

King Elementary > West Middle School > Auburn Academy



Gifted News

A Newsletter from Parents for Gifted Education (PGE) • District 205

Notes from the Superintendent's Meeting with PGE

Last May Dr. Thompson met with PGE parents to answer questions and bring us up to speed on what's happening in the district.

The question foremost in parent's minds that night was, "What ever happened to central administration's proposal to relocate the Academy from Auburn to West and make West a 6-12 gifted only school?" Dr. Thompson said for now the proposal has been tabled. Any future action depends on the outcome of the school assignment issue. Currently there is a committee consisting of parents, community leaders and school staff who have been meeting all summer to analyze data and develop their recommendations. The plan is for their proposal to go to the Education Committee near the end of August. The Education Committee will send it back to a larger community committee with their recommendations. From there it will return to the Education Committee who will then send it on to the School Board for action. Dr. Thompson said this committee will have the gifted piece to consider as part of the overall assignment plan, but based on the response received when the move was first proposed, he is no longer advocating for the change.

Dr. Thompson reported that no middle school students in the district will receive high school credit for their coursework. They can test into higher level classes but will not receive credit for math or foreign language even though they are high school equivalent classes. This is a loss for our students who were required to have 2 or 3 years of a foreign language for college applications. They will now, in a 6 hour day, have to use an additional elective to meet the requirement.

The report on a return to a seven hour day at either middle or high school was an unequivocal No! Dr. Thompson's administration believes students, and especially 9th graders, can be more successful with the reduced class load. He cites a 50% failure rate among freshman, but did not have disaggregated statistics for freshman in the Academy.

Bottom line is 9th graders will not be offered zero hour classes next year. This is partly due to central administration's direction, and also partly due to the failure of the counselors in docu-

menting students' zero hour preferences during registration. And although Dr. Thompson said he would consider requests to add additional zero hour classes for schools demonstrating the need, no one from Auburn petitioned downtown for additional allocations. So as of this writing, the school is slated to have 4 zero hour classes (AP Biology, AP Statistics, Wind Ensemble and String Orchestra), one less than last year. None for 9h graders.

When asked about the counseling situation at Auburn, Dr. Thompson stated there was a problem with counseling at all the high schools. He had recently directed all schools to reassign their counselors by grade level instead of the alpha system (by first letter of the students' last name) currently being used. The plan is for all students to change counselors between junior and senior year. PGE pointed out their concern that a new counselor senior year would have less knowledge of the student for the counselor's letter of recommendation required by most colleges. PGE also reminded Dr. Thompson of the previous success of having a dedicated counselor for gifted who understood the program and the students.

RPS 205 Referendum

This November, voters will be asked to decide whether to maintain the temporary fifty eight cent per \$100 assessed value tax for the education fund for five more years. If the referendum fails, the district will have \$14 million less in the education fund. There is a speaker's bureau which will coordinate a speaker to visit with any community organization or group desiring more information on the referendum. There is also opportunity to participate in "getting the word out" through the distribution of buttons, posters, yard signs or literature. Any person or organization needing information, speakers, buttons, yard signs or posters should contact Jude at 633-6818.

PGE Open House

September 11, 2006 from 6:30 – 8 PM
1307 National Avenue

Please take this opportunity to converse with other parents who have children in the gifted program. We especially want to welcome those of you who are new to all levels of the program. This is a great time to meet and meet and converse with other new parents as well as the "veterans" of the program. We have invited the Director of Gifted, principals and staff, and would love to have you there as well!

