

# Our GT Advocate

## Inside This Issue

What Not to Say to Gifted Students NAGC Conference (con't)	2
Local Enrichment	3
Fall GT Academic Clusters	4 - 5
Resource Suggestions	6
Diversity, Learning Style and Culture	7
GT Art Programs At MPM and HMS	8
GT Art Gallery	9
Fall Enrichment Programs	10
Fostering A Growth Mindset	11

## 2014 NAGC Conference

*Lenore Argen, HMS Gifted and Talented teacher, attended the NAGC Conference in Baltimore.*

“Making Inroads for Gifted Learners” was a fitting title for the 61st Annual Convention of the National Association for Gifted Children recently held in Baltimore. From the first musings of Jack Andraka, a “Scientist and Inventor who happens to be a kid,” to the impassioned stories of Deborah Phelps, a distinguished educator and mother of Michael Phelps, Olympic Champion Swimmer, we were challenged to forge new roads. But there was an underlying theme that, planned or not, began to surface with the very first keynote address by Dr. Freeman A. Hrabowski, III, President of the University of Maryland

and one of TIME magazine’s Most Influential People in the World: our educators, parents, and yes... students themselves... should work together to “create a culture of creativity and innovation.”

And collaboration there was! Along with thousands of others dedicated to making the lives of Gifted Students more fulfilling, we were faced with a wide expanse of activities to fill our every waking moment. Attendees had to get up early and go to bed late in order to take advantage of every time slot offered! One of my favorite workshops was *The Geeks Have Inherited the Earth!*, which requires forgoing ‘sleeping in’ on Sunday morning, perhaps qualifying ME as a Geek?

From a workshop I attended on helping gifted students learn independently

by “inverting” the usual classroom and homework activities, to vendor tables of books, materials, and resources, through round table discussions of the many issues featuring renowned experts such as Dr. Joseph Renzulli, and more...the conference had it ALL!

Especially useful to the GT teacher’s curriculum in Livingston was a workshop that addressed not only creativity and motivation, but the use of student self-assessment. The many interesting discussions that ensued, comparing and contrasting programs with teachers from numerous states, were productive and enlightening.



Continued on page 2

## Our GT Advocate

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

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

**Our GT Advocate** can be found posted on the Livingston District website at <http://www.livingston.org> below the drop down menu: District

Departments, Gifted and Talented, and click the link on the left for **Our GT Advocate**.

If you would like to have **Our GT Advocate** emailed with each new publication, go to the district website <http://www.livingston.org> and click: “Subscribe to LPS News” and check the box for **Our GT Advocate**.

# Things Parents Should Never Say to Gifted Children

*Summary of a keynote delivered at the UAGC (Utah Association for Gifted Children) Annual Conference in Provo, Utah, 2011 by Dr. Jim Delisle. Posted to the examiner.com on April 19, 2011.*

Well-intentioned parents may say things to their gifted children without realizing the effects those statements may have. Certain comments may fall under the guise of constructive praise; however, children are likely to interpret these comments differently which can negatively impact their attitude about education and their outlook on life.

Dr. Jim Delisle, one of the nation's foremost experts in the field of giftedness, was the keynote speaker at the 2011 UAGC Annual Conference in Provo, Utah. He identified mistakes that some parents make when communicating criticisms which can lead to disinterest, disappointment or underachievement. According to Delisle, there are four things that parents should never say to their gifted children.

## 1. **Your report card is good, but...**

A child may interpret this statement to mean, "No matter what I do, it isn't good enough." Delisle

believes that as soon as the word 'but' follows a compliment, you may as well have not given that compliment at all. One should not voice criticism in conjunction with a compliment. Save the disapproving comment for another time.

## 2. **This will be easy for a smart kid like you.**

Gifted kids may feel apprehensive when attempting something new. Telling a child that everything should be easy for him/her simply because he/she is gifted is unrealistic. If failure ensues, this misstatement usually leads to disappointment for all concerned. The reality is that neither the parent nor the child can anticipate whether he/she will be good at something. To suggest otherwise is misleading. Delisle recommends that parents inform their child how proud they are that the child is taking on this new challenge.

