King Elementary > West Middle School > Auburn Academy

PGE District 205

Gifted News

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

From the President

Just as it would have been naïve to think that all the changes in the Rockford Public School system in the last few years would not affect the Gifted Program, so too would it be unrealistic to think that future changes in the Rockford Public Schools will not affect the gifted program.

We often think that Rockford is unique in the challenges we face in our school system. Recently at the state gifted conference I talked with other parents in gifted programs in Illinois. They struggle with some of the same issues as we. This makes sense. State and national trends and issues influence many of the changes in our school system. "No Child Left Behind", school finances competing with other local and state budget demands, Federal and State mandates thrust upon local school districts, citizens' disenfranchisement from public schools, truancy, teacher retirements, difficulty in recruiting teachers for programs and subjects, and lack of parent involvement among others; these challenges exist in most other cities as well. They all can have the effect of unintended neglect for certain groups of children, including the gifted.

Our goal must be to intelligently keep the needs of the special programs like gifted and CAPA in the minds of decision makers and influencers in our community. This means not only the school administrators and school board members but also key stakeholders and beneficiaries of the gifted program. Former students and parents, government, business, and professional leaders support the need to have an excellent program to recruit top talent to Rockford, and to have a public school gifted option for all citizens.

For the last several years we have seen the gifted budget shrink. Once we had a full time director who sat on the administrative cabinet at a level directly reporting to the Superintendent. Today our director, who is of the highest quality and capability, is nevertheless part time. She does not have the direct responsibility and authority to make changes to the program. Currently our gifted program sees the most challenges at the high school level. This has not always been the case. Sometimes the grade school or the middle school levels have had to face the greatest changes. Soon they may again.

Our challenge is to work together to provide a base of advocacy for the program that will guarantee the program's vitality for a generation. If you feel strongly about the importance of the long term success of the program, I encourage you to call (961-0456) or email me (johnte@insightbb.com) as to your interest to get involved. We can find a way for you to contribute that will fit your skills and time availability. This is a critical time for your children's future.

John Torrence

GIFTED STUDENTS SUPPORT EACH OTHER

The connection between King, West and Auburn gifted students is unique to our program and not found elsewhere in the district.

One liaison is the tutoring program at West. Students from West are tutored in the library after school on Thursday evenings by Auburn Key Club members. Both the tutors and tutorees are enjoying the experience.

Another connection is having 2 Auburns swimmers, Allison Zarnke (12th grade Academy) and Lisa Vidicon (11th grade Academy) volunteer coaching the West swim team. They have put forth incredible effort and are doing a great job with the only pay being the gift of teaching so many West students how to swim competitively!

Finally, King reports the assistance of Auburn students helped make their recent Bingo Night a huge success. King parents said students from the Key Club at Auburn were amazing volunteers and described them as "hardworking, excellent role models for the children at King."

For teachers or groups in need of volunteers consider connecting with one of the following: Auburn Key Club (President Valerie O'Brian: lookatthestars26@yahoo.com), Auburn National Honor Society (President Andrea Retiger), the Builder's Club at West (Advisor: counselor Kristen Roberts).

Are Gifted Students "Different"?

Dr. Michael Piechowski, who recently spoke at the IAGC Convention, will be our guest lecturer on **April 16, 2007 at 7 PM** in the **Eiger Auditorium**. He will speak to "*Understanding Intensities and Sensitivities in our Gifted Students.*" His work is based on Dabrowski's model of "Overexcitabilites," addressing five areas in which gifted are extremely sensitive: psychomotor, sensual, imaginational, intellectual and emotional. He will discuss how these sensitivities affect social emotional development, and share coping strategies for parents and educators.

Updates From Previous PGE Meetings

Last fall, our Academy teachers penned a letter of concern about the Academy to PGE. The letter, when read at a school board meeting, was not enthusiastically received by central administration. Downtown did follow up with books, desks, supplies as well as additional classes. Yet, due to unresolved scheduling conflicts, many of our junior and senior students were left with 1, 2 and even 3 open hours. Principal Jancek has organized a committee of teachers and counselors, led by an assistant principal serving as master scheduler. This committee has attended a scheduling seminar and will collect input from a larger committee of teachers in an attempt to develop a more effective schedule. Moving freshman to the Wilson campus is also expected to have a positive impact on the scheduling of classes for next year.

