

S A G E N E W S L E T T E R

ST. LOUIS ASSOCIATION
FOR
GIFTED EDUCATION

ADVOCATING FOR THE SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN

GAPS Conference: First of kind in St. Louis

The Gifted Advocacy for Private/Parochial Schools (GAPS) Committee of SAGE is developing a workshop geared to curriculum ideas and techniques for educators in the private and parochial sectors.

The conference's keynote address will be delivered by Nancy Polette. Nancy Polette is currently a speaker with Creative Learning Consultants and has been involved with gifted education for over 25 years. She and four other experienced presenters will lead breakout sessions.

This August 14 conference will enable classroom teachers, administrators, and parents to understand differentiated instruction techniques that can be utilized to challenge gifted students in their

classrooms.

Gifted students are a population that require resources and teachers who challenge them. Investing in the educational needs of gifted students has proven to be cost effective and beneficial to the entire student population of any

given institution.

If you are interested in more information on this half-day workshop, please call the SAGE Hotline at 314-878-5029 and leave a message along with your name and telephone number. ☎

Gifted Education Conference at UMSL: A Success

by Jaime Rhoades

On March 3-4 UMSL hosted their bi-annual conference on gifted education, "Inquiring Minds, Responsive Teachers: Challenging Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom." Members of UMSL School of Education and

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Spring 2004

Please join SAGE in its 25th Anniversary

25 Years of Advocacy 1979 – 2004

Join us for a wine and cheese reception to honor the past and toast the future of services for gifted children, their parents, and gifted educators.

Friday, May 21, 2004
6-8 PM

St. Louis University - DuBourg Hall
Pere Marquette Gallery
221 North Grand Blvd.

Welcome by Julius Hunter
Vice President for Community Relations
St. Louis University

Comments by Doloris Pepple
GAM Outstanding Educator 2003

Invitations will be mailed in April. Cost is \$15.
Attendance is limited.

For more information please call 314-878-5029.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DATE	PROGRAM	LOCATION	TIME
Friday April 23	How to Motivate your Gifted Child - Dr. Agnes Meyo	Holman Middle School Pattonville	7:00-8:30 p.m.
Friday May 7	Metro Council No Teacher Left Behind	Ferguson-Florissant Adm. Ctr., Bldg. C, BOE Room	9:00 a.m.
Friday May 21	SAGE 25th Anniversary Celebration	SLU DuBourg Hall Pere Marquette Gallery	6:00-8:00 p.m.
Mon. thru Fri. July 19-23	College for Kids	Thomas Jefferson School Sunset Hills	9:30 a.m.-12:20 p.m.
Weekdays only August 2-11	College for Kids	Meramec Campus select classes	9:30 a.m.-12:20 p.m. 12:30 p.m.-1:50 p.m.
Saturday August 14	GAPS Conference	Maryville University	8:00 a.m.-NOON

Check our website at www.giftedsage.com for current information.

GAM - Gifted Association of Missouri

GRC - Gifted Resource Council

NAGC - National Association for Gifted Children

MODESE - Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

SENG - Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted

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The St. Louis Association for Gifted Education, a non-profit organization, provides resources and support for gifted and talented children as well as promoting programs which meet their social, emotional, and educational needs. Membership (includes SAGE Newsletter and library privileges) is \$20 per year.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2003-2004

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“Make new friends, but keep the old, one is silver and the other, gold.” This familiar refrain from a

Girl Scout song keeps reverberating in my brain as SAGE continues planning for our Silver Anniversary, to be celebrated Friday, May 21 at DuBourg Hall on the St. Louis University campus. (See page one for details.) It wasn't that long ago that I stumbled across SAGE, a worried parent, needing to find current information to help my kindergartner—until the college book bill jolts me to the present! My children have grown up with SAGE, greatly benefiting from the resources, opportunities, and information I learned about through the organization, as have many others.

Funding is a “hot topic” at the moment, as legislators attempt to put together a state budget that meets the needs of Missourians. Fortunately, gifted funding has not been hard hit, in part due to the lobbying efforts of Kyna Iman, but also due to the efforts of teachers, parents and students. Ironically, local funding may actually be in more jeopardy, as school districts struggle to find monies for mandated state and federal programs. A quick, hand-written note to your local school board or school superintendent,

thanking them for the district gifted program and mentioning its benefits for your child(ren), can certainly improve the odds against cutting established programs with proven results. Do it today!

