone. Lack of organizational skills in students may manifest themselves in many ways.

People may:

- Wait until the last minute to start projects
- Be late for things
- Have a messy backpack, desk, locker or room
- Forget what they have for homework/assignments
- Lose or misplace things
- Leave needed books or papers at school
- Waste time hunting for supplies

Think about how disheartening it must be for these individuals if they hear over and over "you need to try harder, or if you only applied yourself you would do better". Why not look at a different approach the next time?

Tool-Kit of Organizational Skills

With increasing homework loads, a tool-kit of organization skills is becoming more and more important. Teaching and learning practices have started to change. Learning approaches are sometimes based on discovery and projects rather than lectures and repetitive practice. This approach is excellent as it brings real life and connections from the real world into the classroom.

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However, this approach requires a much different skill set. Students are required to make more decisions about how to approach their work. They need to use multiple sources of information rather than one text book. In this approach they are handling more paper and books. (Remember back to the library scenario). Therefore the organizational skills used by children have become increasingly complex and they have become more important. The result is that we need to help our children learn, develop and practice these skills.

Organizing the many demands of busy lives, and school is critical to their success at school. There are further implications as well. Organization can reach into their personal sense of control and accomplishments in their daily lives.

Individual children seem to vary in the mastering of skills required to stay organized in school. While some have mastered the necessary skills or at least some of them, others seem more random in their approach and have not acquired the organizational skills.

Some educators believe that these types of organizational differences play a huge role in determining which children get the most out of their educational experience. Organization reduces stress for both the student and the parent whom may be helping that student.

What We Already Know: The Facts

1. We know that all children are not alike in their ability to be organized.
2. Some are better than others.
3. They vary in their ability to meet deadlines and manage their time effectively.

Variations of Categories

Children also vary in the following behaviours and categories:

1. How often they use planning tools (agendas/calendars) to keep schedules.

2. How often they use other organizational tools to manage their supplies and papers (binders/notes).
3. How often they remember needed papers and due dates (as some children regularly forget these).

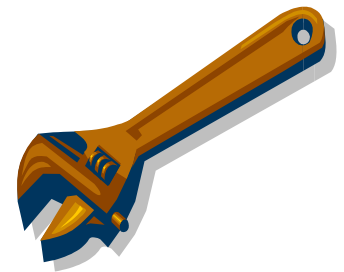
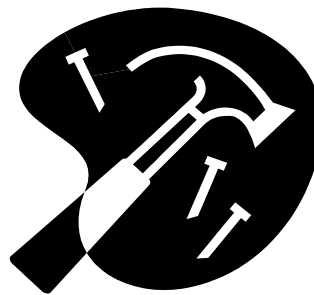
Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) have been looked at closely. Disorganization has long been considered a barrier to success even for bright and gifted children with ADHD. What we can learn about children with ADHD will be practical and significant for teaching organizational skills to all children and may improve and enhance their organizational abilities.

????? Riddles for Organization ?????

Question: What is the significance of these tools?

Question: If you had to choose between these two tools, which one would you put in your organizational tool box?

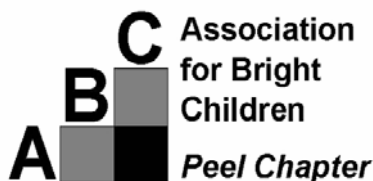
Hint: What kind of tools are these?



Editorial Comment:

Now that you have had some time to think about this, I will share with you the reasons for my choice. My tool of choice would be the adjustable wrench. The reason is because **one size does not fit all**. To be organized we need to do whatever works well in our lives. If you work off of To-Do lists, or Chore Charts, or use an agenda - **do it!** Whatever method works well for you may also work well for your child.

The key is to be flexible. Hence the parody to the adjustable wrench. If we keep hitting the nail on the head with a hammer and it is not working, the answer is not getting a bigger hammer. Maybe we should use a different tool.



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PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENTS: WAIT LISTS OR BIG BUCKS?

