

IAGT Bulletin

Volume 1, Issue 1, Fall 2001

We've Come a Long Way...

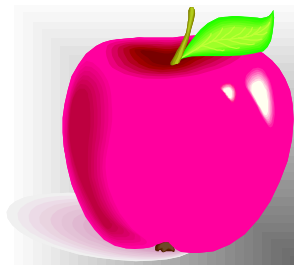
Welcome to the Irving Association for Gifted and Talented. Since our first organizational meeting last May, a group of highly dedicated individuals have worked diligently to bring the nebulous idea of a GT parent group to fruition.

Since that May 2001 meeting we have been busy. We:

- Held core group meetings throughout the summer, assessed our strengths, created and filled board positions
- Wrangled over a name for our group
- Researched and developed a Mission Statement and Goals for the **Irving Association for Gifted and Talented (IAGT)**
- Arranged for appropriate banking services
- Established a membership database (from the cards we received from our May 2001 organizational meeting and our new IAGT members)
- Compiled a "GT" bibliography and several other informational handouts for parents, including a resource contact sheet with names, phone numbers, and websites
- Established an IAGT website
- Developed by-laws, articles, and detailed descriptions of board member's duties
- Sent out an IAGT letter of introduction to all the GT teachers in the district
- Hand delivered copies of our Mission Statement and Goals to every Principal and/or Campus Coordinator in the district
- Initiated our first membership drive in September 2001 by stamping, sorting, and stapling 3000 envelopes, letters, and membership forms that were distributed via interoffice mail to every child in Irving's GT program
- Researched and joined the **Texas Association for Gifted and Talented** as an Affiliate Member
- Attended the IISD's September School Board meeting, introduced the Irving Association for Gifted and Talented, and provided copies of our Mission Statement and Goals to the Trustees
- Held our first official IAGT general meeting in October, featuring an inspirational national speaker (arranged by **Debbie George** in conjunction with the Dallas and Grand Prairie Independent School Districts)
- Discussed, developed, and made 700 copies of this newsletter

One of our major goals has been to set up an effective communication system; we have almost 3000 students and families involved in the GT program in Irving, and we want to include everyone in our efforts to serve as partners in, and supporters of, our children's gifted education. We look forward to a long and productive association with our teachers, our schools, our administrators, and most importantly, with you, the parents who form the backbone of our next great gifted generation.

Teacher Talk!



One GT Teacher's Thoughts on Re-evaluating GT Placement

Teri Hyde GT English Travis Middle School

Let me start by saying that these opinions are mine and do NOT reflect district policy as it stands. The IISD policy states that once a child is identified as "gifted," the child will always qualify for gifted classes unless exited by committee decision. Let me assure you, most students are correctly identified and placed; in fact, most are doing well in their courses. I am primarily discussing those for whom GT placement is no longer the best learning situation. Concerned parents and teachers must make better and more informed choices over a period of time regarding the best placement for this one child, this one learner.

Special ed students must re-qualify every three years because parents and educators of these special needs students know their learning is not static, their needs are not static, and situations change. I believe this is frequently true for GT students. Most GT students are identified at a young age; in fact, many parents can recognize this zest for learning as early as three or four years old, and the district tests these students in very early grades. Sometimes I have seen a child's records showing he placed in the 90+ percentile on ITBS, fell a bit the next year, and instead of rebounding the following year, continued to have scores further away from 90% -- sometimes going as low as 50-60% by the end of fifth grade.

I want to encourage parents to look at the ITBS scores at the end of the fifth grade, and perhaps pull out the old ones from second and third grade. With Irving's emphasis on acceleration, students in middle school reach critical "cutoff" points in math, science, and English. These classes, math beginning in the seventh grade and science and English in the eighth grade, get high school credit. The problem arises when a child has been minimally successful in GT English in seventh grade and somewhat less successful in eighth grade, but has remained in GT. When that child goes to high school, if GT is too difficult, he cannot just switch to ninth grade honors, because he already has ninth grade honors credit for the middle school course. This places the student in honors tenth grade, and for most children, this is quite a painful process.

I would like to see parents, as well as fourth and fifth grade teachers, look closely at the student's progress and discuss frankly how the child is doing. Some students find the adjustment to middle school so stressful that they need a little

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GT Maddening Myths *

Myth: Gifted kids have it made and will succeed in life no matter what. They don't need any special help in school or anywhere else.

Fact: Everyone needs encouragement—and help—to make the most of their abilities and succeed in life.

Myth: Gifted students come from white middle-and upper-class families.

Fact: They come from all cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.

* Excerpted from *The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide: A Teen Handbook*, by Judy Galbraith, M.A., and Jim Delisle, Ph.D. Copyright © 1996 by Free Spirit Publishing. All Rights Reserved.