## 3. **I don't care about your grades; I just want you to do your best.**

Untrue statement! Nobody does his/her absolute best one hundred percent of the time. Typically, we focus our time and strength on things that are important to us. Not every task receives our utmost effort and attention. "When we say

something like this, there is no sense of what priorities mean; rather, everything then becomes equally important." The expert suggests that parents use the word "try" rather than the word "best."

## 4. **You're not working to your potential.**

At what point does anyone reach his/her potential in life? "This statement is without context," Delisle implies. Rather than being meaningless and broad, parents should be specific when communicating with their children about ambitions and accomplishments.

At some point during youth, gifted children will realize that society places unrealistic expectations on them. Parents can help kids adjust to life's ups and downs by telling them the truth: Not every task will be easy; occasional failure is inevitable and acceptable.

Parents may want to give examples of how they and other role models, such as famous authors, teachers, professional athletes, and musicians, also failed at something or did not achieve immediate success.

Finding satisfaction and some enjoyment is an important part of the learning process.

## 2014 NAGC Conference

(Continued from page 1)

Throughout the conference I was constantly supplied with resources to refer to, both in print and electronically. This enabled me to follow up on workshops that I attended, as well as access information from other concurrently run sessions. I am easily able to share this information with my colleagues in Livingston.

A highlight for me was the "Dance with the Dinosaurs" Reception held at the *Maryland Science Center*. Although billed as a social event, I was not surprised

to find that most educators were totally engaged in trying out all of the hands-on activities usually monopolized by our children. What a sight to see hundreds of people of all ages and interests attempting to outsmart an optical illusion or being startled by a dinosaur come to life; you can imagine the volume in that hall from the oohs and ahs...and laughs...that ensued!

Conferences energize me, but attending a national conference features a very special dimension of networking. While speaking with fellow educators during a State

Affiliate Meeting, and throughout the entire convention, 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.

Being dedicated professionals and humanitarians, the conversations were always positive, focusing on improving the educational and personal experiences of all our students, keeping our sense of humor and compassion, and knowing that none of us need to journey down new roads alone.

# Local Enrichment Opportunities

An interesting trip for Academic GT students studying ancient Greece:

## Greek Mythology at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC

Explore Greek mythology at the Met! Follow Percy's footsteps to meet the characters who inspired Rick Riordan's book *The Lightning Thief*! Explore exhibits of armor, painted pottery, and sculptures of various gods. Download a PDF guide before you go:

[Met Greek Guide](#)

## Liberty Science Center

*Guitar: The Instrument That Rocked the World*

*Guitar: The Instrument that Rocked the World* traces its evolution from 3,000 BCE to the present. Explore a gallery of rare instruments and then experiment with the science of sound. Kids can even take to the stage and play real instruments: guitars, drums, and keyboard. The rare instrument exhibit includes over 60 instruments such as Early Fender, Gibson, Ovation, and Martin guitars (from circa 1835 to present.) A stunning PRS Dragon guitar inlaid with 238 pieces of gold, red and green abalone and woolly mammoth ivory is on display.

[Liberty Science Center](#)

"Learning is not attained by chance, it must be sought for with ardor and diligence."  
-Abigail Adams

## History Buffs: Explore NJ!

Grover Cleveland's Birthplace  
Caldwell, NJ

See memorabilia and artifacts  
[Grover Cleveland](#)

Our Governor's Residence  
Princeton, NJ

[Drumthwacket](#)

Looking for something to do?

Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty  
Jersey City, NJ

12 Million people passed through those buildings looking for the *American Dream*. [Ellis Island](#)

Vietnam Era Educational Center  
Holmdel, NJ

Located adjacent to the memorial, so it is convenient to visit both in one trip. It is the first war memorial in the country to have an education center.

[Vietnam Memorial](#)

Walt Whitman House  
Camden, NJ

He published the 95 page *Leaves of Grass*, which altered the world of literature. [Walt Whitman](#)

Waterloo Village  
Stanhope, NJ

Waterloo takes the visitor through time from the old Lenape (Delaware) Indian village to a bustling port along the once prosperous Morris Canal. This early 19th-century restored village contains a working mill complex with gristmills and sawmills, a general store, blacksmith shop, and several historic houses.

