

# Our GT Advocate

## Parent Advocacy Group (PAGE)

### Getting on The Right PAGE...



Nearly 75 children reserved a seat at the table for the Fifth Annual GT Game Night! From strategic games like Risk, to silly games like Giant Spoons (now on the holiday lists of many of our parents), our children enjoyed meeting old friends and making new ones. Can you image consuming 225 slices of pizza, 125 bottles of water, 75 bags of po-

tato chips, and *all* of the mini cupcakes from Hoboken's uncelebrated gem, Sweets Bakery? Oh, what a night!

Because our children had so much fun either quietly playing or loudly engaging in this get together, we will schedule another GT Game Night after the holiday season.

As I mentioned at our first meeting in October, we are also planning a social action activity during the cold winter months. Our children will work together on a community service project, which will benefit those in need around our own community. For all of these activities, your child's GTE

teacher will send a flyer home through school with R.S.V.P. information, so please check your backpacks and watch your e-mails!

We look forward to an engaging year, with programs to address areas of interest for parents and to engage the minds and hearts of our children who enjoy our academic GT programs in Livingston Public Schools during the school day.

Enjoy a happy, healthy holiday season!

Best wishes,

Pam Chirls  
Chairperson

December  
2011

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## Our GT Advocate

**Our GT Advocate** is produced through the efforts of the Livingston School District's Gifted and Talented/Enrichment Department. The goal of this newsletter is to provide the general public with up-to-date information on both the GT and enrichment programs offered by the district, as well as outside enrichment ideas and helpful resources.

**Our GT Advocate** reserves space in each issue for student input. If you would like to be a contributing member, please contact Sharon Handley at (973) 535-8000, Ext: 6920 or through email [shandley@livingston.org](mailto:shandley@livingston.org)

**Our GT Advocate** can be found online through the Board of Education website <http://www.livingston.org> under the drop down menu: Parent Resources, P-T Council, and click the link on the left for PAGE, or if you would like our PAGE dates and **Our GT Advocate** emailed with each publication, you can go to <http://www.livingston.org> and click on "Subscribe to LPS news" and put a check in the box for Our GT Advocate.

### Upcoming Meeting:



February 9, 2012

LHS

Media Center

# Guidelines for Parents of The Gifted Child

In this second of a two-part series outlining guidelines for helping your gifted child, you can read a summary of the research provided by Linda Silverman, Ph.D., Director of the Gifted Child Development Center in Denver, Colorado. Her focus for the morning at the 2011 NJAGC Conference was on "What We Have Learned About Gifted Children." She encouraged the audience to share the informational articles she distributed with parents of gifted children.

She shared that giftedness develops in a stimulating home environment. A rich family life includes shared meals with lively discussions and humor; time to work and play together; exposure to cultural activities such as museums, art exhibits, symphonies, theaters, dance recitals; family trips; shared family interests, story telling, and playing games.

She recommends that parents expose their child to a wide variety of activities. If they display an interest in a certain area, this is where parents can be influential by providing the next step. This may involve encouragement, materials, good questions, or just listening, so that the child can

share the excitement of discovery.

Dr. Silverman points out that families, like gifted children, are all unique, and each has something different to offer. Therefore, no set of guidelines for parenting the gifted can be applicable to all families unless it is so general that it could be considered good common sense. Dr. Silverman provides a variety of ideas to answer the most common concerns by parents of the gifted.

- Talk with your children in an adult manner. Their minds are like sponges, absorbing everything around them: vocabulary, attitudes, values, and interests.
- Gifted children often seem to require more attention than others and they want to be included in most things. It is important however that boundaries be set for them. It must be clear who is the adult and who is the child.
- Praise your child for taking risks, even little ones because many gifted children dread failure or looking foolish. They must learn how to fail in order to succeed.
- Gifted children are able to do

many things independently much earlier than other children. Whenever possible, let them discover their own ways of doing things. Allow them to make mistakes and take risks.