At the November 8th PGE meeting, Martha Hayes, Chief Instructional Officer for the district, informed PGE parents she will begin an audit of all levels of the gifted program beginning in March 2007. Upon completion, PGE has asked Ms. Hayes to share the audit results along with administrative comments and recommendations. Central administration has repeatedly stated their concerns about the attrition rate of Academy students, which mirrors the 50 % attrition of freshman commonly experienced at colleges. (Currently there are 69 Academy seniors, while we typically begin with somewhere between 110 and 120 freshman). PGE believes weighting grades for all Academy classes would reduce that attrition. Academy students who have exited the program have questioned the benefit of taking difficult classes while their peers were getting better grades in easier classes with a fraction of the work. Weighted Academy grades were in place prior to the court order following the law suit, but the current administration is firm in their resolve to limit weighted grades to AP classes which have a standardized national exam.

At the same meeting, Auburn Principal Rich Jancek told parents of his vision for a new construct for the Academy which he referred to as the "café" approach. Such a paradigm would not require students to take all their core classes in the Academy to receive an Academy seal, and would actually offer different seals depending on the classes students did take. Administration believes this will reduce attrition. Parents and teachers are concerned that there will no longer be the critical mass of students needed to carry the upper level singleton and Academy classes.

In November, PGE also met with Bob Corder who is now Director of Human Resources for the district. Mr. Corder explained the district's recruitment and hiring process and spoke to parents' concerns of finding qualified teachers to replace staff who have retired. The job description is critical in deciding who is qualified for a position, and the rationale for hiring a candidate is critical when a principal has a preference for one candidate over another. Suffice it to say, sometimes there just isn't any choice. While a teacher may be most qualified in one subject area if they are certified to teach in another area, they can be assigned to teach in that area of certification even though they have never taught the subject.

During a small group meeting with PGE and Principal Jancek, PGE asked Dr. Jancek to consider having the Gifted Director participate in the interviews for Academy teaching positions. While Dr. Jancek is the only one with the authority to recommend who he'd prefer to have fill a position, PGE hopes the director could assist in forming a rationale why a particular candidate would be better suited for working with gifted students. Dr. Jancek said he is open to the suggestion, but no commitment was made.

FROM THE GIFTED OFFICE

Testing and placement of secondary students is complete. On February 24 the testing for elementary will take place. Meanwhile our director Ms. Simmons, has been organizing professional development opportunities. Two programs are being offered by College Board consultants with middle and high school counselors as the target audience. One is a counseling workshop on March 1st which will provide counselors a better understanding of the college admissions and the enrollment process and the needs and challenges of students and parents pursuing educational options after high school. The second, offered April 5th, is titled Internet Fundamentals and Presentation Design Technology for Counselors and will familiarize counselors with various features of Internet usage so they can help their students use the Internet for career and college decision making. Additionally, a program titled Making Standards Work has been scheduled over the course of three days, March 7, 14, and 21, to inform staff how curriculum standards work, are unwrapped and are utilized in a classroom setting.

PGE is thrilled to have these opportunities available to the counselors working with our students. While the Academy teachers and classes provide outstanding college prepatory opportunities, our program has long been lacking in commensurate guidance for college admissions and scholarships. Last fall, PGE unsuccessfully attempted to work with the district to pay for an independent counselor to offer guidance for college preparation and planning. We felt this was essential after hearing from Academy students who lost admission to colleges because the counseling staff did not complete the necessary paperwork and answer questions asked by the schools. We are also aware of students who have missed out on scholarship opportunities because counselors did not provide guidance in this area. For a short period the Academy had a dedicated gifted counselor, but the new administration took that away. While the district supports the development of the counselor staff, as evidenced by offering these workshops, for the time being PGE reminds parents of their need to be diligent advocates for their students.