Some of you may have noticed how difficult it can be to get a psycho-educational assessment for giftedness in Peel. Although there is the inexpensive option of CCAT testing which can be done at any grade level within the school, it has been known to miss quite a few gifted children. The CCAT is a group screening test, and was not developed to identify children.

The only true identification instrument is full psycho-educational testing using the WISC IV or the SB-V. However, getting the school to assess children with these tests requires a psychologist, and can take many sessions to administer. When parents ask the school about testing their child for giftedness, they are told that it could take years on a waiting list, or that it may never happen at all, since there are other more 'needy' children awaiting assessment.

So, what is a parent to do? They have the option of being placed on a list, or paying for private assessments themselves which can cost up to \$2000, depending on the psychologist and actual assessments that are done. The children of parents who can not afford private testing must wait until the board-wide group screening in grade 4 using the CCAT, or may never be identified. Meanwhile, these children sit in regular classes without any enrichment opportunities.

Some parents choose to ask the school for the CCAT in the earlier grades, and some are identified using this tool. But, there are those who don't quite make the cut-off and these children may never be identified although they may actually *be* gifted. It is those children with scores around the 90th percentile and up, but not quite at the magic 97th percentile required for identification that may never have the opportunity to join contained classes because they must wait too long for further assessment by the schools.

What kind of message is the board sending when parents are told to get private testing? Only the affluent

parents can access testing? Parents need to advocate for testing to be provided by the school if their children are close to the cut-off scores required. In our experience, through contact with many parents, almost *all* of these children go on to be identified when assessed with the WISC IV or SB-V. Ask for psycho-educational testing in writing to your principal and be persistent. If your child is languishing in a regular class and starting to tune-out, it is time to make the school aware of the situation and get that educational assessment done. Your child has the *right* to an education that meets their intellectual needs!

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING DISORDER: (EFD)

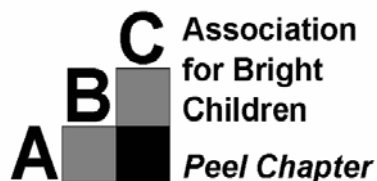
Executive function disorder can affect anyone regardless of their IQ. It is a disorder involving the inability to learn from past experience, plan for the future, set realistic goals and the inability to understand and regulate their own emotions. Many children do not develop these skills until age 12 or later.

Typically the symptoms include:

- Difficulty/lack of interest in setting goals
- Difficulty in taking initiative
- Motivated by immediate needs
- Inability to reflect on past experience to plan for the future
- Poor frustration tolerance
- Difficulty in seeing others' perspective
- Continues to use same strategy even when it has already proven to be ineffective
- Difficulty adapting to change
- Sees personal problems as externally caused
- Poorly developed identity of self-concept
- Lack of empathy

Children can be taught these skills with intensive training, but it should be initiated before more serious issues arise such as depression. Here is a link to an article about executive functions from the tourette syndrome website:

<http://www.tourettesyndrome.net/ef-overview.htm>



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HUMOROUS QUOTES:

Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.

Law of Biomechanics: The severity of the itch is inversely proportional to the reach.

Law of Probability: The probability of being watched is directly proportional to the stupidity of your act.

Law of Logical Argument: Anything is possible if you don't know what you are talking about.

If the #2 pencil is the most popular, why is it still #2?

If all the world is a stage, then where is the audience sitting?

If you try to fail and succeed, which have you done?

What was the best thing before sliced bread?

MEMBERSHIP ISSUES:

If your membership is up for renewal over the summer, you may want to renew in September 2007 in time for the new school year. This will help our membership secretary keep track of our membership if everyone renews around the same time each year.

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.

WEBSITES OF INTEREST:

<http://www.upsidedownschoolroom.com/>

This is a Canadian website for parents of gifted/other exceptional children. It has many different links to articles of interest.

<http://www.cogito.org/>

This is a website for the serious math and science student with links, information and resources, contests and news articles about math and science around the world.

<http://www.happy-neuron.com/games/executive-functions/#95>

This is a link to a free trial of games that strengthen executive functions.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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

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

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