- Provide opportunities for your child to interact often with other gifted children, older children, and stimulating adults.
- Be open to their questions. Gifted children are very curious. They often have early concerns about the meaning of life, death, justice, and war. Be the person they trust to ask these questions.
- Do not over schedule them with activities. Give them time to think, to play, to daydream, and to be children.

Your chances of any success in any undertaking can always be measured by the belief in yourself.

—Robert Collier

References: Linda K. Silverman, Ph.D., Director the Gifted Development Center in Denver, Colorado.

## Team Chess Wins Again!

Mrs. Argen is thrilled to announce that our Team Chess members at Heritage Middle School made us proud at the recent Fall Essex County Tournament held in Caldwell.



Livingston trophies this fall were: 1st place Varsity G.S. and Kevin Xu, 3rd place Varsity,

Albert Wen and Jason Hu, 2nd place Junior Varsity, Mitchell Yang and Rohan Bendre, and 3rd place Junior Varsity, Shannon Li and Jeremy Wei.

During weekly meetings students learn and practice the tactics used for Team Chess, a fast-paced game played with traditional pieces, but engaging four students at once. School tournaments are held bi-

annually, with the top scores earning students a place on a county tournament team. Team Chess is an Enrichment program open to any interested student throughout the year. Congratulations for a job well done!

**Resource Review** has information on purchasing a Chess 4 game.

# Resource Review!

## Apps for Tablets and Websites

### TinkerBox HD

TinkerBox HD is a free app that gives students an opportunity to invent machines that capitalize on basic engineering concepts. The goal is to manipulate the organization of a wide array of mechanical gadgets so they solve a given problem. Using trial and error, students can arrange and rearrange elements until they design a successful solution. The invent mode lets users create their own machines.



**Best Kids Apps** is a website that has already played, reviewed, and categorized the apps for the iPhone, iPad, and Android. They have titled the menus: age, free, creative, educational, parental, best-sellers, and more. It may be worth your time to research apps before purchasing.

<http://www.bestkidsapps.com/>

**NASA Space Place** site is sponsored by nasa.gov. and offers elementary kids,



teachers, and their parents access to numerous activity guides, and additional links to receive free materials about science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Explore the student section to find they have something for everyone from grades K-12.

<http://www.nasa.gov>.

## Games



**Chess 4 Game** expands on the classic game of chess so up to 4 can play at once. Black, white, gold, and silver pieces all go head to head on the same 64 tile square board, plus an additional 96 squares. This game includes 4 full sets of play-

ing pieces. Gifted children love chess! It is a game of logic, but did you know that playing chess has a number of benefits, which includes teaching patience? Amazon.com \$17.14

**Quadrigo** is a mind-twisting, two player, three dimensional, four in-a-row strategy game, that is both simple, and at the same time very sophisticated. It is challenging and fun for all ages. The object of the game is to create a row of four beads, in any direction, level, row, column or plane before your opponent does, but with a twist. Highly acclaimed by Mensa judges.



[Mindtwister USA](http://www.mindtwisterusa.com)

Dare to discover **Forbidden Island!**



Join a team of fearless adventurers on a do-or-die mission to capture four sacred treasures from the ruins of this perilous paradise. Your team will have to work together and make some pulse-pounding maneuvers, as the island will sink beneath every step! [Gamewright](http://www.gamewright.com)



**Primary Science Set** contains real science tools perfectly sized for little hands supporting hands-on early science investigations. This colorful, durable set features ten double-sided activity cards which cover science process skills, living and nonliving things, physical science, senses, and more. Grades: PreK+.

[Learning Resources](http://www.learningresources.com)

The love of learning,  
the sequestered nooks  
and all the sweet serenity of books.  
~Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

## Books

As a follow-up to the Percy Jackson Series reviewed in the Fall 2010 GT Advocate, Rick Riordan has written another series which ties into our Ancient Greece and Rome elementary studies. Hillside GT students highly recommend this series and suggest they be read in order. In this new series fans return to the world of Camp Half-Blood. Here, a new group of heroes will inherit a quest. In order to survive the journey, they will need the help of some familiar demigods.