The GAPS (Gifted Advocacy for Private / Parochial Sector) committee has been actively working to get this group up-and-running. SAGE will sponsor a half-day conference, with workshops geared to teaching the nuts-and-bolts of classroom strategies for gifted children in regular classrooms, targeted to private and parochial schools, on August 14.

If you are a teacher or parent in such a school, please pass the word along to the principal that you want to see some participation by your school. A bottom-up approach seems to work better, as principals respond to parental concerns.

One last bit of homework—nominations for SAGE board members are upcoming. Any member of SAGE is eligible, and we would welcome any nominations. Pay is low (non-existent!) but the camaraderie is priceless. Board members are expected to participate in several events each year, such as meetings, book fairs and workdays, but the time commitment is flexible. If you are interested, please call me directly at 314-544-1339.

Have a crazy, fun-filled summer!!

DEBBIE KOPFF

Successful UMSL Conference

Continued from page 1

Continuing Education and Outreach, GAM, SAGE, and GRC planned the conference.

Keynote Speaker, Dr. Sally Reis, Principal Investigator of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented at the University of Connecticut, presented strategies for parents on how to advocate for their gifted child on March 3. On March 4, Dr. Reis presented research that supports the importance of having gifted programs and reasons why everyone should be responsible for meeting the needs of gifted children.

Concurrent sessions covered a variety of topics including mentoring gifted high schoolers, the new intelligence tests, cluster grouping, grade skipping, literature circles and much more.

In light of recent budget cuts in education all over the United States, education and advocacy for gifted children and gifted programs is vital to keeping gifted education in place. Gifted education funding and programs have been eliminated in schools across America. The more parents, educators and gifted children advocate for gifted programs the less likely it will be that schools eliminate gifted education programs.

Missouri state-funded gifted education funding has been hit by budget cuts, but the majority of gifted funding has stayed intact. This is, in large part, due to the efforts of Kyna Iman, Legislative Consultant for GAM, and advocacy for gifted education funding from parents, educators and students. The conference at UMSL and Dr. Reis' presentations only made it clearer that advocating for gifted education is needed now more than ever. It is extremely important to continue educating others about the importance of gifted education at both the state level and with local school boards. ☘

Updates: February 6 & December 5 Metro Council Meetings

by Jaime Rhoades

FEBRUARY 6

LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

The topic of the February 6th Metro Council meeting at Pattonville Learning Center was "Legislative Issues," presented by Kyna Iman, Legislative Consultant for the Gifted Association of Missouri (GAM). Gifted education funding is holding strong at the state level right now, but advocacy from parents, children and educators is imperative. Kyna gave some important tips when contacting legislators, including that phone calls and letters to legislators are extremely important. E-mailing legislators is not as effective.

Since last year, several school districts in the state of Missouri have completely eliminated their gifted programs all together in order to save money. However, elimination of gifted programs actually does not save districts much money since the majority of costs spent for gifted education goes for paying gifted teachers' salaries. Kyna suggested that gifted educators and parents communicate with their local school boards of the importance of gifted education for the students and for their school districts.

GIFTED CURRICULUM

Dr. Linda Smith, Coordinator of Rockwood School District's gifted program, stated

that a guide to writing curriculum for gifted programs will be posted on both GAM and DESE's web sites. This guide will help school districts develop or revise their curriculum for their gifted program that will be evaluated for 4th cycle MSIP. To access the gifted curriculum guide, go to the following web site to download it in pdf form <<http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/gifted/curriculumguide.htm>>

GIFTED & THE FINE ARTS

A discussion about the necessity to meet the needs of gifted students who exhibit talent in the fine arts area was also a topic during this meeting. Dr. Sunny Pervil, Advisor for Maryville University's teacher education program in gifted education, announced that she will work on contacting individuals interested in assisting in the development of a community gifted fine arts program that could possibly receive funding from the state-assisted gifted program.