[Waterloo](#)

## Korea, Land of the Diamond Mountains at the Newark Museum

Now through January 25, 2015, a selection of rare folding screens and an embroidered bridal robe are featured in the South Gallery on the first floor of the Main Building. This exhibit features 75 pieces of art that represent the Museum's holdings of nearly 500 Korean objects that showcase the power and majesty of Korean art over the centuries. The Museum also offers "A Family

Program" on most Saturdays titled: *Where exploration, discovery & creativity meet.*

[Newark Museum](#)

## Princeton University Art Museum

Chigusa and the Art of Tea  
in Japan

This special exhibit runs through February 1, 2015 and features an extraordinary tea-leaf storage jar named Chigusa, which though made in China in the late thirteenth or fourteenth century, spent the next seven hundred years in the country of Japan. Through the example of Chigusa, this exhibition will, for the first time in an American museum context, reveal how tea



practice in Japan created a performative culture of seeing, using, and ascribing meaning to objects.

[Princeton Art Museum](#)

## Local Universities: a great source for The Arts

Kean University Wilkins Theatre  
1000 Morris Ave., Union

The Sept.-May season includes world-class music and dance artists, chamber music series, lecture series, student and faculty productions, as well as professional theater productions.

[Kean Stage](#)

908-737-7469

Alexander Kasser Theater at  
Montclair State University

One Normal Ave., Montclair

This School of the Arts theater presents music and dance performances. The professional arts events are presented through Peak Performances. All tickets \$15.

[Montclair State University](#)

973-655-5112

# Fall Academic GT Clusters

## Elementary Ancient Greece

This fall we welcomed our elementary school students to the wonderful world of Ancient Greece. This was a time of intellectual curiosity, enlightenment, and amazing advances in medicine, science, and technology. The GT students will explore, discover, and understand that the contributions made by the Ancients Greeks have made a profound impact on our modern society in the fields of technology, politics, mathematics, literature, art, and more.

To first “set the stage,” students analyze and draw conclusions as to how the geographical landforms, natural resources, and location of Ancient Greece helped influence their ideas on politics, society, and culture.

This leads naturally to a study of city-states, specifically Athens and Sparta. While comparing and

contrasting the daily life in these two societies, the students are led into the ideas of government and power. A study of democracy in Athens is an excellent example of how an historical civilization has left an amazing legacy for future societies. The students will come to see how Ancient Greeks influenced present day mathematics. Some future “mathematicians” may focus on Pythagoras and the Pythagorean Theorem, which was known to ancient builders or they can create a “Builder’s Triangle” and experiment with this tool.

It is impossible to overstate the influence of the Greeks on our present day theater. The students may investigate both the Greek tragedies (which showed people how to behave) and the Greek comedies (which made fun of social politicians and issues). Students will explore the world of Greek art and architecture. They may design a building using one style of columns, Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian and can

make the connection of how Greek architectural style has remained popular for over 2000 years. Our Governor’s residence in Princeton, NJ has six Ionic columns along the front porch and several decorative ones on fireplaces throughout the home. <http://www.drumthwacket.org/>. Also, our U.S. Capital Building in Washington, D.C. is another excellent example of modern Greek influence.

A study of Socrates will lead to philosophical discussions of how our present day values are similar or very different from those of the Greeks. Of course, no study of Ancient Greece is complete without reading Greek Mythology and the “family tree” of the gods and goddesses. Our GT student “historians” will be able to better understand how life and events in the past relate to and influence our present and our future.



Class Projects:  
Urn to honor the gods  
Poseidon and Apollo  
Modern Theatre  
Masks



## Middle School Curious Minds

Everybody loves a mystery. In the M.P.M. Curious Minds Cluster, the students are performing experiments, investigating and exploring mysteries. The student-detectives will engage in various hands-on forensic science tests based on evidence found at a “crime scene”. The students will use a multitude of critical thinking skills as they sift through (sometimes misleading) evidence and conspiracies. The students begin by examining the

crime scene and recording all information accurately and in detail. They will develop an understanding between evidence and inferences, which lead to valid conclusions. Some of the forensic experiments may include fingerprints, footprints, handwriting identification, analysis of threads and fibers, and chromatography. Students will investigate “real life” crimes found in recent news articles.

The Heritage students are also investigating mysteries. They are discussing several famous fictional and historical kidnapping cases. Using the science and investigative skills they learned previously, they then work as a group to formulate an original crime scenario. The students create all evidence and suspect profiles. Finally, each group will organize their crime scene for the other “detectives” to solve.