<http://disney.go.com/official-sites/heroes-of-olympus/index>

Book One: *The Lost Hero* 2010

Book Two: *The Son of Neptune* 2011

Book Three: *Mark of Athena* 2012



**Mysterious Benedict Society** is a Series by Trenton Lee Stewart

It starts with children answering an advertisement asking, "Are you a gifted child looking for special opportunities?" The mystery takes off from there. These three books should be read in order. Also found on this site are links titled: "Games for the Gifted" and "Logic and More." Also available is a free app for the iPhone, iPad, and/or iPod. Recommended by C.L.

<http://www.mysteriousbenedictsociety.com/>

If you have an app, website, book, or game you would like to share, please email me at [shandley@livingston.org](mailto:shandley@livingston.org).



## Enrichment Opportunities

### Discovery Museum NYC: CSI: The Experience



immerses you in hands-on science while leading you through the challenge of solving a crime. The hands-on exhibit brings to life fundamental scientific principles, numerous scientific disciplines, and the most advanced technology and techniques used today by crime scene investigators and forensic scientists. <http://newyork.csiexhibit.com/index.html>  
Also at the **Franklin Institute** in **Philadelphia** until January 2, 2012.

that shape our world, all in a colorful, carnival style! Exhibit runs through January 22, 2012.

2. Look for the **Development of Alternative Energy** exhibition opening at Spring 2012

### Morris Museum: "Digging Dinosaurs,"



is an interactive exhibit focusing on the intersection of science, history, and art. If you are looking for something to do over the holiday break – this event runs through Dec. 31st.

**Princeton Art Museum** offers two new exhibitions for viewing:

**Multiple Hands: Collective Creativity in Eighteenth Century Japanese Painting** explores the collective art-making process. This exhibition focuses on two types of cooperative painting practices workshop and collaborative, in eighteenth-century Japan.

(Exhibited until January 22, 2012)



### Object of Devotion: Medieval English Alabaster Sculpture from the Victoria and Albert Museum

Visitors to the Princeton University Art Museum will have a rare glimpse into the spiritual lives, hopes, fears, and religious aspirations of medieval Christians through the exceptional art created during this fascinating time in European history.

Their self-guided activities are designed to provoke thoughtful discussion and to help family members of all ages interact with art and with each other. Stop by the information desk to pick up your activity packets.

(Exhibited until February 12, 2012)

For more information on hours and currently showing works of art link to <http://www.princetonartmuseum.org/>

**Liberty Science Center** is offering two new exhibitions: <http://lsc.org>

#### 1. The Year of Math:

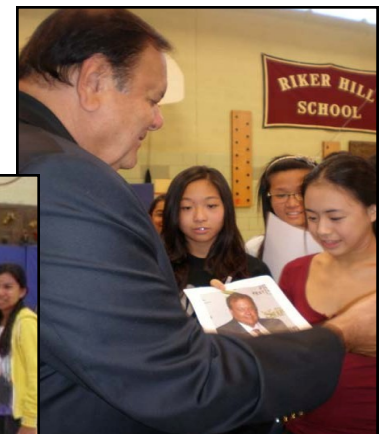
#### "Discover the Math in Everything"

Explore math in the **Math Midway**, a fun-filled exhibition from the **Museum of Mathematics**. This traveling exhibition provides an interactive, hands-on tour of the mathematical concepts

## Opera Students Meet Paul Sorvino

HMS students enrolled in the fall Academically Gifted and Talented Theatre/Opera cluster were recently treated to a visit from celebrity Paul Sorvino. Mr. Sorvino is best known for his roles on the big screen, but he is also passionate about performing opera. The students were able to ask him questions about his career and interests, and were graciously given autographs and photo opportunities. The most exciting moments came when Mr. Sorvino performed, singing Happy Birthday in an operatic voice,

as well as presenting a favorite aria. The students are now inspired to try their hand at writing and performing an original libretto.



