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a publication of the  
Gifted and Talented Education Council  
of The Alberta Teachers' Association

## From the Editor

by Barbara Bishop

It is with great pleasure that I step into this new role as editor for the GTEC newsletter. I am originally from British Columbia, where I had the great pleasure of teaching at Choice School for the Gifted, in New Westminster. I have been at home with my children since moving to Alberta but recently have started my master's in gifted education through the University of Connecticut. My future plans are to work in Edmonton school districts as a consultant for gifted education.

I am still in the process of learning how gifted education is handled here in Alberta. After attending the SAGE conference this year, I was definitely shocked to discover that as of 2005/06, only 0.01 per cent of Alberta students have been formally identified as being gifted. School administrators and classroom teachers need to be educated about giftedness to help aid the identification process. That being said, even when our gifted students have been identified, many of them will still be in inclusive settings within our school system. Classroom teachers need support from experienced professionals on how they can meet the needs of these students in their classrooms when most schools no longer have a resource room option available for gifted students.

A recent interest of mine is in the area of the twice-exceptional learner. It is a difficult concept for many people to realize that a child can be both gifted and learning disabled. Having the ability to think in a gifted capacity but lacking the ability to express what they are thinking must be incredibly frustrating for these students. I believe that teachers need to be educated to identify this type of student in their classrooms, because their giftedness is often overlooked.

While attending university this summer, I was struck by something that was said to our class by Dr Susan Baum, a well-known professional in the field of twice-exceptional children, that applies to the teaching of all students. I will leave the reader with this simple but perhaps perspective-shifting thought: "If we as educators took all of the energy we spend focusing on fixing our students' deficits and directed all of that energy towards the development of their talents, we would create phenomenal children." ☺

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# President's Message

by Hal Curties

**H**appy New Year!

While there are signs of progress in meeting the needs of gifted learners in Alberta, there still appears to be much work to do.

Gifted learners continue to be underidentified in Alberta. Most conservative estimates suggest that gifted learners should constitute 2–5 per cent of our student population. Figures from Alberta Education last year indicate that identified gifted learners make up 0.01 per cent of our student population. Clearly, there is more to be done towards identifying gifted students.

In working with teachers who have identified gifted students in inclusive settings, I have become aware of the fact that teachers (who must daily work with a multitude of special needs) need resources that are immediately usable. These resources exist, but awareness of their existence is lacking. The Gifted and Talented Education Council can be instrumental in assembling and sharing these resources.

Finally, we need to continue to talk to education faculties and school boards to encourage adequate education and training of teachers in all areas of special education, including gifted and talented.

While it is relatively easy to point out how education for gifted learners in Alberta needs to be improved, it is critical that we not lose sight of the significant work that is being undertaken by schools in many districts. Thanks to a number of dedicated teaching professionals, learning conditions for highly able students across the province have improved. Our work is to appreciate the opportunities and continue to address the obstacles. 🐼

# Websites of Interest

by Barbara Bishop

**T**hese links are compiled from the Saturday morning keynote presentation by Edna Dach, at SAGE 2007. They are interesting resources of new technology that can be used by and with our students.

## **X Timeline—[www.xtimeline.com](http://www.xtimeline.com)**

Students can explore and create timelines with other students online.

## **Gliffy—[www.gliffy.com](http://www.gliffy.com)**

Students can use this site to create flow charts, diagrams and mind maps.

## **ToonDoo—[www.toondoo.com](http://www.toondoo.com)**

Students can create their own comic books using this site.

## **Google Lit Trips—[www.googlelittrips.org](http://www.googlelittrips.org)**

Using Google Earth, students create a map of where in the world the greatest literary road trips of all time took place.

## **Community Walk—[www.communitywalk.com](http://www.communitywalk.com)**

Students can use this site to create online maps of their communities.

## **BubblePly—[www.bubbleply.com](http://www.bubbleply.com)**

BubblePly allows students to add speech bubbles to any of their video productions.

## **Screencast-O-Matic—[www.screencast-o-matic.com](http://www.screencast-o-matic.com)**

This site offers a free and easy way to create a video recording of your screen.

## **Teacher Tube—[www.teachertube.com](http://www.teachertube.com)**

This site is a good source of educational videos that can be incorporated into classroom learning.

And an extra—the website for the Neag Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development at the University of Connecticut, USA, is [www.gifted.uconn.edu](http://www.gifted.uconn.edu). If you click on Schoolwide Enrichment Model, you will find a wealth of resources on different programs for the gifted as well as on creating enrichment clusters within your schools. Although this site is from an American university, there are many links here that may give you some valuable resources.

(Websites accessed on January 14, 2008.) 🐼

# Messages from Outgoing Executive Members

**L**inda Finlay and Tracey Schaufele have both been exemplary leaders and contributors to GTEC. Here is what they have done and what they have learned from their involvement in the Council.