## Fall Academic GT Clusters - Continued

### Heritage Communication

This unit is offered to both seventh and eighth grade students at HMS. The GT students study how the exchange of information and ideas impacts the growth of a society and how the needs and wants of a society often forces or impedes the evolution of communication systems.

Students will study verbal, non-verbal, written, and oral forms of communicating and venues through which they are delivered. Some examples may be Braille, flag signals, sign language, and non-human sounds and signals.

Communication is a process that often utilizes more than one sensory input or stimulus, and can be conducted using one or more of the

senses at our disposal either consciously or subliminally for a distinct purpose.

Students will work with a partner to create an original non-standard form of communication system. Each group will be given the opportunity to share their new system with others in the room to communicate an idea.

### Heritage Model United Nations

Each fall Model United Nations is offered at Heritage Middle School as an Academically Gifted and Talented cluster choice. Students are afforded the opportunity to:

- Play "Mining on the Moon," a simulation of international negotiation skills.
- Prepare and deliver formatted speeches in order to convince others to adopt an original resolution.
- Research an assigned issue as a member of their "adopted" country.

- Prepare games, crafts, and foods in order to educate others about their country by holding a Multi-Cultural Festival.

- Create a unique flag for their country.

- Compete for a place on the HMS team, which travels to a regional competition. This event is sponsored by the NJ Consortium for Gifted and Talented Education and run by Drew University's Political Science and United Nations Semester Program students.

This year's Junior Model United Nations Competition will take place in February. The issues being discussed are Climate Change, Counter-Terrorism, and Global Pandemic Response.



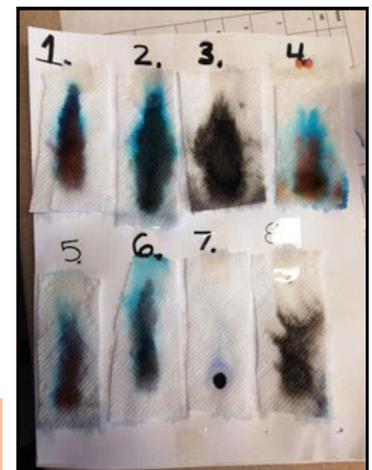
"The two words 'information' and 'communication' are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. Information is giving out; communication is getting through."

-Sydney J. Harris

## Photo Gallery: Curious Minds



Students examine fingerprints and use chromatography to answer questions in the "Curious Minds" unit of study.



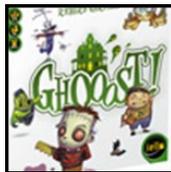
# GT Resource Suggestions

## Menza Winning Mind Games

These board games make great gifts for the holidays or just great gifts for the family to enjoy an evening of fun together.

**Ghoost!** Play your cards wisely to get rid of all the ghosts, undead, vampires, zombies, and other spooky creatures haunting your manor. Block your opponents while they're trying to drive spirits out of their home and into your backyard!

Players: 2 - 6



**Kumali** is a fun, tactical game that keeps players hanging until the last move is made! Players take turns placing their marbles on the ever-changing board. By placing marbles cleverly, players gain the advantage to clinch the victory by taking the most tiles.

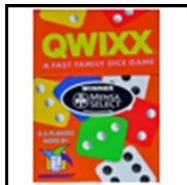
Players: 2



**IOTA** has players adding cards to a grid, making sure that color, shape and number are either all the same or all different across the line. Sounds easy, but as the grid expands, so do the possibilities. Whoever sees the opportunities will seize the win.

**QWIXX** is simple to play, but each decision is crucial. The more numbers a player crosses off, the more points scored. With no downtime between turns, players have a chance to gain from each and every roll.

Players: 2 - 5



"Life is more fun if you play games."

-Roald Dahl



## Classic Board Games:

Include on your holiday shopping list the classic board games of:

**Monopoly:** teaches not only real estate purchasing, but decision making and simple economics

**Clue:** uses critical thinking and logic skills to solve a mystery

**Scrabble:** uses tile letters to create words, emphasizes spelling and vocabulary building

**Stratego:** is a fast moving, easy to learn strategy game using skillful plays, deception, and suspense to capture the opponent's flag

**Othello:** is a strategy game for two players with an objective of finishing the game with the greater amount of pieces of the same color

**Backgammon:** although the roll of the dice is luck, the strategy is for a player to choose the correct option of removing his checkers around and finally off the board

**Rubik's Cube:** provides hours of fun testing one's patience

## Book Series

Rick Riordan has written two series of books which tie into our Ancient Greece elementary studies. Our GT students highly recommend these series and suggest children read each series of books in order.