Mr. Sorvino took time to take photos and sign autographs!

# Crime Solving and Creating at the Middle Schools

Student detectives in the Curious Minds cluster at MPM are busy conducting hands-on forensics science tests on evidence found at the “crime scene.” Let’s back up for a moment and understand that the GT students started by learning the importance of properly conducting an investigation. What do we notice? What will we remove as evidence? What questions arise based on the victim’s or witness’s statement? These are the many questions to be answered.

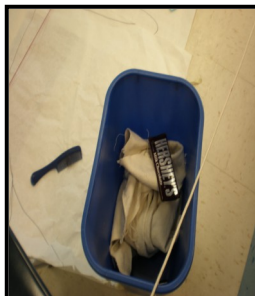
Proper procedures during the first investigation of the crime scene can make the difference between a solved crime and an unsolved one. Children will break down the evidence and perform a variety of tests, such as chromatography where a mixture of substances often can be separated into their original forms. Students perform fingerprint analysis

on visible prints and latent prints and then articulate the similarities and differences within the intricacies of fingerprints.

When investigating a crime a detective must have the ability to distinguish evidence from inference. After a variety of introductory research, the students will

be examining a full crime scene and testing evidence to determine which suspect or suspects committed the crime.

The student detectives are performing the same activities that all scientists do: they observe, classify, compare, use numbers, measure,



predict, interpret data, and draw inferences based on the evidence. They carefully sift through the collected evidence and learn how to see through misleading, deceptive clues and apply what they have discovered to issues of civil and criminal law.

The Heritage GT students in Curious Minds started the year by reading a fictional account of a kidnapping, “The Ransom of Red Chief” by O. Henry. They followed up by researching the true life account of the Lindberg Baby Kidnapping. After determining the elements of a mystery, they began working on creating original crime scenes/mysteries for their peers to observe, investigate, and solve. Students are incorporating several Forensic Science skills that they have been experimenting with such as calculating body proportions and analyzing handwriting samples.

## “All roads lead to ...” Ancient Rome?

“All roads lead to Rome.” “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” We still hear people using these quotes even though the Roman Empire fell in 476 A.D. Where does this fascination with Roman history come from? Why are our elementary GT students so excited by the myriad aspects of the Roman Civilization? Most importantly, why do we study ancient people? The overall question we continually ask ourselves throughout our studies is, “To what extent has the development of early civilizations influenced our present world?” The Roman civilization is one of the greatest success stories in the history of man and our students are delving into some interesting topics.

Students began with the construction of a historical timeline which

helped them picture the order of important events and how they relate to one other. They will add to their timelines as their studies progress. Students learn the importance of Rome’s physical geography and its affect on their development and ability to conquer many lands and cultures, including much of Europe, the Middle East, and the North coast of Africa. With this huge area of land to “rule” our GT “Magistrates” understand the systems of power and how government is used to establish order. They have drawn direct connections between the Roman Senate and our present system of democracy. There may even be some lively debates as to the fairness or injustice of the Twelve Tables as they relate to some of our present laws.

The children are exploring how the wants and needs of a civilization lead to the development of science, technological, engineering, and math inventions and innovations. Some of these ideas include their use of cement, road systems, and the idea of aqueducts as an early water supply system. The students will also cover various areas of daily life, which may include literature, language, and the many aspects of the arts.

Our culminating event will be attending an original “Roman” opera, written and performed by Heritage Middle School GT Theatre students. This will certainly be a rewarding experience and a way to connect the influence of our ancient civilizations to our modern world.

# Time to Play!

## ...how to develop thinking and problem solving skills

In a recent Mastercard commercial it states: "Most popular toy for toddlers - \$500. Most popular stuffed animal - \$350. Most popular book - \$60. Watching her play with the box instead...Priceless."



By clicking on the following link, you can view this commercial on YouTube.

