News and Updates: District GT Coordinator

This winter, DCSD received a grant from CDE to hire a .5 GT Coordinator, assigned to support district personnel in meeting the needs of our gifted students. Jodeen Stephenson holds a Colorado License with endorsements for PK-12 Gifted and Talented, Instructional Technology and Art. She brings 20 years of experience in education, much of which has been focused on GT. She served as mentor for GT teachers in Eagle County and has worked with gifted students through a variety of service and identification models. Judy Fairchild is remaining on the team as GT Facilitator, until the end of the year, and her support is much appreciated.

GT Coordinator goals:

• To support site coordinators and their colleagues in differentiating instruction and creating challenging opportunities for gifted and high-ability learners.
• To guide site coordinators in refining ALPs that present a “portable” body of evidence, meet new state identification rules, and represent a usable road map for classroom teachers as they work to meet the unique needs of gifted students.
• To increase awareness of the social-emotional needs of gifted students, helping individuals to accept and take responsibility for their affective challenges.

Please feel free to share your ideas and questions as we work together to build strong and effective programming for gifted students in Delta County. jodeen.stephenson@deltaschools.com

PES GT KIDS ROCK!

Carmen Rodriquez

Carmen is currently writing a book

Appreciate the paradox of giftedness: You are both different and the same. Your gift makes you, in a very special way, unique. Your humanness makes you, in all other ways, quite similar to everyone else.

Listen to children’s intense and sensitive feelings without offering suggestions to solve the problem. Use active listening skills so they know that you really are interested in their views. Model respect and caring in how you listen.

Allow gifted children opportunities to learn new things every day, no matter how young or old they are. Letting gifted children “just be children” likely includes letting them learn faster, deeper, and more than other kids their age- and that’s okay!

Teach children what great philosophers have said about persons of genius and society’s reactions to them.
As another school year comes to a close, we would like to cordially invite you to the Gifted and Talented showcase, which will be held on Saturday, April 25th, at the Delta Performing Arts Center at 9am. For additional updates regarding the GT program, please refer to our website at: http://specialservices.deltaschools.com/gifted

PES GT KIDS ROCK!
Creative Scheduling at CMS promotes Exciting Events!

Exciting things are happening in GT at CMS! Thanks to some creative scheduling, CMS has been able to establish a GT/Projects class to allow GT students to have time in the school day that is dedicated to extended learning. The students collaborate on group learning projects, every student has an individual project that they are working on this semester, and the class explores careers and the community through a series of speakers and field trips. Some of the group projects underway include designing a greenhouse addition to benefit the CMS community, designing and creating a CMS Video game based on the school building itself, and writing a school play that will be produced and performed for the entire school later this spring. Students also enjoy working on their individual projects, including a school newspaper, Lego Robotics, architectural investigations, Rosetta Stone language learning, creation of a Rube Goldberg Machine, and independent study of trigonometry. The facilitator and the students have done a great job working out some kinks and setting a routine, giving the GT students much needed time for their learning investigations.

In addition to their hard work in the GT/Projects class, CMS GT students have been busy participating in academic competitions, like Knowledge Bowl, Science Olympiad, Math Counts, as well as being active on the CMS and Cedaredge athletic teams and other organizations such as Student Council. It is a great time to be at CMS!

Murals and More at GMES

After pitching her proposal and getting the green light from Mr. Farmer, Taylor Gibson has been painting a wall mural in Garnet Mesa’s cafeteria that is sure to bring some panther spirit to our students! Other GT students at GMES are busy working on many different projects, from original plays or stories to house plans and famous building research. Third graders recently joined our fourth and fifth grade students during Friday afternoon GT time, and the students are excited about the upcoming GT showcase in April.

Architecture and Design at North Fork Montessori

There is a student at NFM@C who is interested in architecture and is in the process of designing a home. We brought in a local architect, Bob McHugh to help this student and others realize how the design process works. They met and talked about the steps that most architects go through when designing a house. Mr. McHugh also brought in some manipulatives to help with ratio and configuration. It was a meaningful presentation! We also have a WIKI page that shows many of our projects at North Fork Montessori @ Crawford: www.deltaschools.com/groups/enrichmentnfm.
More GT News from the District

New State Identification Portability Rules
In conjunction with the State Legislature, CDE is developing consistent guidelines for the identification of gifted students. This effort will make a child's body of evidence (BOE) for gifted identification much more clear, and ease the transition from one district to another. While the components of a strong BOE - normed cognitive assessment, normed or criterion-referenced academic achievement and normed behavior checklist - will form the baseline criteria across the state, each district has discretion in the choice of instruments. DCSD GT personnel are reviewing a number of normed testing instruments, including the CogAT Form 7, Naglieri Non-verbal Abilities Test (NNAT2), and the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking. We are also reviewing available normed behavior checklists, to determine a best fit for our identification goals.

Universal Screening in Second grade this April
The second component of this winter's CDE grant, was funding for Universal Screening for all district second graders. The screening window is April 13-24, 2015. Second grades will be taking the CogAT Form 7, a newly-designed test that is less dependent on English language ability and more culturally neutral than previous forms of the CogAT. The new form also has updated norms. We believe that this will give all students, especially those from traditionally underserved populations, a more equal opportunity to demonstrate critical thinking abilities.

Colorado Gifted Education Review - CGER
DCSD received our final report from CDE for our Colorado Gifted Education Review (CGER). Reviewers focused on the area of identification, and indicated a number of steps we should take to improve our practices. We submitted a series of goals and action steps with a timeline for completion by this time next spring. Some of those goals have already been addressed - adoption of less biased testing instruments (CogAT Form 7), for instance. Others are well under-way and we should have no difficulty meeting our own goals and the new state portability rules within the next year.

Additional GT Resources:
Western Colorado Assoc. for Gifted & Talented  http://www.gifted51.org/
Colorado Assoc. for Gifted & Talented  http://www.coloradogifted.org/
National Assoc. for Gifted & Talented  http://www.nagc.org/
The Davidson Institute  http://www.davidsongifted.org