<http://www.rickriordan.com/home.aspx>

The first series is called **Percy Jackson's Greek Gods**. Twelve year old Percy Jackson is on the most dangerous quest of his life. With the help of a satyr and a daughter of Athena, Percy must journey across the United States to catch a thief who has stolen the original weapon of mass destruction, Zeus' master bolt. Along the way he must face a host of mythological enemies determined to stop him.

Book One: [The Lightning Thief](#)

Book Two: [The Sea of Monsters](#)

Book Three: [The Titan's Curse](#)

Book Four: [The Battle of the Labyrinth](#)

Book Five: [The Last Olympian](#)



In this second 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.

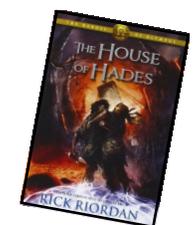
Book One: [The Lost Hero](#)

Book Two: [The Son of Neptune](#)

Book Three: [Mark of Athena](#)

Book Four: [The House of Hades](#)

Book Five: [The Blood of Olympus](#)



# Diversity, Learning Style and Culture

*This article summarizes a few key points made by Pat Burke Guild from John Hopkins School of Education - New Horizons for Learning*

## The Drum

daddy says the world is  
a drum tight and hard  
and i told him  
i'm gonna beat  
out my own rhythm  
--Nikki Giovanni

Educators do not believe that all learners are the same. This article communicates the need for teachers to learn more about our students and work with and communicate with them as individuals. This is especially true with students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The article asserts that many people struggle with cultural generalizations and have a limited understanding of the backgrounds of the individual people with which we interact. To truly help all students to reach their potential, teachers, students, and parents need to establish a relationship. We are fortunate in Livingston to have a diverse population which consists of students and teachers from a wide range of cultural backgrounds.

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is noteworthy as he defines intelligence as "the ability to solve problems or develop products that are valued in a particular cultural setting." It is clear from this definition that we all must try to understand and form connections based on the cultural identities of our diverse student population.

Guild emphasizes two important ways to help students form connections with others and their own cultural identity. First, a trusting relationship between teacher and

students in which open conversation and communication are the keys to learning about cultural backgrounds. A second essential practice in addressing cultural awareness is to actively practice and celebrate all differences, including cultural and linguistic. Celebrating the strengths of the students who are introverted, artistic, mathematicians, talented writers, etc. is an effective way to support an open and culturally inviting classroom.

There are several differences in children's learning styles that should be considered:

### **Perception:**

Perception, the initial stage of cognition, involves receiving, taking possession of, and discerning information, ideas, and concepts. These perceptual differences affect what and how something is received.

Students' backgrounds and perceptions can lead them to totally different understandings of the same situations. Two people can see the same movie, for example, and take something entirely different away from it.

"Without an understanding of the unique meanings existing for the individual, the problems of helping him effectively are almost insurmountable."

-Arthur Combs

### **Conceptualization:**

People also exhibit differences in what they do with the knowledge they gain: how they process information and how they think. Some people are always looking for connections and ways to tie things together. Some others are more divergent: one thought, idea, or fact triggers multitudes of new directions. It is extremely important to realize that different people may be thinking about things in an entirely different way.

### **Affect:**

Differences in children's values, motivation, emotional responses, and judgments, also characterize individual style.

This area acknowledges the differences between analytical thinkers, divergent thinkers, subjective decision-makers who consider emotions, people pleasers, and so on. Cognitive, conceptual, and affective patterns are the roots of behavior, and pervasive and consistent stylistic characteristics will be reflected in a person's actions.

A child may be reflective, slow to respond to questions, a careful thinker...or impulsive, responding quickly, blurting out thoughts...or linear, learning best when each stage is clear...or intuitive, making leaps.

Teachers know that students learn in different ways; experience in the classroom confirms this every day. Most educators can talk about learning differences, whether by the name of learning styles, cognitive styles, psychological type, or multiple intelligences. Learners bring their own individual approach, interests and talents to each learning situation.