**Linda Finlay** started with GTEC 10 years ago and has served as president-elect, president (twice), conference coordinator, newsletter editor and secretary.

She is currently working as the AISI learning leader at Centennial High School, in Calgary, a position that allows her to work with teachers to address the needs of 21st-century learners.

Linda says that “GTEC gave me the opportunity to develop professionally. I was fortunate to attend conferences featuring international leaders in the gifted field. I met and worked with absolutely wonderful people who shared their passion for advocating for the needs of the gifted learner.”

While Linda’s commitment and involvement to the Council have been outstanding, one of her most important contributions has been in involving her sons, Andrew and Graeme, in becoming active on the GTEC executive. We need more mothers like Linda!

**Tracey Schaufele** started working with the Northern Regional arm of GTEC in 1987. She began as the secretary in the days when we literally cut and pasted our newsletters—and she is not talking about a computer function! From there, Tracey moved to the provincial GTEC executive sometime in 1992. Soon she assumed the duties of secretary of the provincial executive, a position that she held until she became president-elect in 2005. Her presidency followed in 2006, and this past year she served as past president and conference director. Tracey says, “It has been a pleasure to serve with the GTEC

executive over the past 20 years. The committee is a dedicated group of fun-loving and hard-working people. We have laboured to be on the leading edge of information on gifted education, have formed a strong liaison with Alberta Education, and have worked to connect with veteran teachers and novices alike, to advance the special needs of gifted students.”

This past summer, she had the pleasure of representing GTEC at the World Gifted Conference, in Warwick, England. She was fascinated to learn about the state of gifted education worldwide. “One of the things that stands out in my mind is a lesson I learned from a colleague in Singapore. In that country, they view giftedness as truly a gift—unearned. With that gift comes an obligation—to give back to society in a tangible way. As a result, their coded gifted students engage in citizenship activities that are a mandatory part of their gifted programming. What a great model!”

Tracey is thrilled that we have new interest in the Gifted and Talented Education Council, and she is happy to now step down from the executive and leave things in new and capable hands. “I will continue to work with the gifted students in my school, and look forward to future SAGE conferences.”

Many thanks to both of you for your remarkable and long years of service. We will miss you. 🍷



# SAGE 2007 Highlights

by Tracey Schaufele

Conference Director, SAGE 2007

This year's SAGE conference was held at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, in Edmonton, on November 16 and 17, 2007. It was a small conference, with only 96 delegates in attendance. However, we were pleased to include a contingent of student teachers, who received a very special promotional rate of \$25 for conference registration. The committee felt that it was wise to include preservice teachers so that they get a taste of the needs of gifted students well before they encounter them in their own classrooms.

As you may know, the conference is sponsored by three stakeholder groups: the Alberta Association for Bright Children (AABC), the Gifted and Talented Education Council and the Centre for Gifted Education at the University of Calgary.

## Conference Highlights

### Friday Night Keynote—Dr Roy Jensen

Dr Jensen wowed us with his visual chemistry. He modelled good teaching, showing us how to engage our gifted learners while also covering content. He discussed the evolution of polymers, explosives, catalysts and drugs in modern-day society. And, of course, just like the children we teach, we loved the explosions, chemical reactions and fun that Dr Jensen shared.

### Saturday Morning Keynote—Edna Dach

Just when we thought we were pretty good with computers, Edna had us sitting up and taking notice that the kids' world of technology has passed us by. We may use word processors and e-mail just fine, but the kids are into blogging, podcasting, movie making and text messaging—in their own language, no less. Edna showed us a wealth of sites that will help us begin the journey that our children are already well along. She reminded me of something that Dr Jensen said the night before: "Confidence is what you feel before you fully comprehend the situation." That's exactly how I felt about my computer expertise!

### Breakout Sessions

After the keynote sessions, delegates were free to choose from a selection of 22 breakout sessions, organized into three blocks. Feedback was that there was so much to hear, but not enough time to do it all. Sessions included identification of gifted students, literature and poetry, math, the social-emotional needs of the gifted (and gifted with autism), citizenship, art and computers. There truly was something for everyone. Many thanks to the committee for all of their dedicated work to organize the conference—Don Delaney, Terry Gerling, Meheret Worku, Debbi Andrews and Ray Tomcej.

We also want to say a special thank-you to our conference administrator, Pat Chichak, who did such an outstanding job of managing the many details of such a conference.

We look forward to SAGE 2008, to be held in Calgary. 🍷

# Tribute to Dr Michael Pyryt

by Hal Curties



It is with tremendous sadness that we acknowledge the passing of our great friend, Michael Pyryt. Not only was Michael a very distinguished scholar in the field of gifted education, he was also a driving force in the awareness and development of gifted education in Alberta and beyond.