HIGH SCHOOL PLANNING GUIDE

The Index of Course Offerings was omitted from the hard copies of this publication. The Index lists, in the format of a chart, each course and the schools at which it's offered. The chart is in the process of being installed on the district's web site: rps205.com

'WEIGHTED GRADES' AND OTHER HIGH SCHOOL POLICY UPDATES

Polly Perkins, District Director of Curriculum, provided the following answers to FAQ's regarding high school grading and AP policies.

Quality Points: In the past this was referred to as a 'weighted grade.' Only AP classes taken at the high school will be given the quality point. As such, an "A" would be worth 5 points, a B 4 points, etc., for determining a student's GPA. At the end of the first semester, the district chose to use a .5 multiplier for each semester of an AP class, but realized this didn't work for one semester courses. For this reason, first semester GPA's and class rank were recalculated after report cards were issued in January, and new labels were placed in student files.

Dual Credit Classes: If taken at Rock Valley, the student will not be required to take the AP exam and WILL NOT receive the quality point averaged into their GPA. But, if the class is taken at Auburn (such as calculus), the student will be required to take the AP exam and will receive a quality point. (PGE note: taking the AP exam is a redundancy since a dual credit class already ensures college credit for the class. Yet the district requires families to pay the $83 and take the test in order to give them feedback on the teacher. The student is also required to pay a fee assessed by RVC for taking the class at Auburn).

Core AP Classes: Currently 5 of the core classes of the Academy are Advanced Placement level classes. Students are required to take and pay for the National AP Exam for these classes (College Board charges $83 per class). Exams for students with free and reduced lunch are paid for with state funds. No student shall be required to take more than 3 AP exams in a calendar year. So the only way a student can opt out of any AP exam is if they have more than 3 AP classes during a school year.

RVC Fee Bills: RVC sends bills for dual credit classes taken in the high school to the district and the district sends them to students. Most families are unaware such a fee ($44 last yr.) exists for a class taken in the school (both years of calculus fall under this category). Typically, bills are sent in June after school is out. Ms. Perkins said she will work with finance to include information in letters that go out with the bills and try to get the fee amounts from RVC before students register for school in August.

PARENTS AND CHILDREN UNITE TO SUPPORT GIFTED EDUCATION

"Please Don't Leave Our Children Behind Day" scheduled for **April 18, 2007,** is a day for gifted children, their families and their teachers to meet in our state capital, Springfield, Illinois. Our goal is to focus the attention of the Illinois legislature on the issues of gifted children. This also provides an excellent opportunity for our children to see law making in action. Children will be able to meet several individuals in state government personally and see both houses which are currently scheduled to be in session.

We also plan to expose children to the history of our state by seeing the new Lincoln Library and Museum and possibly other sites. Our Rockford group's activities will be coordinated around common activities planned by the Illinois Association of Gifted Children from 11:30 am – 1:30 pm with other Illinois school districts' gifted children, parents, and teachers.

If you as a parent or teacher have interest in helping us to plan for this day or want to join us for this day, please let us know by emailing to johnte@insightbb.com or call 815-961-0456. We will be setting up a meeting to discuss people's interest in going.

Academy Students Want Their Zero Hour

8th through 11th grade students enrolled in the gifted program were polled regarding class requests for the next school year. One result was clear. 80% of students responding requested a zero hour class! 201 of the 383 eighth through eleventh grade students enrolled in gifted (52%) turned in their surveys. Of those responding, the break down of students requesting a zero hour by grade level is: eighth 88% (53 of 60 responses); ninth 76% (41/54); tenth 81% (26/32) and eleventh 74% (41/55).

Despite this obvious need for the zero hour, when our students recently received their official course request form at Auburn for next year, no where on the form did it ask if a student was requesting a zero hour class! Yes, there were lines for alternative classes. But these are needed in the event of scheduling conflicts and do not actually indicate to the counselor or scheduler if that student would like a zero hour class.