The Directors Job

PGE would like our parents to know the position of Director of the Gifted Program is currently NOT a FULL TIME position. Parents must understand that the director answers to the same boss (Dr. Thompson) as does each of the principals. While a director has the opportunity to collaborate with the administrators at each of the schools housing gifted and CAPA students, they have no authority over those administrators. What follows is the job description (expectations and outcomes) written for the position for the previous school year (05-06):

I. Student Recruitment, Evaluation, and Selections for programs Academic

- High Need Placement testing--Ongoing
- Recruitment for elementary and secondary testing
 - Phone and mail applications; computer scan recruitment
- Preparation for elementary and secondary testing
- Testing and processing of applications for elementary and secondary testing
 - Kindergarten Testing Onsite and Private Elementary (Grades 1-4 and private school Applicants)
 - Secondary (Grades 5 - 10 and private school applicants)

Data processing required for each applicant
 Kindergarten - Gr. 2 Test booklets, teacher recommendations
 Grades 3 & 4 Multiple test data
 Grades 5 - 7 Multiple test data, acquisitions of GPA data, assessment of student written essay
 Grades 8- 10 Multiple test data, acquisition of GPA data, assessment of multipage Student applications

Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA)

- Recruitment through mail out brochures
- Support for CAPA auditions and subsequent results
- Encouragement for written CAPA Handbook

II. Coordination of Administrative Activities between (and among) Sites

Monthly Administration meetings for King, West, Auburn (Academy/CAPA)
 Monthly meetings w/principals
 Monthly meetings w/Selection Committee Members
 HNP review
 Establishment of Program goals (Academy/CAPA)
 Discuss Parent concerns
 Recruitment issues and maintaining students in program

Curricular flow

Parent conferences upon request (gifted, special ed)

III. Curricular Issues

- Coordinate with Auburn Academy Coordinator for Curricular focus groups in summer (staff only)
- Similar planning for West
- Encouragement to develop building Gifted Program Handbooks /CAPA handbooks

IV. Interpret/Implement Gifted Program Policy for admission, Academic Review, Curricular Standards

Among Sites

For parents/applicants

V. Problem Solving/Mediation at and between sites when requested.

PGE Contributions - Where Does the Money Go?

Top expenditures for last year included:

Communication- Newsletters and the Website

PGE Directory

Staff Appreciation and Support

Illinois Association for Gifted Children

Previous years we were able to bring in out of town speakers, although recent finances and parent apathy impeded offering a program. So please consider supporting PGE with contributions of your time and money. And remember to submit for matching funds if they are available from your employer!

The Auburn Weight Room

Talk about a place that needs "fixing up!" A committee of parents has taken on the task of raising the \$50,000 needed to refurbish the weight room at Auburn. The hope is to make it a place where students and staff can work out in a safe environment with current equipment. PGE will attempt to post pictures of the "before" on our website to encourage parents to solicit and send in donations. The Booster Club has a power point presentation they would be happy to share with any potential donors (to arrange call Jude at 633-6818). Keep your eyes open for further information from the Booster Club. If you wish to contribute, please send a check to Auburn Booster Club at **5268 Solitude Drive 61114**. Checks should be made out to *Auburn Booster Club-Weight Room*.

U.S. Department of Education Definition of Giftedness (1995)

"children or youth who give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop such capabilities."

Meet the New Principals

KING: Jill Faber

I have been married for 26 wonderful years to husband Walter. We have three wonderful daughters. Joanna will be a senior at the University of Nebraska this fall and will complete her student teaching in Rockford this spring in secondary math education. Jessica will start her sophomore year as a marketing/finance major and Jacqueline will hit tennis balls for Guilford HS and worry her parents about driving around town. Jacqueline has aspirations of becoming a second grade teacher

WEST- Christy Kutz

Dear Families,

Welcome to the 2006-2007 school year! This school year brings many positive changes to West Middle School. I am pleased to be a part of the West family and I look forward to meeting each of you.

It is my pleasure to introduce new staff serving our gifted students at West, John Zuba, assistant principal and Carolyn Meingast, 8th grade algebra and geometry teacher. John joins us from Christian Life where he was the mathematics department chair. Carolyn joins us most recently from Jefferson High School. She brings with her many years experience teaching high school mathematics. I am very excited to have both of these fine educators on our staff.

On a more personal note, I have been married to Tim Kutz (Yes, the Guilford Principal) for 17 years. We have three children Timmy a sophomore at Guildford, Nick a 7th grader in the gifted program at West and Corinne age 4. Although I grew up in Northern Illinois we moved back "home" three years ago from Ft. Myers, Florida.

