

President's Update (Otto Schmidt)

Thanks to all the delegates who attended our Enrich and Be Enriched Conference. The executive worked very hard to make it rewarding and successful. Many people commented about the high quality speakers and the general energy of the day.

We received some comments about the food. We believed we had a tried and proven caterer who performed below expectations. We will no longer be using her services.

A valuable contact was made at the conference. Mr. Jim Saraco, the new Superintendent of Special Education for the TCDSB was impressed by what was offered and will be meeting with us to discuss Board assistance for future conferences. The next conference will TENTATIVELY be on Friday, October 19, 2007.

It was brought to our attention that advertising flyers for a Mississauga roller rink were brought to the conference by a delegate. Please be advised that it is inappropriate to use conference time and space to advertise outside interests. In future, any such materials will be confiscated and discarded.

EDGOTAGO EXECUTIVE

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Join the EDGOTAGO executive team!! We are looking for dedicated, reliable and passionate people from different parts of Ontario to join us in various positions.

Please email us at mail@edgotago.com if interested.

The next World Gifted Conference is held in England—Aug 5 –10, 2007.

See website: www.worldgifted2007.com for details.



Effectively Educating Gifted Students in Regular Classrooms (Otto Schmidt, www.AccentonSkills.com)

Educating gifted students has become more difficult in Ontario. Lack of proper training of program facilitators/teachers is one of the most serious causes. This issue has been brought up several times at meetings of the Consortium of the Gifted – a Ministry of Education advisory group (see www.edgotago.com “Affiliates” for description of this group. Because of this, regular classroom teachers are expected to take on more and more of the responsibility.

These are three of the most powerful alternatives in educating gifted children in regular classrooms:

1. Differentiation of Curriculum

Curriculum needs to be qualitatively differentiated. If students show that their learning is at a noticeably higher level than other students, teachers purposefully change student involvement with the course content. This does not mean more work. It means different work suited to the higher abilities of the student.

For gifted students, course content (what is taught or learned), the learning processes (the skills that determine interaction with learning), and products of the learning (the ways learning is assessed) all need to be considered and incorporated into the learning when differentiating. The purpose of differentiation is to better match curriculum to individual strengths, talents, skills, abilities, and needs. This is conceivably the ultimate goal in educating all students.

2. Enrichment of the Content and Products of Learning

Schools can strive to provide exciting opportunities for high-powered enrichment (broadening the learning in courses) It is one of the best ways to enrich all student learning. It is also one of the easiest ways teachers can help meet the needs of gifted students in regular classrooms. EDGO-TAGO has made great efforts to show teachers how to enrich teaching and learning by bringing amazing and unusual speakers to our conferences. Bringing people and topics that take learning into new, exciting, challenging, different and unusual directions into schools motivates students to learn. Enrichment is a small but important step in meeting the needs of gifted students in every subject in every classroom.

3. Acceleration

Acceleration (speeding up a course) is a viable option for gifted children. There is a great deal of controversy around the subject. On the one hand, school boards lose funding as students spend less time in the system. There is concern about missed learning, skills and concept development. There are social issues to worry about as students move ahead of their peers. Ask yourself this: What would you do if you were stuck in an environment in which you were expected to work at a level far beneath your capability? Most people would probably get severely bored and do as little as possible, tune out or quit and/or change jobs. Ultimately, how much students learn depends not on how long one spends in school but on how great their need to learn and how well that need is met by increasing the pace.

It is important for teachers, parents as well as gifted students themselves, to find the best ways and means to maximize learning and productivity.



Association for Bright Children of Ontario 2007 Annual Conference

April 13 & 14th, 2007

Michener Institute 222 St Patrick Toronto, ON www.michener.ca



Karen B. Rogers, Ph.D.
Professor of Gifted Studies in
the Dept of Curriculum & Instruction
at the University of St. Thomas
St. Paul Minnesota

Author of

Re-Forming Gifted Education
How Parents and Teachers
Can Match the Program to the Child

Dr. Rogers will be travelling from Australia, where she is currently engaged in research at the University of New South Wales, home of GERRIC, the Gifted Education Research Resource and Information Centre, to lead two full days of workshops.