PGE has asked Principal Jancek and Dr. Thompson to solicit from each student, on a written form, whether they want a zero hour class. Dr. Thompson has repeatedly expressed his commitment to fund as many zero hour classes as are needed. The problem is, how does the school know how many classes are needed unless they ask the question? And telling students to write their request somewhere on the form is not asking the question. Too many students do not hear or remember open ended statements of instruction, and parents may be unaware the instruction was even given.

The original course request forms which parents had to sign were on pink paper. In response to PGE's request, Dr. Thompson, Martha Hayes and Rich Jancek confirmed ***students will be asked, by the school, in writing, if they want to take a zero hour class.*** PGE also asked the district to clarify, in writing, as part of the survey, if transportation will be provided for zero hour. Dr. Thompson told PGE ***transportation will be provided for all funded zero hour classes.*** Since transportation impacts zero hour decisions, families need this information before choosing to participate. PGE has also requested schedules be built around class requests, choosing 7 classes instead of one zero hour class, meaning some students may end up with an alternate choice due to scheduling snafus. Ask your student if they have received the questionnaire. If not, please contact their counselor and principal. Many students who requested zero hour last year were deprived of the opportunity because Auburn did not have in writing which students wanted a class. Others did not sign up because they were told there wouldn't be transportation, then there was. With adequately documented information, families and administration can make informed decisions that benefit our students.

Auburn Achievers

Advanced Placement Scores

In a February 7th Register Star article, Keith received recognition for their 93% pass rate (score of 3 or better out of 5) on the College Board National Advanced Placement European History Exam. Yet John Longhenry's students at Auburn outperformed Keith students on the same 2006 AP European History Exam with a 95% pass rate (37 pass/ 2 fail). Additionally, Auburn students scored 100% in Karen Hoover's Statistics, 93% in Ami Marshall's Chemistry, 91% in Carol Longhenry's English Literature, 86% in Carol Longhenry's English Language, 83% in Dave McCoy's Micro Economics, 83% in Bruce Keyzer's Physics Mechanics and 80% in Bruce Keyzer's Physics Electricity and Magnetism. Of the 350 AP tests taken by Academy students in May 2006, 282 students achieved passing scores for an astounding 80.6% pass rate (compared to 59.4% nationally)!

Auburn AP teachers have a history of students consistently scoring high AP pass rates. For their performance on the 2006 exams, College Board awarded 5 Auburn students their highest award, National AP Scholar. Keith had none. This award is granted to students in the United States who receive an average grade of at least 4 (out of a possible 5) on all AP Exams taken, and grades of 4 or higher on eight or more of these exams. Auburn 2006 National Scholars are Laurie Boettcher, Tyler Kerr, Ross Makulec, Aashesh Verma and Laura Wilson. Auburn also had 16 AP Scholars with Distinction (3.5 average and 3 or higher on five or more exams), 10 AP Scholars with Honor (3.25 average and 3 or higher on four or more exams) and 28 AP Scholars (3 or higher on three or more exams).

ACADEMY STUDENTS RECOGNIZED NATIONALLY

National Merit Semifinalist: Jeremy Tatar

National Achievement Semifinalists: Jendaya Clark and Jacquelyn Whitworth

National Achievement: Kaitlyn Meeks

National Hispanic Recognition Program Scholar: Jacquelynne Day

AUBURN FRESHMAN CAMPUS AT WILSON

On February 13, 2007, as part of the vote to assign middle and high school students to schools by geographical zones, the Board of Education also approved having all Auburn freshman, including CAPA and Academy students, housed on the Wilson campus. This is the building just south of the football field. While many questions remain unanswered, Dr. Thompson provided the following information.

The school will be the Auburn Freshman Foundation (AFF), not Wilburn, not Auson. The administrative structure will be 6 administrators for both campuses. Dr. Jancek remains head principal. He will choose how his staff is distributed. By state law, one staff member will be given the title principal, but that individual will report to Dr. Jancek. The new principal is expected to be confirmed at the Feb 27 BOE meeting and begin work April 2.