It is with great anticipation that we begin the new school year; every August is a fresh beginning. I look forward to seeing you at registration and in the days and weeks to come.

Sincerely,
Christy M.P. Kutz

AUBURN- Richard Jancek

I am a farm boy who grew up in southern Illinois near St. Louis as an only child. I attended Eastern Illinois University and received a BS in Technology Education (1989). I taught at Triad HS in Troy, IL for six years (1989-1995) and also coached football, girls basketball and track. I received my Masters Degree in Administration from Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, IL (1995). From there, I became the Athletic Director / Assistant Principal at Stillman Valley HS for three years (1995-1998). I moved to my first Principal position at Kirkland Hiawatha Jr / Sr HS and stayed for two years (1998-2000). The next school year I had the opportunity to move into a large school setting and was Associate Principal at Harlem HS (2000). Due to a failed referendum, my position was eliminated. I then moved to Principal at Beloit Memorial HS where I stayed for the past five years (2001-2006). During my time there, I received my Doctorate degree from Northern Illinois University in Dekalb, IL. I have moved around over my seventeen years in education but have picked up a wealth of knowledge regarding educational leadership and programming. I am very excited to be the new principal at Auburn HS and I intend on bringing a sense of pride and positive climate for all students. I want to challenge my staff as they push all students to do their best! I want students to come to school everyday, be challenged and feel good about themselves and their academic achievements. I truly believe this can and will happen!

On the personal side of my life, I am married to my wife Wendy. She is a Special Education Teacher at Harlem HS. We have five children: Jenna, 18; Brett, 15; Hunter 8; Hayden 6; and Jarrett 3. We are also foster parents and currently have a 13 year old girl staying with us. My wife and I have dedicated our lives to children and want what's best for them...ours, theirs and yours!!

The Infamous "Word Paper"

Each year Academy juniors engage in a research project in which students choose and research in-depth a single word. From this word they develop a related thesis, and culminate in writing a well-developed paper relevant to that thesis. A certain mystique and fear have come to be associated with the assignment. Last year PGE asked seniors (class of 06) to rate and comment about the assignment. The majority of the students (39 out of the 46 polled) felt it was a positive endeavor. And even those who felt they'd not benefited, recognized they got out of it what they put into it ("I don't feel that I learned a whole lot from it. However, I put very little to effort into it. So, it was not the assignment, it was me..."). Please read the full text of student's comments on our website pge205.org. And while there, take a look at the full report of the Workload Survey where students rate and comment about the amount of school work assigned within the Academy.

Ruth Harris Scholarship Recipients

Congratulations to Jenny Milius and Sapna Shah! Each received a \$500 book scholarship paid for by Ruth Harris Memorial donations. Jenny will begin at Knox College in Galesburg with a major as yet to be determined. Sapna will enter the University of Illinois in Champaign majoring in Biochemistry. Good luck to you both.

Improve Achievement with a Meal

According to a study done by the University of Michigan, if your family eats dinner together 5 times a week, the chances of your child getting an "A" on their report card goes up 50%. Organic Style magazine reports regular family meals also cuts a child's risk of substance abuse in half and makes them more likely to grow into well-adjusted adults.

Are Gifted Girls and Gifted Boys Different?

Gifted education expert and Principal Investigator of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, Sally Reis, explores whether gifted boys and gifted girls are different in "the gender issue." (from the Northwestern CTD)

Sally Reis: Males and females differ in fundamental ways. Decades of personality research suggested that, on average, men are more assertive and have higher self-esteem than women, while women are more extroverted, anxious, and trusting (Feingold, 1994). Gifted girls and gifted boys also differ in fundamental ways, although they can also be similar. In one somewhat depressing study, for example, Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, and Whalen (1993) found that male and female academically talented adolescents were "equally likely to continue in or become disengaged from the domain of area of their talent by the end of high school.

In what other ways do gifted girls differ from gifted boys? Talented girls begin to have lower self-confidence in elementary school and that trend continues as they get older. Reis (1987; 1998) found that gifted girls have decreasing self-confidence and self-perceived abilities through high school. As gifted girls reach adolescence, they may value their won personal achievements less. For example, in a qualitative study of gifted girls, not one participant attributed her success in school to extraordinary ability (Callahan, Cunningham and Pluche).