We also know that an individual learner's culture, socioeconomic level, and family background affect his or her learning. The context in which someone grows and develops has an important impact on learning. These beliefs and principles have an important impact on the success for every student in our schools.

The authors remind us of the importance of the interdependence of culture and learning styles.

Guild, P. B. (2008, May 13). Diversity, Learning Style and Culture. Retrieved 2014, from New Horizons for Learning: <http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/styles/guild.htm>

## Mount Pleasant Middle GT Art

Sixth grade Gifted and Talented Art students are busy mastering basic concepts and techniques that foster creativity and expression. Students are encouraged to experiment with arts media and concepts while working on their sketchbook assignments. These independent sketchbooks reflect their personality, as well as skill development. The assignments are then channeled into a creative journal page which is a visual record of their interests, skills, and personality. The journal assignment is ongoing throughout the year.

Skill development continues while students are exposed to

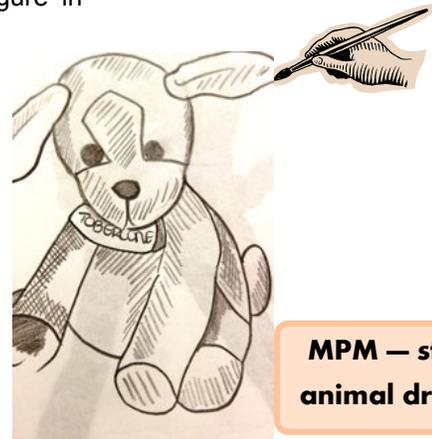
drawing from observation. This year we are concentrating on still life objects. The students completed a drawing using graphite pencil in their sketchbooks. Students choose from a variety of stuffed animals to draw. Their drawings are then developed into a multi-colored reduction print. The activity will culminate in a discussion of artists who created Pop Art Prints from items in popular culture. The artists Andy Warhol, Wayne Tiebaud, and Jime Dine will be discussed.

Creative activities will continue by having the students draw from a human figure model to develop sculptures related to that figure in

action. We will view the work of George Segal to discuss and enhance our planning and understanding of the human form. As a result, students will be developing their ability to create three-dimensional figures in action. The figures will be engaged in various activities such as sports, socializing, and performances. The sculptures will be built from foil and plaster and possibly placed in a simple environment. Our MPM Gifted and Talented Art students are encouraged to push their limits of creativity!



HMS self-portrait



MPM – stuffed animal drawing

## Heritage Middle School GT Art

Seventh and eighth grade Gifted and Talented Art students are exploring a wide variety of arts media and thought-provoking subject matter as they work to create unique works of art at Heritage Middle School.

In seventh grade, GT artists are experimenting with various line qualities, textures, and colors in their self-portrait reduction prints. Students are currently studying their faces in mirrors and drawing expressive self-portraits. These self-portrait drawings will later be transferred onto rubber blocks, carefully carved out, and printed using interesting and varied color combinations. This project allows

adolescents to show the world how they perceive themselves through their artwork.

In the eighth grade GT Art program, students are devoting the entire school year reinterpreting famous contemporary paintings inspired by movement and/or sports themes created by current artists and/or artists of the past and then transforming them into beautiful wall murals.

Students began this project by creating individual drawings of athletes, dancers, and other figures in motion and reinventing these works of art on a small scale. These drawings will later be judged by seventh grade GT artists and the

top ten drawings will be selected to be enlarged and painted on the walls. Students will be working in teams of three or four to enlarge and paint the chosen images above the lockers on the first floor outside the gymnasium.

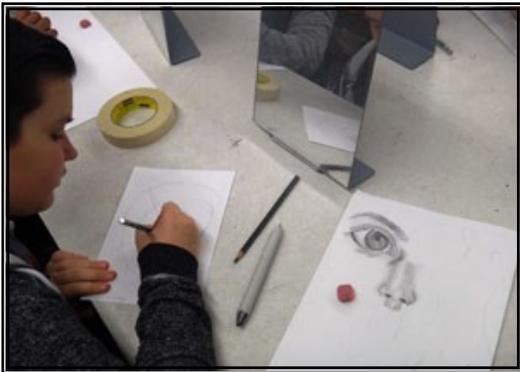
This mural project will allow eighth grade GT Art students to leave their legacy on the walls of Heritage Middle School, while promoting creative collaboration. Both these self-portrait reduction prints and wall murals are challenging projects that encourage our Gifted and Talented art students to create works of art that are personally meaningful to them and inspiring to others.