Fresh Start will remain in the building. The section of the building where Fresh Start is located will be separated from the AFF by locked doors. The programs will remain separate at all times.

The district's intent is to limit the AFF to first year students. "Freshmores" (sophomores who have not passed all their freshman classes) will attend class on the main Auburn campus. There will be roughly 500 Auburn freshman in 06-07, 200 of which will be Academy and CAPA students. The free and reduced lunch student population is estimated to be 61%

Central administration is recommending all students, including Academy and CAPA, take a career awareness class their freshman year as well as a speech class their sophomore year. Please be aware that *these are only recommendations and not graduation requirements.* The district made the speech recommendation based on data that showed past RPS 205 students of all economic groups scored an average of 3 points higher on their ACT exam if they had taken a speech class. If your student prefers other classes for their electives, they will not be penalized for opting out of speech or career awareness.

The district estimates the cost of implementing the Freshman Foundation at all 4 district high schools will be around $750,000. That figure includes $10,000 at each school for a facilitator, 3 days of staff training,, an additional 14 teachers (total for all schools) to accommodate the reduced class size (25) and office staff for AFF. The facilitator will work with instruction and cohesion throughout the program. Dr. Thompson said the estimated cost ($600,000) to re-open the Wilson pool is prohibitive to that occurring. There is no dance floor. Participation in sports will be as part of an Auburn team.

The fate of some Academy/CAPA students' class locations remains a question. At the Education Committee meeting on Feb 6, Martha Hayes said students in the Academy and CAPA would spend half a day at Wilson and be transported to Auburn for half a day. Then at the Feb 13th Board Meeting, Ms Hayes said upon further study of the facility, Auburn Principal Jancek felt freshman Academy/CAPA students would spend the entire day on the Wilson campus. At the Feb 20th Education Committee meeting Ms. Hayes said administration is committed to doing whatever is needed to meet the needs of the CAPA and Academy students. She further clarified by saying if there proves to be a hardship with the campus at Wilson not accommodating the student needs, those students will be transported back to Auburn as deemed necessary. In a subsequent conversation, Dr. Jancek reiterated his desire to limit movement of students. If they have to be moved, he hopes to have it at the beginning or end of the day. Administration feels it would be easier to move teachers than students, although the union has yet to agree. It is typical for Academy teachers to teach both freshman and upper level courses. This was voiced as a major detriment to placing freshman Academy students in another building, as was the loss of communication between staff.

One benefit of the Foundation will be reduced class size for all freshman classes. Another will be the increased availability of classrooms at Auburn, which is expected to alleviate some of the scheduling difficulties encountered this year for upper level classes at Auburn. This will only work if the district keeps the Auburn census at the promised 1600 for which the building was designed, yet Dr. Thompson indicated building in the area could increase Auburn's enrollment by 200 in the next couple of years.

(Continued on page 6)

WEST UPDATES

SCHOLASTIC BOWL: Bonnie Wallin and Deb Johns are coaching Scholastic Bowl. There are 15 team members who will compete in Barrington, Illinois on March 17th.

7G CAN DRIVE: 7th grade gifted students recently held a "Souper Sunday" Can Drive. The donations were taken to Zion Lutheran Church Pantry

MIDDLE SCHOOL MATH COUNTS COMPETITION: Andrew Hudson won the individual competition at the Math Counts Competition held at Rock Valley College on Saturday, February 10. Andrew is in 7th grade in the gifted program at West Middle School. Andrew will be representing West at the State Competition for Math Counts. Other students receiving awards and placing in the competition representing West Middle School were Alex Liddell, Brandon Dao, Sam Toppe, Ariana Munger, Jordan Wright, Hayley Rydberg and Caroline Pilcher.

SEVEN HOUR DAY

A recent series of articles about education in the Chicago Tribune makes the point in their February 7th installment that a "180 day school calendar makes no sense today and neither does a school day that lasts only six hours. U.S. students spend less time in school than students in most countries. Chicago has one of the shortest school years and one of the shortest school days, in the nation. Chicago comes up seven weeks short of New York City schools." Since Rockford has the same 180 six hour school days, our students are also cheated out of weeks of educational opportunities.