IAGT Contact List

If you have questions, concerns, or ideas, give us a call:

District Coordinator

Shannon South (972) 253-7876

Nimitz Cluster Coordinator

Glenda Servin (972) 790-5047

MacArthur Cluster Coordinator

Tonya Hilton (972) 258-3184

Irving Cluster Coordinator

Melanie McCullough (972) 438-2570

District Bilingual Liaison

David Solis (972) 871-0216

IISD Director of Gifted and Talented

Debbie George (972) 273-6130

Our Big Event, October 11, 2001: Dr. Jim Delisle

A great big "THANKS" to **Debbie George**, the IISD's Director of Gifted and Talented, for arranging to bring **Dr. Jim Delisle** to our district (in cooperation with the Grand Prairie ISD and Dallas ISD), as the guest speaker for our first official IAGT general meeting.

A professor from Kent State University and an expert on the social and emotional needs of gifted children, Dr. Delisle spoke about "Understanding Gifted Children from the Inside-Out: Meeting Their Emotional Needs at Home". Dr. Delisle (who has appeared on Oprah) instructed and encouraged the parents, teachers, and college students in the audience to become actively involved in the lives and education of their gifted children by being aware of the myths and misunderstandings of "giftedness".

Teacher workshops with Dr. Delisle were held in Grand Prairie and Dallas on October 12th and 13th, and IAGT parents were welcome to attend free of charge.

We thank Dr. Delisle for his inspiration and Debbie George for making it happen.

GT Maddening Myths *

Myth: Gifted kids should love school, get high grades, and greet each new school day with enthusiasm.

Fact: Most schools are geared for average learners, not gifted learners, which makes it hard for gifted students to get excited about going. Some of the most talented students in the United States actually choose to drop out of school altogether.

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" I don't care about your grades as long as you do your best."

Every parent I know, and virtually every student, too, utters this phrase at some time. It is meant to provide comfort to a child who does not gain an automatic grasp of a concept or idea. The effect of this statement, though, might be quite the opposite, because if a child thinks he or she always has to do the best work possible—whether in academics, creative endeavors, sports, whatever—then this leaves little room for mistakes.

Be cautious of your admonitions to always do your best. Instead, ask your child to be selective in his or her attempts at excellence, because there just is not enough time in anyone's life to excel at everything. Remember less than perfection is more than acceptable.

Dr. Jim Delisle

Our Next General Meeting...

We are already planning our next general meeting, which will be held in February or March of 2002. Information regarding this meeting will be distributed to your child via the school's interoffice mail system. **If you are an IAGT member** you will receive a postcard in the mail.

What a Great Idea!

Bowie's "The GT Journal" - An update of happenings in Bowie's GT Math, English, Science, and Humanities classes, published and distributed by the GT teachers at Bowie to stay in contact with parents and keep them informed. **WE LIKE IT!!!**

GT Maddening Myths **

Myth: Gifted kids are good at everything they do.

Fact: Some gifted students are good at many things; others are exceptionally able at only a few things. Some gifted students are also learning disabled,* which means that they might not be very good at schoolwork.

* We prefer the term "learning different" because we believe that it more accurately reflects individual characteristics

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Congratulations to **Natalie Picquet**, Humanities teacher at **Travis Middle School**, who has been named a winner of the 2001 Outstanding Teaching of the Humanities Award.

Good job, **Ms. Picquet!**

For contributions to our Kudo's page or to submit a brief article to be considered for publication in the *IAGT Bulletin* please contact your cluster coordinator or e-mail res0asud@verizon.net.

LOOK!

Thank you to John Quinn for developing our website!
Thank you to Kasandra Bell for designing our newsletter!
Please visit at our Website at www.IAGT.com

Attention

IAGT Parent Survey

Parents, please take some time to fill out the attached IAGT Parent Survey, which is based on the Concern Cards completed by parents at the May 2001 meeting (and join IAGT if you have not already done so by filling out the membership form on the back page of this newsletter). We want to represent the needs of all our children and their families, so please tell us everything...the good, the bad, and the ugly.

The questionnaires are to be mailed to our treasurer Karen Rosenthal, whose address you will see on the bottom of the survey.

Thank You!

Membership Update: As of November 15, 2001, the IAGT had 215 members. If you are already a member, please encourage other GT parents to join our group.

Remember: Individually our voices are small, but collectively we will be heard.

FYI...

Future IAGT newsletters will be sent to **IAGT MEMBERS ONLY**. Our debut issue is being sent to IAGT members and to those who attended our May 2001 meeting and filled out a yellow card with their name and address. Due to budgetary limitations we must restrict the distribution of future issues to members only.

If you want to continue receiving the *IAGT Bulletin* please join IAGT — a membership form is attached to the back of our Parent Survey, and is to be mailed to:

Karen Rosenthal
600 Shadow Ridge
Irving, Tx. 75061

PLEASE JOIN US—IAGT NEEDS YOU! *

* If you want to be noted as a charter member of IAGT you must return your membership form and dues by December 31, 2001.

GT Maddening Myths *

Myth: Gifted kids are equally mature in all areas — academic, physical, social, and emotional.