Identification as gifted and accepting one's gifts and talents may be problematic for girls and boys due to the accompanying negative social consequences (Reis, 1987), although some research

suggests that this occurs more in girls than in boys. Reis (1998) also found that gifted girls deliberately underestimated their abilities in order to avoid being seen as physically unattractive or lacking in social competence. Swiatek (2001) found that gifted girls sacrificed giftedness for acceptance and that they denied their giftedness. Buescher, Olszewski, and Higham (1987) found that gifted boys and girls were more alike than their peers not identified as gifted, except in the critical area of the recognition and acceptance of their own level of ability.

Other gender differences exist, as well. Underachievement differentially affects adolescent boys and girls, as more academically talented boys are identified as underachievers than girls. Even though we suspect that as many girls underachieve as do boys they may just underachieve more quietly, without acting out (Reis & McCoach, 2000. Reis, Hebert, Diaz, Maxfield and Ratley (1995) studied gifted girls and boys who were underachieving and identified several problems that contributed to their underachievement, including inappropriate curricular and counseling experiences, problematic family issues, a negative peer group and environmental influences, and discipline problems. In particular, a lack of belief in self contributed to underachievement in the high potential students who underachieved. In that study, more boys were identified as underachieving than girls, and other research suggests that more gifted boys than girls are identified as twice exceptional, that is they have both gifts and learning disabilities (Reis, New and McGuire, 1995).

Find other thought provoking articles about gifted children archived on the PGE Web page at:

PGE205.ORG

The Road to National Merit Finalist

1.3 million students from all 50 states enter the National Merit Scholar program each year by participating in the qualifying test (PSAT/NMSQT) the fall of their junior year. The top half percent of each state's highest scoring high school seniors advance to the competition for Merit Scholarship awards. Of that, 15,000 become finalists and 8,200 become Merit Scholarship award winners. PGE is proud to say all five of the semifinalists from Auburn's class of 2006 were named finalists and award winners! Congratulations to: Tyler Kerr, April Lundberg, Ross Makulec, Colleen Powers and Laura Wilson.

In addition, the companion competition, National Achievement, recognizes 1,600 semifinalist black students. Of those, 800 earn the distinction of becoming finalists. Congratulations to Academy student Jessica Coates for being named National Achievement Finalist!

These are nationally recognized awards. While college admissions offices recognize the achievement of becoming a semifinalist and finalists, the award can also be worth a lot of money! Finalists receive full ride offers to certain universities while others offer significant tuition reductions (such as in state tuition to out of state students. In addition, there are monetary awards from schools and corporations good for each of the 4 years of the finalist's undergraduate education.

For parents of 10th and 11th graders, your student is eligible to take the PSAT/NMSQ on October 21, 2006 at 7:30 AM in

the Atrium at Auburn. The cost of the test is \$14 and students must register and provide payment to Mr. Vogt sometime from September 18-29.

Up until two years ago the district paid for the exam for 11th graders. It was given at school while the freshman and sophomores took other standardized tests. Now it is an optional exam on **Saturday** morning. Do not let this deter your student from participating. The Academy has over 3 times the number of National Merit Semi-Finalists as any other school in the Rock River Valley (refer to 'Why Gifted' on pge205.org for the actual count). While our students are well prepared through their class work, they can also improve their scores by taking the exam for "practice" as a sophomore (same time, same place). Scores for 10th graders will not be considered as part of the National Merit competition but your child will benefit by having experienced the test format and question design. *Please encourage your student to participate!*

The Key to Raising Gifted Children...

...is to respect their uniqueness, their opinions and ideas, and their dreams. It can be painful for parents when their children feel out of sync with others, but it is unwise to put too much emphasis on the importance of fitting in; children get enough of that message in the outside world. At home, children need to know that they are appreciated for being themselves (from *How Can I support My Gifted Child?* by Linda Kreger Silverman, updated by Sandra Berger).