Recently there have been rumblings among school board members about the return of a seven hour day to the middle school. At the February 8 Forum at Eisenhower Middle School, Dr. Thompson spoke to the decline of the art and music programs in middle and high school since the loss of the seventh hour and indicated something has to be done to bolster these programs. Yet no official proposal to return to a seven hour day in middle or high school is currently being entertained by the board and Dr. Thompson states a 7 hour school day is "Not my priority." Since the administration is developing next year's budget, the time is now for parents to come forward and express their concerns on this subject, either through calls or letters to Dr. Thompson and board members (contact information is listed in your PGE directory and on the district website: rps205.com), or, preferably, by speaking directly to board members at the open comment section of a school board meeting. Consider that since the school day was shortened to deal with budget deficits, the overall Education Fund deficit has been reduced from $42 to $8 million, there was a general fund surplus last year and another $5.9 million surplus projected for this year, the community passed a referendum maintaining the school tax rate, the average district teacher's salary dropped from $62,144 in 05 to $55,558 in 06, the number of administrators in the district has risen the average district administrators salary has increased from $85,298 in 05 to $97,051 in 06, Freshman Foundation is projected to cost $750,000 and *the number of Academy National Merit Semifinalists dropped to it's lowest ever- one.*

COLLEGE PLANNING

For a booklet written on preparing gifted kids for college, co-written by a Board member of the Illinois Association for Gifted Children, parents are encouraged to go to the following website: http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/nrcgt/reports/rm93201/rm93201.html

KING UPDATES

GLO and Spanish classes are richly enhancing the quality of our children's education.

The Scholastic Book fair raised almost $2000 that will be used to purchase new books for our library. Teachers, students and parents made this event a positive experience for our school.

Over $1300 in monetary donations, gift cards, clothing, furniture and food were donated to King families who are recent victims of disasters. Included in this amount is $300 our own K-Kids donated from money they've raised.

King students and their families have been introduced to Study Island, a computer program students can access from home to help them prepare for the ISAT.

Our school is making a commitment to upgrade our library. Many titles are out of date, and we have a serious lack of non-fiction books. Old books are being weeded from the shelves, and we are all looking forward to watching our library grow!

King students Sam Rinaldo, Neil Mediratta and Nathaniel Westholder received perfect scores in the Rockford Chess Challenge at North Boone Middle School.

TEACHER APPRECIATION

If you have not yet signed up to donate food or your help with set up, serving or clean up, PGE would love to hear from you! Please leave a message with Jill at 815-633-6818.

RUTH HARRIS BOOK SCHOLARSHIP*: *Applications due April5th

Thanks to the donations from some parents during our registration at the beginning of the year and from a grant from Hamilton-Sundstrand, we are pleased to announce that PGE can offer the Ruth Harris Book Scholarship again this year. In February of 2005, RPS 205 centralized gifted program students, staff and parents lost a faithful advocate and friend. Ruth Harris worked for the Rockford Public Schools as the gifted program psychologist since its inception in 1975.. She was a champion for gifted students, a mentor to teachers, and a friend to parents. PGE will offer two scholarships in honor of Ruth Harris. Each of the scholarships will be worth $500 to be used for the purchase of college textbooks.

Information and application forms will be available on the PGE website, **www.pge205.org** and in the Auburn counseling office. The deadline for applications will be April 5, 2007. Award winners will be announced in May.

GIFTED IN THE NATIONAL NEWS

Recent articles have explored the relationship between gifted programs and the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law. We begin with excerpts from the February 7, 2007 New York Times article titled "*Federal Law Drains Resources for the Gifted.*"

"NCLB requires virtually all children become proficient in reading and mathematics by 2014, and this demand is forcing many school districts to focus attention – and money – on students who are not proficient in reading or math. Many families of exceptionally bright children like to say that it is the gifted who are being left behind… Districts needing to pay for after-school tutoring or other score-raising remedies needed under NCLB inevitably poach dollars from programs for students who already score high."

