

Talented and Gifted News

Volume 1, Issue 3

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Special points of interest:

- Fall Conferences
- Pre-Assessments
- Personalized Education
- Grading of Differentiated Work
- TAG Publications
- Middle School - High School Connection
- Band & Choir Programs
- Math Competition
- Advanced Art

Inside this issue:

<i>Research Databases</i>	2
<i>TAG Child Find</i>	2
<i>More Classroom Projects</i>	2

January issue:

- Wordmaster Challenge Language Arts Contest*
- American Mathematics Competition Results*
- Spelling Bee Preparation*
- Pentagame Teams*

TAG Happenings by Isolde Hedemark



During the past few weeks, teachers at Sisters Middle School participated in professional development relevant to talent and giftedness, worked relentlessly to pre-assess talented and gifted students at the beginning of each unit, and improved differentiated assignments in all core subject areas.

In general, these pre-assessments measure conceptual understanding rather than the knowledge of specific data, and students who perform at the 97th % level or above on these tests earn a grade that corresponds to the percentage. The differentiated assignment, that replaces exercises and projects of the mastered unit, is also graded and feedback given to the student, but

the score is not included in the overall grade. This approach is designed to encourage TAG students to produce quality work in all differentiated assignments.

We have also added to our professional library a number of language arts publications for gifted children, "who need educated vocabularies and grammar competence of exceptional quality," according to Michael Clay Thompson, OTAG conference speaker and renowned publisher.

And, our TAG students continue to thrive in high school level math and foreign language courses, produce notable journalistic articles for yearbook and journalism classes, perform admirably in

band and choir concerts and participated for the first time in a mathematics competition, sponsored by the Mathematical Association of America.

A special purpose of the AMC 8 is to demonstrate the broad range of topics available for the middle school mathematics curriculum, and to promote excitement, enthusiasm and positive attitudes towards mathematics.

Results of the competition should be available the end of December and high scoring students in each grade level will receive special awards and recognition.

Classroom Projects for TAG Students

Mrs. Hopp's 5th Grade Reading

Differentiated instruction in 5th grade reading focuses on two "C's": challenge and choice. Students are continually monitored and assessed through comprehension and fluency

checks, expository responses to reading selections and other creative interpretations that require a synthesis of reading knowledge.

Here are a few ways of challenge and choice work in 5th grade reading:

Our new literature anthology comes with beyond level readers, complete with higher level vocabulary and accompanying questions at the analysis, synthesis and evaluation levels.

Continued on page -2-

Classroom Projects for TAG Students

Independent book projects are another great opportunity in reading, allowing students to cover a wide range of genre that is at their independent reading level and of interest to them.

Mastery of literary elements and themes is demonstrated in many ways including responding to the novel using various writing modes, creating different multiple intelligence based projects and presenting class "Book Talks" or speeches.

- To be continued next issue

Mrs. Kanzig's 6th Grade Social Studies

Sixth graders at Sisters Middle School social studies classes have



been actively learning about the fascinating continent of Africa this fall. Unlike many parents' memories of studying geography and history, lessons go beyond reading a textbook chapter and answering a quiz. While textbooks remain part of the students' learning, they are given many additional engaging and creative educational opportunities that more effectively bridge students' prior knowledge to new information and greater understanding.

All students participate in a storyline method of learning where each child creates an African character from a specific country which the student has chosen to research. Their characters have been "selected" to present to the "world" their life in their country, in-

cluding physical and political geography. The final project will be the "African Celebration", to be held in January, 2008 (We are pretending it is in Cairo, Egypt with worldwide media present).



- To be continued next issue

Mrs. Pledger's 5th Grade Math

This year the fifth grade is fortunate to have three different math classes for our students. Students were placed in groups according to their beginning of the year assessment and their results from last year's state tests. We have a high group that works at grade level, but the rate of instruction is fast.

Mrs. Pledger's 5th Grade Math - continued

When they finish the book, additional instruction on topics not covered in our book will be addressed. The second group is working at grade level, but not as fast paced as group one. Our third group is working at grade level, but using specific strategies. Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication and Division facts are highly emphasized in this group. We feel having three classes of math offered for fifth grade is a great example of differentiated curriculum.

Toastmasters Club with Cheryl Stewart

Cheryl Stewart, mother of two Sisters Middle School students, will again offer a Toastmasters class to 7th and 8th graders. This extracurricular program focuses on developing communication and leadership skills in a fun setting. Participants learn how to prepare and present speeches, conduct meetings, evaluate speakers, and develop effective listening skills.

All interested 7th and 8th graders should indicate their interest in the club by December 10 with their respective Language Arts teacher, Miss Schoenecker or Mr. Miller.

Classes will start after Christmas Break and run on late start Wednesday from 8:00 - 8:45 for eight weeks. The cost is \$ 20 for materials with scholarship opportunities available. Location TBA later.

SIRS & Proquest Databases for Differentiated Research

In addition to multiple search engines, Sisters Middle School students have available to them several on-line databases. **OSLIS**, Oregon School Libraries Information System, **EBSCO**, **SIRS**, and Proquest **E-Library**.

SIRS Discoverer offers thousands of references, articles, pictures, maps, and videos appropriate for middle school age groups. Each research re-

sult in "SIRS Discoverer" is given a reading level of general, easy, moderate or challenging, which can easily be incorporated into differentiation for talented and gifted readers. In addition, articles show lexile scores which match reader ability and text difficulty, allowing individualized monitoring of student progress. **E-Library** offers a vast collection of biographies, reference

books, journal articles, images, videos, sound clips, web links and "Poets on Screen." Over 800 poems are read by the world's greatest poets and many literary articles lend themselves to student led research, comparisons and the creation of interest driven projects.

SIRS and E-library are accessible from home.