

Lincoln Unified School District

# GATE Parent Newsletter

December 2006

October and November have been busy GATE months for me. I just have just returned from four days at the National Association of Gifted Children Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina. Prior to that, I attended a one day California Association of Gifted Conference in Sacramento. I heard many impressive speakers in the field of gifted education and also learned about many opportunities for gifted students. Some of the programs I found interesting were Renzulli Learning (focused areas of interest), Great Books (classic literature), and math and science opportunities through Johns Hopkins University. If you are interested in knowing more about them, you may go to the following websites: \_\_\_\_\_ . We are currently looking into the feasibility of bringing these programs to the district. In addition, we are hoping to have one of the conference presenters come to the district to speak to parents. You can look forward to hearing more about these opportunities in subsequent newsletters.

I have also just started a GATE parent lending library at the District Office. The titles are listed below and more will be added over time. I will update you on new titles from time to time. Feel free to check out a book. E-mail me the title and your site, and I will see that you get it.

In this newsletter you will have information about Kids College and the Parent Day at the CAG Conference. In addition, you will find articles that continue to address the Social and Emotional Needs of the Gifted Child. I hope that you are finding them interesting. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [mhaydel@lusd.net](mailto:mhaydel@lusd.net).

## **Kids College Applications!!**

The Kids College offerings and application are included in this newsletter. This opportunity is provided through a partnership with Delta College. Space for your child is reserved on a first-come first-served basis and there is limited space available. Students not gaining entry to a class will be put on a waiting list and you will be notified when/if space becomes available. There are approximately 100 spaces available in the classes listed. The range and scope of these classes is entirely dependent upon the availability of instructors and their course criteria. Because of this, there is not likely to

be the same amount of classes offered at each grade level. Lincoln Unified GATE students are guaranteed a certain number of spaces in each class depending upon the size of the class, and the rest of the space is available to the general public. These classes are sponsored by the district and offered at no cost to GATE students. However, if your child reserves a space and does not attend, you will be responsible for the cost and subsequently billed. Because these classes are popular and fill up quickly, it is recommended that you submit your registration as soon as possible. Kids College is run by Delta College and parents are responsible for transportation. Please feel free to e-mail me with any questions you may have. The selection of classes is based singularly on those classes that are being offered through Kids College. It is not possible to have more offerings for any particular grade level if it is not being offered by Kids College for Spring 2007. In other words, they make up the classes depending upon the instructors and the classes grade guidelines that they establish. We then choose from that.

## **California Association of Gifted, Parent Day**

The California Association of Gifted is an important and informative association for parents of gifted children. This year the conference is being held in Santa Clara on March 2-4. Parents are invited to the institute for Parent Day on Sunday, March 4. The district is able to send parents this year, as the conference is local. If you are interested in attending, please contact your site GATE chairperson or e-mail me directly at [mhaydel@lusd.net](mailto:mhaydel@lusd.net).

## **GATE Parent Lending Library**

## Dates to Remember:

- Site GATE Parent Advisory Meetings through 12/20/06, to review the GATE section of School Site Plan.
- California Association of Gifted Conference, March 2-4, Santa Clara. Parent Day is Sunday, March 4.
- \*\*\*\*•last day to register for Kids College is\_\_\_\_\_

## Risk-taking and Risk-making: Understanding When Less than Perfection is More than Acceptable

by James Delisle (Excerpted from SENG)

Remember the last time you ventured out in a totally new direction, unencumbered by anyone's expectations but your own; and individual goal focused on learning or becoming something (or someone) new? Usually, whether you succeeded to your satisfaction or not, you probably gave yourself a pat on the back for even putting forth effort. Conversely, do you recall a time when someone else--a teacher, a parent, a spouse--prodded you to try something that you might not have attempted without their external urging? What happened when you succeeded...failed? Who was the first person you thought might be pleased...disappointed?

I raise these questions because they point out a distinction that is too-selfdom appreciated when we are trying to help out gifted children accept new challenges--the difference between risk-taking and risk-making. In risk-taking, someone is often pushing you to accept a risk ("Wouldn't you like to learn to ski so that you can join the rest of us on winter weekends?") that was not on your personal agenda; in risk-making, you are the person doing the pulling ("Gee, I'd really love to learn how to ski!"). The dynamics of risk-taking vs. risk-making, pushing vs. pulling, is worth considering, especially with easy-to-criticize-themselves children who are highly gifted and used to (addicted to?) success.

Here is what I have learned, both in my career as an educator and my role as a dad, when it comes to understanding the dynamics of risks:

- Someone needs to explain to children the distinctions between risk taking and making, asking them to recall situations where one of the two was more in evidence. Then, you can begin a discussion of the "comfort level" one feels in each situation.
- Some people find it easy to make (or take) a risk in an area of relative comfort. For gifted children, this is often an academic area or intellectual skill. Yet when it comes to physical tasks (like trying out for the soccer team), social tasks (going to a sleepover where you only know one other kids), or emotional risks (telling someone your true feelings about them or an incident that affected you), the level of anxiety may be heightened, especially if the risk is imposed from someone else.
- Adults talk a good game about the benefit of taking risks, yet how well do they model this behavior? For example, how often do you take on a challenge in an area where

you have no expertise or little obvious interest? If the answer is "not very often", consider the message this inactivity might be sending to your child.

- Highly gifted children may tend to focus on what they can already do well because their only standard of acceptability is perfection. To some gifted children, a "B" is tantamount to failure, which limits your risk taking/making behavior to the ol' stand bys: areas in which you have excelled in the past.

- Risk-taking (the one that is accompanied by external prodding) is often more acceptable for younger children than older ones, and may, in fact, be a good way to teach your child early that perfection is not the goal of a new activity...fun and learning are the primary goals.

- The best people to convince gifted children that perfection isn't all it's cracked up to be may not be parents (or, for that matter, any adult). Instead, think of using the advice and "peer wisdom" of a child who is two-four years older than your child. This "near peer" usually has more credibility than does an adult who, from the child's view, went to school while the Earth was still cooling. So...bring in the reinforcements: near peers can entice children to take and make risks in productive and meaningful ways.

- As a parent, you do know your child very well--better than your child may think.

Therefore, there are times when it is within your parental purview to make a suggestion to your child that you think s/he will like once they get into it. The best way to convince your son or daughter, though, is to offer them an out. Piano lessons? Fine...as long as the child can quit in six months if it's just not enjoyable. Same for ice skating. Same with advanced math. No adult I know makes a long-term contract with the unknown...why should your child?

These are just some tips to help acclimate your child to the idea that life is not perfect, and neither are they, yet the sun still rises every new day. Risk-taking and risk-making, and understanding the distinctions between them, might go a long way toward enriching your gifted children's lives--from both their vantage and yours.