Fact: That would be convenient, but it's not a reasonable expectation. On the other hand, it's not fair to assume that just because someone is advanced intellectually, he or she will lag behind in other developmental areas.

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Teacher Talk!



(Continued from page 2)

more time to mature, and would learn more effectively by changing to honors and being one year accelerated rather than two years. Some students will absolutely thrive in GT and blossom in ways that will astound everyone. It is hard to predict, to a degree, how one child will fare as compared to the next.

With Irving's emphasis on acceleration, students must not only have the innate ability to understand complex ideas and think deeply, they must also have a commitment to meeting deadlines and actually handing in their work. It may be that some highly gifted learners -- ones behind their peers in organizational skills and/or who have trouble handing in work -- do not need the pressure of the rapid pace of GT classes. They can handle the concepts but not the reality of gifted acceleration, but by high school, when they mature a bit more, then can once again handle advanced classes - honors instead of GT classes.

I have simply seen too many students struggle to keep up with the rapid pace, and feel many could learn more and be better prepared for college if they replace some GT classes with honors or regular classes.

I think we need to take a critical look at qualifications and expectations for students in GT courses. The child's success in learning is far more valuable than wearing the label of "GT".

Your 2001—2002 IAGT Board

District Coordinator — Shannon South
Nimitz Cluster Coordinator — Glenda Servin
MacArthur Cluster Coordinator — Tonya Hilton
Irving Cluster Coordinator — Melanie McCullough
**Communications/
Assistant District Coordinator** — Dana Edwards
District Bilingual Liaison — David Solis
Recording Secretary — Kasandra Bell
District Teacher Liaison — Carrie Frost
Computer Specialists — John Quinn and Kasandra Bell
District TAGT Liaison — Kelley Brown
District Treasurer/Membership — Karen Rosenthal
District Educational Information Coordinator — Stacy Bennett

Communications 101

In order to simplify the process of contacting each other, we've organized our communication system by aligning it with the IISD's natural clusters—a cluster consisting of one high school and the middle schools and elementary schools that feed into it. Since we have three high schools in Irving, we have three communication clusters: one for MacArthur High School and its feeder schools, one for Nimitz High School and its feeder schools and one for Irving High School and its feeder schools.

An example: if your child attends Elliott Elementary School and you have questions about the GT program, you would contact our Nimitz Cluster Coordinator because Elliott students ultimately feed into Nimitz High School. You are welcome to contact any of us at any time; however, you might meet someone who has experience at your child's school within your own cluster. If you need to know which cluster your school is in, call us.

How you can help: We need at least one contact person per school to serve as that school's liaison to the IAGT. Possible duties include: assist in making telephone calls should we need to disseminate information quickly, help another parent who has a question or concern, aid in collecting signatures, help with coordinating campus committees.

Irving Cluster Report

Irving High Cluster parents, where are you?

We still need School Liaisons at 8 of our 10 Irving High Cluster schools. We currently need parent volunteers from Crockett and Austin Middle Schools, and Hanes, Barton, Davis, Keyes, Good, and Gilbert elementary schools.

The School Liaison role is one of communication and is not very time consuming. If we need to make phone calls, collect signatures, or distribute information, our IAGT liaisons will be critical to our success. We want every school in the Irving Cluster to have access to IAGT announcements and activities, so please call Melanie McCullough at (972) 438-2570 to make sure your school will be represented.

MacArthur Cluster Report

Parents, we still have a few MacArthur cluster schools needing a liaison for the IAGT.

We need parent volunteers to be School Liaisons at MacArthur High School, Travis Middle School, and Johnston and Lee Elementary Schools.

Please help us ensure that nobody gets left out of our communication system - call Tonya Hilton at (972) 258-3184 to become an integral part of your child's gifted education.

Nimitz Cluster Report

The Nimitz Cluster meets on the Monday following the district meeting at 7:00 p.m. Everyone is invited. Call Glenda Servin at 972-790-5047.

The Lamar Solution

6th grade GT students only have math every other day, all other 6th grade students have math every day. Two parents wrote letters regarding this issue to Principal, **Cynthia Goodsell**, and 6th grade Advisor, **Trudy Jackson** at **Lamar Middle School**. These students have to choose another elective class (that would have most likely come from 7th grade electives) to fill the free period. Since this time was available, these concerned parents wanted more study time for core classes. These parents felt that more classes would compromise their children's ability to focus on the core classes and steal time from extra curricular and co-curricular activities after school that afford a more balanced life. The parents requested a study hall in this period time slot.

Ms. Goodsell, her GT team, and **Debbie George's** solution was a study skills class. The Lamar Solution protected the credit integrity of the GT curriculum standard, not provided by a study hall, and offered a double bonus with a more inclusive option. Study Skills offers more study time, computer lab time, access to the library, and individual support and tutoring from their instructor, **Ms. Susan Rice**, the IISD 2001 Secondary School Teacher of the Year. Thank you for listening, caring, and responding in such a timely manner.