# Photo Gallery of GT Art

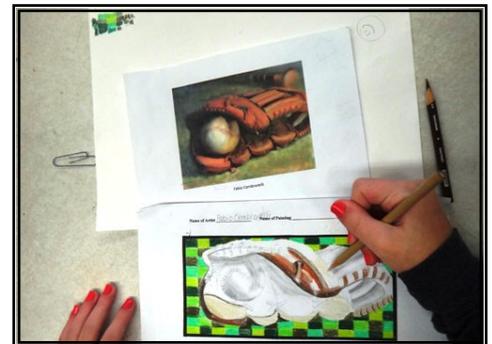
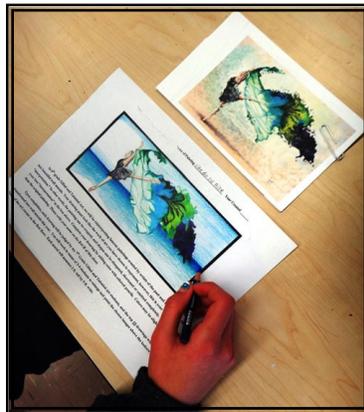
## Sixth Grade GT Artwork



## Seventh Grade GT self-portraits



## Eighth Grade GT Artwork



"The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance."

-Aristotle

# Fall Enrichment Programs

## Team Chess at HMS

Mrs. Argen is once again thrilled to announce that the HMS Team Chess members made us proud at the recent County Tournament. Team Chess is an Enrichment program open to any interested student throughout the year.

During weekly team 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 an

Essex County tournament team. This time around, we had several winners at the Experienced Level. Kamal Paspuleti and Eashan Bagia placed second, Josh Nagler and Vivek Kanpa placed fourth, and Max Brekhman earned the fifth place Experienced Level trophy.

We are also proud of our Novice Level winners. First time competitors Jenna Foley and Vani Vora placed fourth in the Novice division, and Sohail Akbari and David Lin placed sixth. When his partner stayed home due to illness, David Poestl was able to play partner to a

student from neighboring Caldwell/ West Caldwell Public Schools and together they earned the second place Novice trophy.

Several of our students also earned prizes by dressing in whimsical chess themed costumes. Jenna attended in the regal garb of a Queen, Vivek was decked out as a Chess Board accessorized with several chess pieces, and Josh sported a *Bobby Fischer* mask.

Congratulations to all for a job well done! Now, let us begin practicing for the spring Team Chess tournament!

## Forensics: Public Speaking Grades 5 - 8

Livingston's budding politicians, educators, and public speakers are encouraged to hone their skills by joining their schools' Forensics Teams. This *Public Speaking* enrichment activity is open to any interested student in grades 5 - 8. The program is sponsored and directed by each school's Gifted and Talented/Enrichment Teacher, who serves as Coach.

Students are given the opportunity to participate in various facets of public speaking, such as Interpretive Reading, Oratorical Declamation, Impromptu, and Duo. When moving up to Livingston High School, the award winning Lancers Forensics Team provides students the opportunity to continue in these events, as well as Original Oratory, Drama, and others. All participants are able to perform at school, and sometimes district, events. The top scoring students will represent Livingston at regional tournaments throughout the school year. Several area High Schools also sponsor tournaments that are open to any grade 5 - 8 student who has been training throughout the year.



Team Chess — Winning Team!

Confirming their commitment to the art of public speaking, Lenore Argen, Michelle Bodow, Breanna DeMatteo, Sharon Handley, Karin Pinto, and Donna Richter-Maschio, Livingston's GT/Enrichment teachers, play a major role in organizing and running the annual county Interpretive Reading and Oratorical Declamation tournaments. These are sponsored by the Essex County Steering Committee for Gifted and Talented Education where teams from several districts convene at highly competitive convocations held at Caldwell University in December and May.