TWICE EXCEPTIONAL

A final topic of discussion was the number of children in the St. Louis area who are "twice exceptional" in the areas of giftedness and either Asperger's Syndrome or Autism. Children with Asperger's or Autism who are also gifted have exceptional needs, which can often be unmet. Discussion generated the possibility of a future program for these children, similar to the setup of the PEGS program.

DECEMBER 5

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

The topic of the December 5th Metro Council meeting at Lindbergh High School was "No Child Left Behind". Randy Rook, who is in Federal Programs at DESE presented the components of the No Child Left Behind legislation. One of the programs, Title V (old Title VI) money can be used for gifted education programs. The bottom line when it comes to the NCLB legislation is that gifted education and gifted educators can be instrumental in helping with the success of the legislation's main goal, which is to improve student achievement. ☀

College for Kids

The College For Kids program, open to gifted and talented students completing K-8th grade and offered at the St. Louis Community College's Meramec campus, is expanding this summer to include classes at Thomas Jefferson School in Sunset Hills July 19-23.

The traditional program will be August 2-11 on the Meramec campus. Tuition ranges from \$37-\$77 per class and enrollment begins May 24th for both sections. Prior registrants automatically receive a brochure, but other interested families may contact Janet Turnbough at 314-984-7777.



**TO BE GIFTED AND LEARNING
DISABLED:** STRATEGIES FOR
HELPING BRIGHT STUDENTS
WITH LD, ADHD, AND
MORE

by Susan M. Baum, Ph.D., and
Steven V. Owen, Ph.D. \$34.95
This revised and expanded
resource for parents and teach-
ers presents case studies, means
for identification, and tech-
niques for working with chil-
dren (K-12) who are gifted and
learning disabled.

CRIME SCENE DETECTIVE:
USING SCIENCE AND CRITICAL
THINKING TO SOLVE CRIMES
by Karen Schulz. \$12.95
Written by a local middle
school teacher, this book guides

students through the crime
solving process while introduc-
ing them to forensic science
and law enforcement proce-
dures. Grades 5-8.

**WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE
SCARED AND WORRIED:**
A GUIDE FOR KIDS
by James J. Crist, Ph.D. \$9.95
Recognizing that children do
not have the same coping
mechanisms that adults do,
Crist shows children how to
recognize and deal with their
fears as well as know when to
ask for help. Ages 9-13.

These books are available
through the SAGE Office. Please
contact Sarah Dowd at 314-454-
3981. ☼

February GAPS Meeting and Panel Discussion

by Sheila Glazer

SAGE GAPS held an informational meeting and panel discussion on February 19, 2004, to introduce available options for gifted students in private/parochial schools. The panel consisted of Martha Anne Bull, Karen Dafflitto, Anne Penrose, and Karen Kerber Tapy. Their combined experiences included being in gifted classes, parenting gifted children, teaching gifted students, and coordinating gifted programs. The panel also represented several school models: pull out programs, dual enrollment, parents subsidizing a program to make it self-supporting, etc. This variety of experiences and the personal perspectives of the panel resulted in an interesting discussion. They answered questions about gifted student identification, appropriate curriculum, special needs, and regular classroom accommodations. Approximately 25 people attended. There were delicious refreshments, many of which were homemade, and books for sale.

It was a successful evening and participants said they would like to meet again. SAGE GAPS is planning a half-day conference in August. See page one for more information. ☼

SAGE Winter Meeting hosted by Valley Park Elementary

by Jaime Rhoades

“Precocious Pre-Schoolers and Giftedness in the Elementary Years” was the topic for the SAGE winter meeting on January 20th held at Valley Park Elementary. Dr. Agnes Meyo, licensed psychologist specializing in work with gifted children and their families since 1988, was the guest speaker.

Dr. Meyo discussed characteristics of giftedness in children during several developmental periods and ways parents and teachers can nurture a child's unique abilities. She pointed out that testing children to identify possible giftedness early on is vital to assist in educational programming for a child. However, it is also important to understand that a child's performance on intelligence tests can greatly change during the early childhood years and giftedness is, therefore, difficult to determine during this time.