"Our education reform is so focused on making sure everybody is mediocre that we haven't thought about meeting the needs of those students already exceeding those goals…Everybody assumes those children are going to continue to grow. But it's like an athlete with potential. If they don't have a coach, that skill is not going to be drawn out."

"Some see the gnawing irony in the diversion of money from gifted programs…cuts in programs for the gifted hurt low-income children with tons of potential who may not be getting the attention they deserve."

"Lost in the debate, champions of the gifted say, is that exceptional intellects need hand-holding as much as those below average, that they get restless or disheartened working with material they long ago conquered. Jane Clarenbach, public education director of the National Association for Gifted Children, said research shows that 20 percent of the nation's three million gifted students will drop out before graduating from high school."

With those in mind, consider the argument Charles Murray puts forth in his recent Wall Street Journal article *"Intelligence in the Classroom"* http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.25452,filter.all/pub_detail.asp) when he writes, "Our ability to improve the academic accomplishment of students in the lower half of the distribution of intelligence is severely limited…There is no reason to believe that raising intelligence significantly and permanently is a current policy option, no matter how much money we are willing to spend… We only know for sure that if the bar for basic achievement is meaningfully defined, some substantial proportion of students will be unable to meet it no matter how well they are taught."

The second article in the series *"Excerpt from The Aztecs and The Greeks"* (http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.all,pubID.25474/pub_detail.asp) speaks to an interesting reason Murray believes separate classes for gifted students are needed, "The encouragement of wisdom requires a special kind of education. It requires first of all recognition of one's own intellectual limits and fallibilities--in a word, humility. This is perhaps the most conspicuously missing part of today's education of the gifted. Many high-IQ students, especially those who avoid serious science and math, go from kindergarten through an advanced degree without ever having a teacher who is dissatisfied with their best work and without ever taking a course that forces them to say to themselves, "I can't do this." Humility requires that the gifted learn what it feels like to hit an intellectual wall, just as all of their less talented peers do, and that can come only from a curriculum and pedagogy designed especially for them. That level of demand cannot fairly be imposed on a classroom that includes children who do not have the ability to respond. The gifted need to have some classes with each other not to be coddled, but because that is the only setting in which their feet can be held to the fire."

In the final article titled *"What's Wrong with Vocational Schools?"* (http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.all,pubID.25464/pub_detail.asp) the author challenges that "far too many students are going to four-year colleges… Combine those who are unqualified with those who are qualified but not interested, and some large proportion of students on today's college campuses--probably a majority of them--are looking for something that the four-year college was not designed to provide."

AUBURN FRESHMAN CAMPUS AT WILSON *(continued)*

(Continued from page 4)

When board member Jay Nellis asked Ms. Hayes if there would be zero hour classes for Auburn freshman, she responded there would be if the need was established. This was confirmed with 88% of 8th grade gifted students requesting zero hour. (refer to the zero hour article on pg 3 of this newsletter).

At the Feb 20th Ed Committee Meeting, Ms. Hayes referenced articles which she said supported the contention gifted students have the same social emotional issues as traditional students. PGE has yet been unsuccessful in obtaining copies of the specific articles used to support these statements. Sally Walker of the IAGC suggests parents consider current discussion around the topic "Overexcitabilities" may contradict the statement of all students being alike. PGE has arranged for Dr. Michael Piechowski to speak to our parents on Monday, April 16th at 7 PM in the Eiger Auditorium on Fulton Ave. The discussion will be pertinent to gifted students of all ages.

Many questions remain to be answered regarding Academy/CAPA students and the AFF regarding upper level academics, CAPA, Industrial and Engineering Technology (drafting, aerospace, automotive mechanics) and Information Technology (CISCO, INET, A+). More will surface with planning and scheduling. But as parents we cannot underestimate the concern that containing freshmen students in a separate facility will isolate them from the high school community experience which prepares them for further education and the world of work. What incentive will there be for freshmen to become a part of the larger Auburn community - WYSE, Scholastic Bowl, Key Club, YWLO, sports etc? Where will their role models be? Will they buy into the Auburn community when they have to travel to the main campus for after school activities? Will parents get involved in Booster Club while their student is attending another campus? How many good teachers do we risk losing to this change? And will our gifted director and staff participate in the decisions being made for our students?

