

F A L L 2 0 1 4

GATE Newsletter

Seasonal Updates for Parents from the GATE Office

Parent Survey Results: 2013-2014 GATE Parents Speak-Up

Last spring the GATE office presented a parent survey via Question Pro to all parents of GATE students across the district. The results of that survey were reviewed over the summer, and the GATE office has been working to implement solutions addressing concerns around communication. This quarterly newsletter along with an updated district GATE website (www.scusd.edu/gate-0) are some of those solutions.

Survey at a glance:

- Respondents represented 16 schools (Elem, Middle & K-8)
- 79% believe their child's classroom is academically challenging
- 83% believe their child's classroom is creatively challenging.
- 96% believe their child appears to have positive relationships with a peer group.
- 88% have not attended DGAC or the Guiding the Gifted Child Speaker Series.

Save the Date!

District GATE Advisory Council

Jan. 20 5:30 PM
John Bidwell Elem

This council consists of parents of GATE students, teachers & administrators from across SCUSD. Learn about GATE events, and hear from guest speakers

Nor Cal GATE Seminar

Nov. 8 All Day
Rosemont High

Sponsored by the CA Association for the Gifted. A special topics strand will be offered for parents of GATE Students. Register at www.CAGifted.org

Welcome Back!

We're excited to share this, the first quarterly parent newsletter for the 2014-2015 school year. We're excited to be able to put in place a communication format that addresses frequently asked questions and shares information with GATE parents across the district. If you have a topic or question you'd like addressed in the Winter Edition, please e-mail Kari, our GATE Resource Teacher.

At this point in the year, you have likely already attended your child's Back to School night, and were able to meet with your child's teacher to learn about the ways their classroom education will be engaging and rigorous! That last word- "rigor" is being used a lot these days. Look for a definition on page 3.

Likely, you've been hearing quite a lot about the impact of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in your child's classroom and how learning may look, feel, and sound differently from the way it did when you were a student. In the GATE Office, we're excited that Common Core places an emphasis on learning strategies we've supported for decades: Collaborative Learning and Academic Conversation.

It's already a busy, exciting year and we're looking forward to partnering with you during it.

Kari & Stephanie

Parent Resources

Are you looking for additional support? Ready to learn more about giftedness? Looking for parent-friendly journals, articles, or a good book to read about supporting your gifted child?

These three organizations are excellent places to start.



SENG

www.sengifted.org

Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted. SENG's mission is to empower families to successfully guide their gifted children to success. Through frequent newsletters, webinars, and support groups, members are provided with a wealth of resources. If you're interested in becoming a SENG trained parent group facilitator, let the GATE office know.

National Association for the Gifted

www.NAGC.org

This is the national advocacy organization representing the needs of gifted learners. Their publication "Parenting for High Potential," is an excellent and accessible resource for members. In addition, NAGC provides an expansive website, annual conference and resources.



California Association for the Gifted

www.CAGifted.org

Membership in this statewide organization supports advocacy for the needs of gifted learners along with their parents and teachers. CAG hosts regional events, professional development, an annual conference, and publishes nationally recognized journals.



Frequently Asked Questions

How can I get involved?

District GATE Advisory Council meetings happen three times during each school year. Parents are invited to serve as site representatives, sharing information between the district and their school. Speak to your principal to learn who your site representative is, or to volunteer to become one.



What is rigor?

Have you've heard this in terms of Common Core, or even your child's teacher saying, *"We're striving to increase rigor in our classroom."* Rigor is not synonymous with difficulty, but rather with depth of understanding. It is more difficult to memorize the names of all of the counties in CA, but that learning task does not require deep understanding about the various regions. A rigorous assignment might ask students to compare and contrast two or three different counties in the state. The goals of rigorous instruction include considering multiple meanings, taking and supporting positions, and engaging in inquiry.

What makes a GATE classroom different?

The answer to this question is as varied as gifted learners! SCUSD offers a range of differentiated learning opportunities from self-contained GATE classrooms to GATE cluster model classrooms. Typically, teachers of gifted learners will look for opportunities to provide learning activities that give gifted learners a chance to have both choice and to be challenged. Differentiated classrooms provide opportunities for students to work collaboratively with peers who may sometimes be at a similar ability level, and at other times may share similar interests. Additionally, students may be given similar but different learning tasks, or have the opportunity to select one component of their studies (E.g. picking the topic for a report.) Above all, your child should have the chance to encounter rigor. If you have questions about your child's classroom, always ask the teacher!

Who can I contact?

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-Teacher training, Parent Education

The Common Core State Standards: How will this affect gifted and advanced learners?

This is an exciting time in education, but mixed in with that level of excitement there is more than a little anxiety about these new standards and what they mean for teachers, parents, and students. At home, you are already seeing new types of math problems and solution strategies. It's very likely they are not similar to the ways you learned to solve similar problems when you were in school. In addition, your child is likely sharing stories from their day using terms like "Academic Conversation" or "spy talk." What is all of this new? And where does your gifted child fit in the mix?

In many ways, the teaching strategies needed to achieve Common Core standards are deeply rooted in best practices within the field of Gifted Education. The emphasis on creativity, innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, communication and collaboration, technological literacy, and social skills are all essential components in Common Core, in a classroom for gifted learners, and ultimately for any learner to be prepared for success in the 21st century!

Most exciting for gifted learners is that Common Core standards are not a checklist of skills, as were our previous CA State Standards. This shift offers learners the chance to dig deeper, to think more broadly, and to consider the complexity of learning tasks. Teachers are encouraged to take the time in their classrooms to support students in deeper study and to resist rushing on until students have been able to gain mastery.

All of this makes it much easier for teachers to

comfortably differentiate learning within their classroom. You may see that your child has the opportunity to read increasing amounts of both literature and non-fiction at their reading level. This may mean reading books as a whole class and taking the time to discuss and understand the big ideas around structure and meaning, or it may mean that your child has the chance to select a book that appeals to his or her interests to study with a small group or partner.

Assignments may present few questions for students to answer, but the task of completing the responses requires more in depth thinking.

So, what can you do at home to support your gifted learner and to ensure that they are being given the chance to experience rigor and complexity? First of all, understand the standards for yourself. Visit the district website www.scusd.edu where you can access a link to the standards, training sessions, and links for more information. Then, take the time to talk to your child's teacher. Ask about the ways your student is able to demonstrate mastery of content. Find out about the differentiation strategies that are being used in the classroom. And, the ways that those strategies are being used to support your child's learning experiences. Finally, support your child! Your voice is the strongest voice in shaping your child's viewpoint. For most students Common Core requires them to re-learn the ways that they "do" school. This can be frustrating. Seeing and hearing your support of their learning accomplishments and of their classroom teacher's efforts can go a long way in building their willingness to try!