Susan Schneider presented legislative information and discussed ways parents and educators can advocate for gifted education funding at the state level as well. ☼

A Chance to Soar: Missouri Scholars Academy

by Ashley Gold, Junior at Pattonville High School

Missouri Scholars Academy (MSA) is a three-week, state-funded summer program that provides a wealth of educational and social opportunities to 330 gifted high school students from Missouri. Through intensive and challenging courses, enlightening and thought-provoking speakers, and intriguing and eye-opening activities, MSA provides a fun, stress-free environment of learning. Homework is not assigned. Grades are not given. Learning is done just for the sake of learning. MSA is, in many ways, an educational utopia.

I was lucky enough to be a Missouri scholar during the summer of 2003. Honestly, I didn't know what to expect as I entered the dormitory at the University of Missouri-Columbia on the second week of June. School had just ended, and I was reveling in the wonder that is summer. I had heard that MSA was a "life-changing" experience, but I was somewhat skeptical. I expected a good time, but "life-changing?" Maybe.

It did not take long for me to realize that MSA was far from anything that I could have expected. From the beginning, MSA nurtured our "nerdiness." Ted Tarkow, the co-director of MSA, expressed knowingly, "Why is the word 'nerd' looked down upon so much? We should all embrace our nerdiness! You'll be spending the next three weeks at Nerd Camp!"

Never have I been in an environment with peers where I have felt completely comfortable. MSA provided this environment. I knew that I was with a special group of people when, during our first lunch, fellow scholars and I had discussions about politics. Other teenagers thinking about the things I think about? Being able to intelligently debate about a topic without worries of seeming "dorky?" Quite a place this MSA turned out to be.

A typical day at MSA began at 6:00 AM. Students would rush downstairs to sign up for activities and/or to go jogging, do yoga, or go on a morning nature hike. Afterwards, around 8:30 or 9:00, students would go to their major classes. Major classes included The Civil Rights Movement, Introduction to Philosophy, Japanese Language and Culture, Game Theory, Perfect and Pathological Mathematics, and Botany. There were 19 majors in all. After three hours of major classes, students had lunch.

Then, there was a meeting to discuss any evening activities or other business. The minor class was next. Minor classes were as equally captivating as major classes. One could take Acting for Non-Actors, The Social Issues Behind Music in America and Beyond, Cosmic Cogitations, Time Travel, or another of the 20 minors. I took The Problem of Poverty, a class all about the histori-

cal, social, philosophical, and economic influences on the American welfare state. Needless to say, I learned more in that class in three weeks than some year-long classes back home. After the hour-long minor class, students did Personal and Social Dynamics and then went to optional afternoon activities. Dinner was next; then evening activities/speakers. Generally, the day ended at 11:30 PM when the lights went out.

Personal and Social Dynamics (PSD) is very difficult to explain. We MSA alumni like to deem PSD as "a support group for nerds." Really, it was much more than that. In this class, we explored peer pressure, our families, the trials and tribulations of giftedness, our flaws, our strengths, our relationships, and our goals. Through group-oriented activities, we developed deep friendships, trust, and compassion for one another. Through individual activities, we questioned ourselves in ways we'd never done before. PSD was certainly different for everybody. For me, however, it was a deeply meaningful period that caused me to analyze myself and, in doing so, change some of my negative ideas and behavior that I had never before acknowledged.

Each day brought numerous opportunities to stretch our boundaries. Throughout the duration of the Academy, I did many things I otherwise would not have had the opportunity to do. Oftentimes, I found myself getting frustrated that I could only fit so

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Spring 2004

Missouri Scholars

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many things into the day. One afternoon, I did insight meditation; another time, I learned how to salsa. A self-defense class was offered. Conversations about religion, the war in Iraq, women's rights, and other pertinent topics were popular afternoon activities. I was involved in a tele-conference with a NASA astronaut. I did yoga and pilates. One day, there was an opportunity to visit an Islamic mosque to gain understanding of that culture. Book discussions were offered and clubs were formed. One could be in a debate tournament, write for the MSA newspaper, or sing in the choir. There was something for everybody.