<http://youtu.be/sDf751c1yiA>

This 30 second TV commercial is noteworthy because it emphasizes the importance of play. The toddler is exploring the box. She peers inside, drags it across the room, climbs in and out of it, puts it on the couch and then turns it into a tunnel. The toddler is discovering all the many possible uses for the simple box – in other words, developing her higher order thinking skills.

Play is an essential and proven means for children to develop necessary academic and life skills. Researchers throughout the decades support the importance of play for children to develop the abilities to think abstractly, become problem solvers, and creative thinkers. Through play, children of all ages develop thinking skills that move them from concrete thinking to that abstract or creative thinking so necessary to life success. These skills acquired through play include exploration, manipulation, mastery through practice and repetition, logical memory, problem solving, interpretation, imagination, creativity (divergent thinking), and expression of will. (K. Elise Packard) Entire companies have formed to capitalize on the importance of play, creating new toys which purport to develop a child's

brain. The play which is studied and extolled in research is good old-fashioned imaginative play. The baby playing in a box...children engaging in role play...constructing and inventing new items or new uses for items...exploring electronics, chemistry...engaging in strategy games.

Kathy Hirsh-Pasek and Roberta Michnick Golinkoff, coauthors of *Einstein Never Used Flash Cards: How our children really learn and why they need to play more and memorize less*, emphasize that "...children who learn through play do better academically and socially. As members of the 'Google' generation, 21<sup>st</sup> century children will have facts at their fingertips. They do not need to be fed information through toys. **They need to play...to become problem solvers and creative thinkers.**" (Hirsh-Pasek, K. & Golinkoff, R.M, 2003) Because research emphasizes that learning occurs best in meaningful contexts, they assert that "good toys" expand the boundaries of children's



ordinary experiences and naturally build social skills, academic skills, and bigger brains. (Hirsh-Pasek, K. & Golinkoff, R.M, 2003) The box is a clear example of a meaningful (and free!) toy for the little girl. Consider looking around the house and yard with your son or daughter to find new uses for old items. Encourage creativity and exploration. If you are considering toys for a birthday or holiday, keep these ideas in the back of your mind. Choose toys that will enable your child to explore, create, and discover. These are the ones which they

Trust that little voice in your head that says "Wouldn't it be interesting if..." And then do it.

~Duane Michals

will continue to return to for months or even years.

The National Association of Gifted Children publishes an annual list of recommended toys. These toys are evaluated by gifted students, their parents, and teachers. In the 2009 list, NAGC proposed that parents consider six different types of play when choosing toys: motor/physical play, language play, exploratory play, constructive play, social play, and pretend and imaginative play. (Reed, 2009) Not every toy or game is for every child. It is important to interact with children while they are exploring a new game. But remember, your child can find a wealth of ideas by exploring what they already have around the house and in the environment! Cost: Priceless

A few recommended games from the past two years are listed in the "Resource Review" section of the GT Advocate.

### Bibliography

- Bartlett, T. (2011, September). The Case for Play. *Education Digest*, pp. 27 - 33.
- Hirsh-Pasek, K. & Golinkoff, R.M. (2003). *Einstein Never Used Flashcards: How our children really learn and why they need to play more and memorize less*. Emmaus, PA: Rodale Press.
- K. Elise Packard, P. (n.d.). *Playing to Learn*. Retrieved Nov. 15, 2011, from Learning Basket: [www.learningbasket.org](http://www.learningbasket.org)
- Reed, M. (2009). Finding Value in Play. *Parenting for High Potential*.
- Schader, D. R. (2010). NAGC's 2010 Toy List. *Parenting for High Potential*.



## Mrs. Argen Attends NAGC Conference in New Orleans!



**Mrs. Argen getting an autograph from  
Bill Nye, the Science Guy!**

**George Rodrigue  
the Blue Dog artist**



"Advancing Potential and All That Jazz" was a fitting title for the 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the National Association for Gifted Children held in New Orleans last month. From the first musings by *Bill Nye, the Science Guy*, to the last brushstrokes of *George Rodrigue, the Blue Dog artist*, we were challenged to Jazz it up...but less glamorous was the underlying theme, that planned or not, kept appearing – passion.