Friday, April 13th, 8:30 am to 4 pm
Topics of interest to educational
professionals will be covered
\$175 for members or \$225

Saturday, April 14th, 9 am to 4 pm
ABC Family Day including AGM
& children's workshops
\$50 for members or \$100

Members can enjoy both days for \$200
(non-members \$250)
Registration begins December 2006
Register early ~ space is limited

Visit www.abcontario.ca
for further details coming soon
including accommodation information

Convenient downtown Toronto location near restaurants, hotels, theatres and more

Creating Your Own Personal Healing Rituals (Otto Schmidt, www.AccentonSkills.com)

You may be one of the many people whose lives tend to be very busy and hectic. Winding down and healing may involve a nap, a drink, exercise/sport, a walk, shopping, or watching TV to take the mind off issues. These do work but there are other simple and meaningful rituals that can be set up to provide even greater healing.

There are different ways that we are regularly injured and hurt in the day from others and also by ourselves. There can be physical, mental and spiritual inner components that need healing. Some simple rituals may be helpful in bringing about a balance back into one's life. Develop and create a comfortable environment (quiet room, outside under a tree, on a park bench, in a car before turning on the engine, etc) where you can go through one or more of the rituals. Develop a personally meaningful physical position (hands in prayer, arms reaching out, eyes closed, hugging yourself, etc.) that is appropriate and naturally comfortable.

Boosting Self-confidence Ritual: "I'm special!" Perhaps on the bus, in your car on the way to work, or while walking to school, take yourself aside and say to yourself what you would say to a friend in need. Be your own best friend. Review your positive attributes and affirm yourself: "I am a good and worthwhile person and I deserve to do my best." Review your amazing gifts, skills, talents and abilities. Consciously be aware of the blessings in your life and how well off you are compared to other people. Perhaps at the end of a day, give yourself a physical and mental pat on the back for all your accomplishments. Give yourself a hug. Talk to yourself out loud. Develop a slogan or wise words that you can recite and live by each day. Pin some up so they are always visible.

Overcoming Suffering from Anger/Hatred Ritual: Each day, yell and scream loudly in a place where nobody can hear you (in a car while driving, when home alone before others arrive, into a pillow, etc.). Turn your rage and anger into feeling sorry for who/whatever hurt you. Somebody/something didn't have enough insight to realize they were hurting you. Assess what the message was intended to do. Perhaps you do need to change something. A ritual might involve a pleasant scent or a chant to relieve anger/hatred. Fill your mind with loving, pleasant thoughts.

Countering Boredom Ritual: With billions of people around and endless things to do, how can anybody get bored? People often get bored when they stop thinking and instead wait for life to entertain them. Life is short and meant to be lived. As a ritual, you might want to learn one new thing each day – in areas that you have never explored before. It may be from the internet, talking to others, a bookstore, etc. Set up a special time when you will do this - lunch hour, before going to bed, when you first turn on a computer, just being alert each day, etc. Consciously acknowledge when your new learning happens. Pass it on to others, if desired. Say it out loud to yourself or to others when you learn it. Pretty soon you will marvel at the endless things to learn. Motivation to get more involved in life will increase tremendously. (Note: Writing this newsletter has taught me NOTHING is boring in the world!)

Grieving Ritual: People grieve for many reasons involving loss. They may have had a particularly bad time and are feeling very sorry for a loss of a spouse, friend, job, pet, opportunity, career, or you might have had a generally bad day, confrontation, etc. We may also want to grieve more generally for the plight of others, the environment, pain and suffering in the world, sad situations we become aware of in the media, etc. It is important to open up and let the emotions out in whatever way they want. Each day there are things we can grieve for – big or small. Lighting a candle and saying special words to yourself or to the "other(s)" might be a way to do this. Let things pass naturally and be more involved in the present.