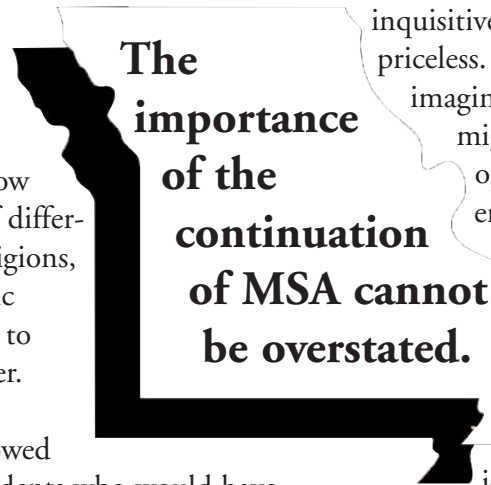
Each evening, various speakers and/or programs were offered. A hypnotist and a magician visited MSA. (Once a skeptic, I can now vouch that hypnotism is real!) Scientists specializing in stem cell research and evolution presented us with the newest progress in their fields. A Holocaust survivor even came to present her chilling account of her experiences during World War II. A specialist on brain chemistry gave a tantalizing presentation on the depth of the human mind. African tribal dancers and Japanese drummers performed. MSA was even able to hunt down the international Scrabble champion. I'm proud to say that one team of scholars lost by only 18 points! In all, the speakers were integral parts of the MSA experience. They expanded our thoughts and our ideas; they helped us understand the multitude of paths we could pursue.

The diversity of students at MSA was unbelievable. I can honestly say that the only thing we all had in common was our giftedness. I loved that there were so many different kinds of people. Having been in scholarly private programs before, I realize how state-funded programs allow for people of different races, religions, and economic backgrounds to come together. Funding by Missouri allowed for many students who would have otherwise been unable to pay for the program to attend.

The importance of the continuation of MSA cannot be overstated. For the past 19 years, 330 gifted scholars have been given the opportunity of a lifetime. Many students do not have advanced courses or gifted programs at their schools. MSA provided them with an opportunity to engage in education on a level more fitting to their abilities. Furthermore, many gifted students get discouraged by regular school. MSA makes students want to learn instead of focusing so much on grades. Let's not forget the social implications of the environment of MSA. Recluses at home became stars at MSA. The "cool kids" were those who could do the Rubik's Cube in under two minutes. The "Pi Guy," a student who could recite the first 150 digits of pi, received standing ovations from his peers. The National Spelling

Bee champion was, arguably, one of the most popular kids. Stereotypes about "nerds" were crushed beneath our unconditional acceptance of one another. That kind of social environment cannot be truly explained; acceptance by peers based on intellect, curiosity, inquisitiveness, and talent is priceless. It's difficult for me to imagine that future scholars might not have the opportunity to experience that kind of unity. Funding must continue. Letters must be written to representatives. The importance of MSA, both academically and socially, must not be forgotten when Missouri's funds are distributed.

MSA changed me. Its effect is profound and enduring. Only after living in an educational, social, and emotional utopia for three weeks can I truly understand who I am as well as what I want to achieve in the future. I was able to stretch myself, my ideals, my opinions, and my standards for myself. Instead of doing the comfortable thing, I did the "dangerous" thing. I felt free to take risks. I did not need to worry whether I'd be looked down upon because I wanted to learn. MSA brought out the best of everybody involved. As eloquently stated in the MSA song, "A Chance to Soar," I assert that MSA is (and will hopefully continue to be) "an open door inviting you and me, giving us a chance to soar and wings to set us free." 🌟



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SAGE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The St. Louis Association for Gifted Education invites you to join or renew your membership to the largest organization in the St. Louis metropolitan area whose aim is to advocate for services which meet the social, emotional, and educational needs of gifted children.

Membership benefits include:

- free use of the lending library and all resources at the SAGE office
- regular meeting notices
- discount on books at the annual open house
- the *SAGE Newsletter*
- the opportunity to meet with and support those who advocate for gifted children.

Annual membership dues are \$20.

Make check payable to: SAGE MEMBERSHIP
P. O. Box 4739
St. Louis, MO 63108
314-878-5029

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Please check appropriate box/es.

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