And passion there was!

Along with thousands of others dedicated to making the lives of gifted students more fulfilling, I was faced with a wide expanse of activities to fill my every waking moment... and you had to get up early and go to bed late in order to take advantage of every time slot offered. From research presentations, vendor exhibitions of unique materials and resources, round table and panel discussions of current issues, workshops, mini keynote addresses by internationally renowned experts such as Dr. Joseph Renzulli from the

University of Connecticut, special interest meetings, and informal sessions in the "Learning Quarter"...they had it ALL!

Especially useful to my work here in Livingston was a workshop addressing the use of the newly scripted National Common Core Curriculum Standards, which we are incorporating into our District GT lesson plans and assessments. The discussion that ensued, comparing and contrasting programs with teachers from numerous states, was both productive and enlightening.

The highlight for me was the "Crescent City Celebration" at *Mardi Gras World*, which I had surmised was more of a social event since it included family members, not just conference participants. What a surprise when we all found ourselves in yet another keynote address, which included hands-on activities. What a sight to see thousands of people of all ages and walks of life attempting to create a simple origami figure or solve a brainteaser. You can imagine

the volume in that hall from everyone collaborating and debating the best methods!

Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty.

~Henry Ford

Conferences always energize me, and this was no exception. Adding to the excitement this time, though, was a whole new dimension of networking. I found that we in NJ have much in common with our colleagues from the rest of the country - a passion for learning and teaching, and a genuine concern for our students all facing the same challenges. Being dedicated professionals, as well as humanitarians, the conversations were always positive, focusing on improving the educational and personal experiences of our students, keeping our sense of humor and compassion, and "all that jazz!"

# Media Viewing Together

Lately, the concept of viewing media has gotten negative press. As with many things in life, approach is everything. What follows is a summary of several key points from "Effective Co-Viewing: Ideas on How to Make Watching TV a Better Learning Experience for Your Children."

Our children spend a lot of time in front of a screen attached to a computer, TV, tablet, or even a phone. Reasons for these actions can range from deriving entertainment, gathering information, being part of a social network or sometimes simply having the screen substitute for a babysitter.

According to Carey Bryson, graduate of Brigham Young University, children's advocate and media critic, as well as reviewer of over 200 children's films, it is beneficial to co-view media with your children. Bryson describes co-viewing as simply watching media with your children. Effective co-viewing involves getting more value out of your children's viewing time and she recommends some tips to achieve effective co-viewing.

- Talk about the media as you watch it together. Ask your children questions throughout the show, such as, "What do you think is going to happen?" "What does that mean?" "Why do you think the character did that?" or "How do you think the character feels about that?" Get your children actively thinking about the program or movie, instead of just passively watching.
- Point out interesting things in the program. Whether it is a scene, a song or just part of the background, if you notice something interesting, point it out to your child.
- Address inappropriate content or behavior. For example, if siblings are fighting in a TV program, you can ask them, "Why are they fighting?" "Is that a good way to act toward each other?"
- Discuss the difference between the program and reality. Many programs often show characters doing dangerous things or fighting with no real consequences.

Children need to know that these occurrences are unrealistic and would result in serious consequences in the real world.

- Use the media viewed as a springboard for additional learning. If your child shows interest in something from the show, use that interest as a reason to look up websites on the topic or help your child find a book about the topic at the library or bookstore.
- Have fun! The best thing about "co-viewing" is the extra cuddle time you can enjoy as you talk and laugh about TV shows or movies with your kids.

Practicing these co-viewing activities with children will establish a habit of thinking and active participation, which can make media time a little more educational.