Mental Balancing Ritual: We get good and bad things thrust at us each day as a fact of life. A good way to have a mental balance at the end of the day is to look for one good thing throughout the day that will counterbalance all the crap. Acknowledge it by saying it to yourself or another person. For example, a phone call from a good friend comes spontaneously at a needful time. Just before going to bed, take a moment and reflect on the day. Tell yourself that someone has made your day in some significant way. Everything else negative doesn't count any more because you found what made your day. Think only about the positive thing. With practice, this is very effective in "lightening the load." The "good thing" can be anything – a joke, a gift, something you see, something somebody says.

Calming Ritual: Mentally rehearse being calm in advance of situations that would normally incite frustration, rage and/or anger and other negative emotions. Rehearse what you might say and do to show respect and set an example to others despite their reactions or behaviour toward you. Establish and remind yourself of the good reasons you do things. Do this each day before entering the rat race. You may want to close your eyes, get into a special pose that is conducive to relaxing and repeat meaningful positive words to yourself. Be your own best friend and coach.

Imagine the Universe (Engage in astronomy, cosmology, etc.) <http://imagine.gsfc.nasa.gov/>

Ecological Footprint Calculator <http://www.bestfootforward.com/footprintlife.htm>

Online Games for the Blind (amazing area for creative programmers to be inspired) <http://www.gamesfortheblind.com/>

History of Psychology in a Timeline (ASTOUNDING!! links to hundreds of philosophers, events, books, etc.)

http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Delphi/6061/en_linha.htm

Virtual Library (amazing reference site to put into your "Favorites") <http://vlib.org/>



Rules of Resiliency

(from Adaptiv Learning Systems, a Pennsylvania consulting firm, that helps people in corporations stay resilient in difficult situations. It's a skill everybody, especially leaders, should have.

<http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/45/bounceback.html>)

Many gifted children have excellent leadership abilities. Despite the great satisfaction and joy that comes from that, it is also important that they learn to toughen up and be prepared for the inevitable difficult challenges.

Explain yourself.

- How do you explain what happens to yourself and to others? In a negative/helpless or a more resilient way?
- Notice a pattern. Do you habitually see a setback as temporary or permanent?
- Do you blame yourself or others? Use logic and perspective

Don't overreact.

- Notice if you say or think 'always' and 'everything.' Evaluate accurately to avoid predictions of doom and gloom. Be selective in what may be wrong.

Act fast, but don't rush to judgment.

- Lay out all the details of difficulties honestly so you know what is really happening in the situation. Don't rush to condemn without enough information. The solution is more important than the problem.

Keep it in perspective.

What's the worst case scenario? What's the best you can hope for in the situation? Be accurate and honest and keep going over these questions.

Enriching Websites

Sites that Promote Academic Success (exceptionally valuable resource list!!) <http://www.uni.edu/walsh/linda7.html>

Extreme Ironing (AMAZING!! PHOTO GALLERIES)
<http://www.extremeironing.com/>

Steganography (Hiding information by using many unusual methods) <http://www.jitc.com/Steganography/>

Musical Instrument Encyclopedia (140 instruments. Explore musical traditions) <http://www.si.umich.edu/chico/instrument/>

Wise Words About Education

Never complain about your troubles; they are responsible for more than half of your income.- Robert Updegraff

Nothing is troublesome that we do willingly.- Thomas Jefferson

It is always with the best intentions that the worst work is done.
- Oscar Wilde

You are what you do. If you do boring, stupid, monotonous work, you'll end up boring, stupid, and monotonous. - Bob Black

MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION FORM

Membership is valid for one year beginning on the date of our conference.

Please fill in and mail us this form (one per person)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/Prov: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone No: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

School/Board Affiliation (if applicable): _____

School Address/Contact Information (if applicable): _____

Position You Hold: _____

Level of interest (please circle 1 or more):

Elementary / secondary / parent / advocacy group (name) _____

Please make out a cheque for \$30 payable to EDGOTAGO and send it to:

EDGO – TAGO Membership
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