Michael grew up in Garfield, New Jersey, USA. He attended Johns Hopkins University, where he obtained both undergraduate and graduate degrees in psychology. His doctorate was achieved at the University of Kansas. Michael came to the University of Calgary from West Virginia in 1989, teaching in the division of applied psychology. He eventually assumed the directorship of the Centre for Gifted Education at the U of C in 2000.

Michael's academic contributions are numerous. He has published extensively in the field of gifted education, contributing as an author, reviewer and editor to such publications as the *Handbook for Gifted Education*, *the Roeper Review*, *Exceptional Education Canada*, *Gifted Child Quarterly* and many more local, national and international publications. Michael also presented at conventions around the world and helped to organize local events such as SAGE Conferences and Dabrowski symposia.

While Michael's academic credentials were extremely impressive, I would like to say that it was his authenticity as a person that made him a truly unique and unforgettable man. Both personally and professionally, he acted from a highly developed sense of values. He was a teacher in the truest sense of the word: not only given to imparting knowledge, which he possessed in seemingly endless abundance, but also full of infectious enthusiasm that made one believe, on so many levels, that this was important work. Michael was a mentor and advisor, whose wisdom was highly sought by countless individuals and organizations because what he said was always well considered and in the best interests of the seeker.

For a very, very long time, it is going to be oddly discomfoting to attend events where Michael's presence was a constant and to not see his happy, welcoming smile, his thoughtful shrugs or his inimitable fashion. For those of us on the train of gifted education, it will seem as though a powerful engine has been taken away and we are in danger of slowing to a stop. For Michael's sake, we shall have to work just a little harder, with a greater sense of determination, to make sure that doesn't happen.

Michael leaves behind many, many friends, admirers, and colleagues. Our sympathies go to his wife, Leta Gonzales-Pyryt; his daughter, Tara, and her husband, Chris; his granddaughter, Brooke; the staff at the Centre for Gifted Education; and his good friend and long-time collaborator, Dr Sal Mendaglio. 🍀

# Gifted and Talented Education Council of The Alberta Teachers' Association

The Gifted and Talented Education Council

- is a specialist council for teachers ECS to Grade 12 with an interest in the education of gifted and talented children, and
- is dedicated to the improvement of teaching practices of gifted and talented children in the regular classroom, pullout programs and full-time programs.

Joining the Gifted and Talented Education Council will

- provide you with the opportunity to actively participate in matters relating to the education of gifted and talented children;
- entitle you to receive the council's newsletter, published three times a year, featuring council news and articles of interest for classroom use;
- keep you informed on current research and writings in gifted and talented education through *AGATE*, a journal published twice a year;
- introduce you to other professionals with an interest and involvement in gifted and talented education; and
- provide you with opportunities for professional growth in the area of gifted and talented education through the annual conference and activities sponsored by the Gifted and Talented Education Council regional in your area.

*Get Involved! Join the Gifted and Talented Education Council!*

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## Application Form Gifted and Talented Education Council, ATA

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Alberta Teaching Certificate No \_\_\_\_\_

Category of Membership (check one)

Regular—\$25     Student—\$5     Affiliate—\$25     Subscription—\$40

Please return this form with a cheque or money order payable to the Alberta Teachers' Association, Barnett House, 11010 142 Street NW, Edmonton, Alberta T5N 2R1.

### Membership Classifications

**Regular** • Members of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), as specified in ATA bylaws, are eligible for regular membership in this council. All such members shall be entitled to full privileges of council membership including the rights to vote and to hold office.

**Student** • Student members of the ATA may join this council and shall be entitled to all benefits and services of council membership except the right to hold office.

**Affiliate** • Persons who are not ATA members as specified in the ATA bylaws may join this specialist council as affiliate members. Such members may receive all the benefits and services of council membership except the rights to vote and to hold office.

**Subscription** • Council publications shall be available to interested organizations at an annual rate.

## Permission to Print

Your child has submitted a sample of writing that we would like to print in the next issue of *SAGE Words*. *SAGE Words* is a newsletter that goes to teachers across Alberta who are members of the Gifted and Talented Education Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

We would like to encourage students to publish written work in our newsletter to be shared with educators across the province. Your child has completed a piece of writing that we would like to include in the next issue of our newsletter.

By signing below, I give permission for my child's work to be considered for publication in an upcoming issue of *SAGE Words*. This permission form will be forwarded to the newsletter editor.

Parent/guardian name \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/guardian signature \_\_\_\_\_

Student name \_\_\_\_\_ Student signature \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_ School location \_\_\_\_\_

Notes to teachers:

- When submitting student work, please include the Permission to Print form with all signatures completed. Send the student work and the permission form to the editor of *SAGE Words*, Barb Bishop, c/o Arbour Lake School, 27 Arbour Crest Drive NW, Calgary T3G 4H3.
  - Work may be submitted electronically to [bdbishop34@hotmail.com](mailto:bdbishop34@hotmail.com). Please ensure that the permission form is mailed to the address above.
  - Submissions should not exceed 500 words.
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