A favorite date on our competition calendar is always the Junior Forensics Tournament for students in grades 5 - 8, sponsored by our own LHS Lancers. The High School Forensics Students, along with their coach, Dr. Michael Sunga, plan and

run the tournament, which attracts numerous students from several area school districts. Many of our students are such avid performers they decide to enter two events at this tournament, and in the past some have even garnered awards in both areas of Interpretive and Declamation.

In order to support their future team members, the LHS forensics team hosted the HMS team for a "Pizza and Performance" coaching session in late November. The high school students performed for them, and then the HMS students performed some of their pieces, too. This enabled the HMS students to observe what a polished, winning presentation looks like, and to hear constructive criticism on how to improve their own performances. Best wishes to all for a successful year!

# Fostering A Growth Mindset

*Summary of Fostering a "Growth Mindset:" 7 Ways to Nurture Your Gifted Child from Changing the focus from perfection to personal bests ,Published on December 19, 2011 by Signe Whitson, L.S.W. in Passive Aggressive Diaries*

Having your child labeled as "gifted" is always a wonderful thing. However, some students take this label and allow it to alter their thinking about themselves and their abilities. Students may lose their self-confidence while working toward a level of perfection that is impossible to reach. The pressure that comes along with being a gifted student is a factor of which all parents should be aware of.

Signe Whitson suggests pushing "growth mindset" to counter that negative personal-thinking. Whitson says the following, "First, let me explain the 'fixed mindset,' as defined by cognitive psychologist Carol Dweck. Gifted children often develop the belief that everything they do should come out well and that their smarts alone are enough to guarantee that things will come easily."

Whitson goes on to explain that in the mid-to-late elementary school years, many gifted children first start to doubt their intelligence. Their fixed mindset dictates that if they are not the best, do not score a perfect 100%, or can not find a

solution easily and immediately, then they must be stupid, bad, and worthless. All-or-nothing thinking, as it turns out, is a hallmark of some of the greatest young thinkers out there. It can also be a deal-breaker to their otherwise unlimited potential.

## Here are 7 ways to foster your child's growth mindset:

### 1. Play up personal strengths:

Many kids want to be the best, the fastest, the smartest, and they want to do it all first. If being the best is your child's fixed priority, help them re-structure their focus to achieving personal strengths and celebrating individual accomplishments.

### 2. Play down competitions:

When it comes to perfectionistic children, there is no need to emphasize competition. You can be sure that these kids are well aware of their competitors and are knocking themselves out to be on top. Take the focus off of contests and scores and help your child instead prioritize the effort he/she puts toward achieving his goals.

### 3. Provide opportunities to try out new things:

Perfectionists often fear trying something new, in the event that they are not immediately and effortlessly good at it. Offer your child many opportunities to try new

activities, sports, and projects without the pressure of having to be good at them right away.

### 4. Encourage practice:

Emphasize to your child that practice is the best way to become good at something. Gifted kids benefit from realizing that they do not have to excel at something right out of the starting gate and that practicing skills is not a sign of weakness, but rather a path toward excellence.

### 5. Celebrate mistakes:

Make a big deal out of your own mistakes, letting your child know that it is only through making errors that you have had the opportunity to learn and grow!

### 6. Idealize improvement:

Use the growth mindset to get rid of that fear of not being good enough. Champion the improvements your child makes each day and make incremental accomplishments more important than having instant goal achievement.

### 7. Praise hard work and effort:

Focus praise on your child's hard work, efforts, and persistence rather than on outcomes, scores, and results. Instead of responding just to the straight A's on their report card, compliment specifically on the hard work shown throughout the marking period.



HMS Forensics Team being coached by the LHS Forensics Team

Twin sisters Meredith and Maya practice their Interpretive Reading pieces together



**Livingston School District**

**Gifted and Talented/Enrichment  
Department**

**11 Foxcroft Drive  
Livingston, New Jersey**

**Phone: 973-535-8000 Ext: 8022**

**Supervisor  
Ms. Mary Oates  
moates@livingston.org**

Check us out  
on the web...  
[www.livingston.org](http://www.livingston.org)

**2014 —2015  
GT Staff and Writers**

**Lenore Argen  
Michelle Bodow  
Breanna DeMatteo  
Sharon Handley  
Karin Pinto  
Donna Richter- Maschio**

**Guest Contributors:**

**Nancy Babey  
Jennifer Sarracino**

**“Empowering all to learn, create,  
contribute and grow.”**