## References:

Carey Bryson, BA Psychology, Brigham Young University; author of newsletter: *Kid's Movies and TV @ about.com*

American Association for Gifted Children: Current News and Resources: *Gifted Children and Television* <http://www.aagc.org/tv.htm>

## Student Forum



**Here's what I  
have to say  
about it...**

BG - "Forensics makes you confident and it leads you in a good direction. Everyone should join."

EW - "GT is important because it is an opportunity for me to learn and be inspired, so I can inspire others."

JH— "It was fun to transfer Ancient Roman mosaics into modern digital form."

JL - "GT is important because it lets me show what I am capable of."

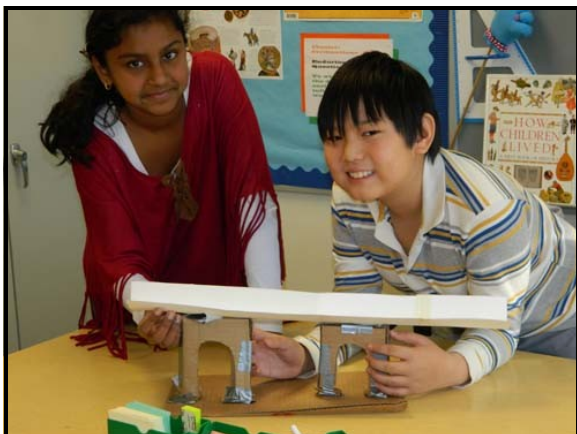
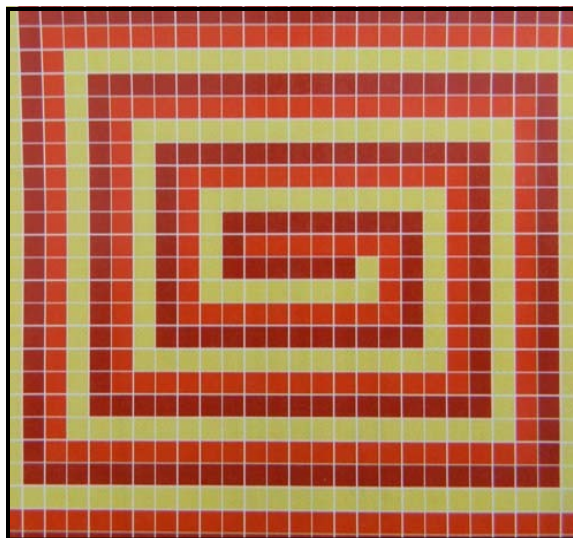
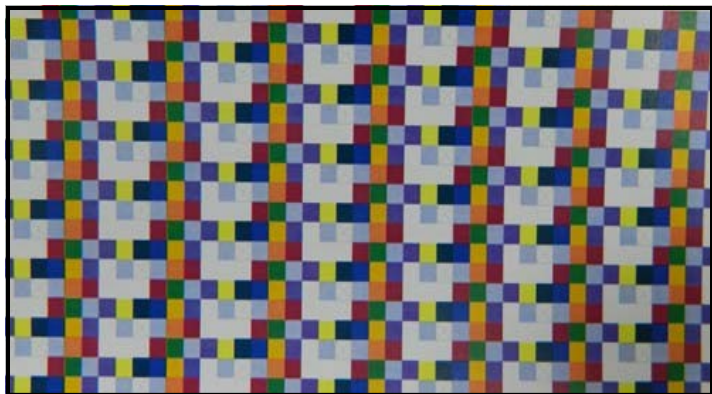
DB - "GT is important to me because it is a way to challenge my mind."



# Photo Gallery

## Ancient Rome GT Cluster:

Students designed and generated digital mosaics in repeated patterns and pictures.



## Ancient Rome GT Cluster:

Testing their engineering skills, students designed and constructed an aqueduct. To their great surprise—the inventions worked!



Six of Livingston's fourth grade GT students attended Essex County Tech Day at the Community Center. They worked in teams of five with students from various school districts using problem solving skills to design, build and present a working water tower.

# **Livingston School District**

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*"Empowering all to learn, create,  
contribute and grow."*