PARENTS FOR GIFTED EDUCATION

4913 Birch Ave
Rockford, IL 61114-6205

Email: johnte@insightbb.com

March 7, 2007 PGE Meeting 7PM, West Library
Auburn Principal Dr. Jancek will provide further update on the Freshman Foundation. Parents will have the opportunity to ask questions and have concerns addressed.

April 16, 2007 Speaker: Intensities & Sensitivities
7PM at Eiger Auditorium (605 Fulton Ave, Rockford 61103)
Dr. Michael Piechowski presents psychological factors and central nervous system sensitivity which make gifted children "different," as well as strategies for coping with these "overexcitablities."

April 18, 2007 Please Don't Leave Our Children Behind
Join PGE in a trip to Springfield where we'll focus the attention of the Illinois legislature on the issues of gifted children.

PGE ON THE WEB: PGE205.ORG

CHECK HERE FOR PAST, UPDATED AND CURRENT GIFTED NEWS

STARQUEST IS BACK!

After a year off, the annual Starquest trip to Florida at the end of seventh grade is back. Although this trip is a physics trip, it is not a school district field trip, which is why it takes place after school is out for the summer. The trip is lead by seventh grade science teacher Linda Griffin and her son. The trip began in 1999 when they took 42 kids to Florida for 5 days of physics learning fun. Over the course of the next seven years, over 200 kids expanded their understanding of physics, while enjoying the best central Florida had to offer.

This June, twenty two kids, along with Mrs. Griffin and her son will fly to Florida, where they will be met by their World Strides guide, who will remain with the group for the next five days. Upon arrival , the group will board their bus and leave immediately for Epcot. They will spend the remainder of the day exploring this incredible showcase of technology, learning and international studies. Over the course of the next five days, they will do behind-the-scenes seminars at both Epcot and Magic Kingdom.

The new seminar at Epcot, Dynamics of Technology, blasts off at Mission Space before the park opens and into the world of technological advancement. Students will be put to the test as they discover the progression and application of mathematics in technological development at Mission Space and Test Track. Students will explore, among other things, the interplay of electric and magnetic forces in technological designs and the application of the laws of motion. The day will continue with an exploration of lighting, fiber optics, energy, the effect of 3D projection, sound effects, and of course, the chemistry of fireworks. In addition, Epcot is mec'ca for international studies

The Physics in Motion seminar at Magic Kingdom begins at Space Mountain before the opening of Magic Kingdom with some physics calculations and then a ride on Space Mountain in the dark and again with the lights on to see the effects of lighting on perception. Then on to investigate lasers, hydraulics and pneumatics with Buzz Lightyear, followed by the study of potential and kinetic energy, velocity, acceleration, inertia, and G-forces through the use of equipment on Big Thunder Railway. Another favorite is the study of reflection, refraction, and acoustics at the Haunted Mansion and the study of magnetic induction at the TTA. The Magic Kingdom is a playground of physics!

Another day will be spent at the Museum of Science and Industry in Tampa, investigating lightning, exploring hurricanes in the simulator, and doing workshops on electricity and space travel. Located in Tampa as well is the Challenger Learning Center, where students will complete a student lead simulated space mission. Students will take on positions such as navigation, communication, probe completion, robotics and more and are completely in charge of handling their mission.

The group will complete their last day with a visit to a safari park for a close up, hands on experience with animals indigenous to Florida, including the black panther and of course, the gators! Then they will enjoy a picnic on the beach and a close encounter with the Atlantic Ocean before returning to Orlando to fly back to Rockford, tired and full of extraordinary experiences to share with their families and friends.

Starquest 2008 information is available with the possibility of early registration discounts for next year's 7th graders at http://students.ed.uiuc.edu/ljgriffi/starquest/index.html