

ABC PEEL NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: GINA HEISZ

Welcome to a brand new year. I hope that you will come out and join us for the next few month of Parents' Night meetings. We are having some interesting topics with a focus for this time of the year on the choices that our older children might be making. We often talk of the importance of identification and placement of children in the younger grades, so it is time to look at what is available to senior public school students and high school students, and how appropriate they are for your child. Some programs have more to do with desire and interest that they do with learning style or giftedness, so it is important to look at the whole picture when helping your child make such an important decision. Remember that, very often, people make very different career choices then they thought they were going to make when they were in grade 5 or grade 12, or even after finishing a degree at university!!

BOARD UPDATES:

At the December 19, 2006 SEAC meeting, a new chair was elected. Barbara Byers, the representative for Fragile X syndrome was elected and was previously the vice-chair. Trustee Brad McDonald was elected as the vice-chair.

At the December 4, 2006 meeting of the Board of Trustees, Janet McDougald was re-elected as chair and 3 new Trustees assumed their positions as members of the Board of Trustees. They are: Allison Van Wagner, Suzanne Nurse and Jeff White.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS:

On Saturday January 27, 2007 we will be having a special childrens' program in conjunction with Spirit of Math. It is called "Neuron Tickler", a winter warm-up for children in grades 4 to 6. The cost is \$35 for ABC members and \$50 for non-members. If you have more than one child attending, and are a member of ABC, the 2nd child's registration will be \$30.

The program will run from 1:30pm until 4:30pm, and will be located at the Erin Mills Community Station at 3476 Glen Erin Drive in Mississauga. Please confirm your registration at activities@abcpeel.org

PARENTS' NIGHT THIS MONTH:

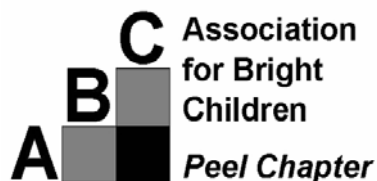
This month our parent's night will be held on January 25, 2007. Our topic will be "**Why Choose Regional Gifted in Secondary School?**" Our speaker will be Lois McGinn, who runs the Regional Gifted Program at Glenforest Secondary School in Mississauga. This evening will be of great benefit to children in grades 7 and up who are making choices about which highschool program is right for them. Children as young as grade 5/6 may also attend.

We would like all parents to come out and share their experiences about the many different programs that are available to our children. We would like to hear about what you like and/or dislike about these programs, and why you made the decision to join one of these other programs, etc.

NEXT MONTH'S PARENT NIGHT:

On February 22, 2007 our topic will be "**Cognitive Science Program at U of T.**" This meeting will be held in conjunction with the Toronto ABC chapter and will be held in the Mississauga room. Professor John Vervaeke will be joining us along with 2 senior students to discuss this fascinating interdisciplinary program that combines studies in cognitive psychology, philosophy, linguistics and computer science (artificial intelligence).

Prof. Vervaeke was nominated in 2006 for TVO's Best Lecturer Challenge in Ontario, and received one of the five teaching awards at UofT in 2000/2001. The meeting will begin at 7 pm instead of our regular 7:30 start and will be held in the Mississauga Room.



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ADVOCACY SUPPORT:

As members of ABC Peel, did you know that you have access to advocacy support for IPRC's, IEP's and school team meetings? If and when you have questions about an upcoming IPRC, we are available to help you through the steps. No parent should ever go to an IPRC alone. Although you may feel that you can handle the situation, it is always better to have someone with you that fully understands the process and can ask the appropriate questions at the appropriate time. Sometimes it is very difficult to maintain composure during a meeting when the topic is *your* child. An advocate acts as an impartial 3rd party, always maintains composure, and hopefully will help put the parent at ease. If you want an advocate to attend your IPRC with you, please call 905-230-8281. There may be a small mileage fee of 25 cents per kilometer each way to cover gas.

PROGRAMS AVAILABLE IN PEEL:

In the Peel District School Board there are 7 different types of programs available to children starting as early as grade 1, with some starting in grades 5 and up. These are:

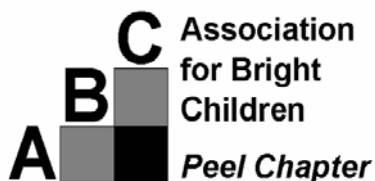
- 1.) Enhanced Learning Classes (gifted contained)
- 2.) Sci-Tech (science technology)
- 3.) IBT (International Business & Technology)
- 4.) Regional Arts (visual, music, drama, dance)
- 5.) IB (International Baccalaureate—middle years and highschool level)
- 6.) Extended French (grade 7 through 12)
- 7.) French Immersion (grade 1 though 12)

These programs are available throughout Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon in various schools, and most have an admission/audition qualification process with the exception of French Immersion which starts in grade 1. The list of French immersion schools is found here:

www.peelschools.org/schools/fr_schls.htm

Here is a list of each of the programs with their corresponding school locations:

- 1.) **ELC** - Primary/Junior— Helen Wilson (Brampton)
 Junior— Somerset Drive (Brampton)
 Intermediate —R.H. Lagerquist (Brampton)
 Greenbriar Senior (Brampton)
 Senior — Heart Lake Secondary (Brampton)
 Primary/Junior —Britannia (Mississauga)
 Primary/Junior —Lyndwood (Mississauga)
 Junior — Thorn Lodge (Mississauga)
 Intermediate—Homelands (Mississauga)
 Camilla Sr. (Mississauga)
 Lyndwood (Mississauga)
 Dolphin Sr. (Mississauga)
 Thomas St. Middle (Miss.)
 Senior — The Woodlands (Mississauga)
 Lorne Park S.S. (Mississauga)
 Glenforest S.S. (Mississauga)
 Primary/Junior/Inter.—Caledon East (Caledon)
 Intermediate — Allan Dr. Middle (Caledon)
 Senior — Humberview S.S. (Caledon)
- 2.) **Sci-Tech**—Tomken Rd. Middle School (Mississauga)
 Port Credit S.S. (Mississauga)
- 3.) **IBT** — Allan A. Martin Sr. (Mississauga)
 Gordon Graydon S.S. (Mississauga)
 North Park S.S. (Brampton)
- 4.) **Regional Arts**—Earnscliffe Sr. (Brampton)
 Queen Elizabeth Sr. (Mississauga)
 Mayfield S.S. (Caledon)
 Cawthra Park S.S. (Mississauga)
- 5.) **IB** — Middle years—W.G. Davis Sr. (Brampton)
 Senior — Turner Fenton (Brampton)
 Glenforest S.S. (Mississauga)
- 6.) **Extended French**—W.G. Davis Sr. (Brampton)
 Green Glade Sr. (Mississauga)
 Allan Dr. Middle (Caledon)
 Turner Fenton (Brampton)
 Humberview S.S. (Caledon)
 Lorne Park S.S. (Mississauga)



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BOOK REVIEW: HOTHOUSE KIDS The Dilemma of the Gifted Child

**Book by Alissa Quart ISBN #1-59420-095-5
Published 2006, Penguin Books**

About the Author: Author of the acclaimed book *Branded.*, a book about the ways that corporations market to teens, targeting their basic desires to fit in, make friends) and driving them to consume. She writes book reviews and opinion pieces for the New York Times and for the New York Times Magazine, as well as other publications.

PLEASE NOTE: As this book is American based, it refers to and uses definitions that are not necessarily applicable in Canada.

In her book, the author talks about the dilemma of the gifted child in the United States.

"This book is written for parents and educators as well as adult readers with gifted pasts. In *Hothouse Kids*, we traverse the country to meet gifted kids, prodigies and "former" gifted kids, clarifying what early enrichment worked for them and what went to far."

There is much discussion about the more intense parenting of recent years. This intense parenting includes:

- Increase in children's structured time (as opposed to free play time)
- Increase in enrichment activities
- Specialized camps
- Competitions

One of the outcomes of this is the tendency to turn what these children do for entertainment into their job.

Added to testing IQs of very young children, Quart says that this so called "enrichment" has filtered down into the youngest of children. With an emphasis on early programs and products that are directed towards babies and toddlers.

These programs are referred to as baby edutainment. You may be familiar with the Baby Einstein videos or baby sign language.

Several reasons have been given for why we have these products. They include the demand from parents, the hard sell from these companies, and our increasing desire for electronics, and to be able to have easy and convenient access to repetition for learning. It is much easier to re-watch a DVD than to readily repeat other types of learning experiences.

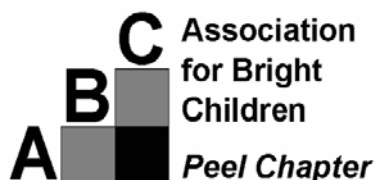
According to the chapter called "*Gifted and Left Behind: Enrichment in the Public Schools*", there was a disturbing fact mentioned that 61% of classroom teachers have never received any training in gifted education.

This chapter explores both the "Against Gifted" and "For Gifted" arguments.

On the "Against" side falls the argument that gifted education is not just elitist, it is also a way of enforcing social divisions, both of class and race from an early age. Others say that separating students does more harm than good and accuses gifted education of blocking diversity.

On the "For" side falls the arguments that the more extreme a child's intellectual ability, the less likely that the child will be able to tolerate a standard curriculum.

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As well as a staggering statistic from the National Association for Gifted Children that says that those in elementary school already know half of the material that will be covered in the regular class before the year begins.

Being familiar with the material and the repetitive nature of a typical average classroom, can often result in boredom. When these students come from a poorer background where extracurricular activities are not available to them, as much as 20% of gifted and talented students drop out of school.

Advocates of gifted education point to the common assumption that if the gifted are left to their own devices, they will come out all right in the end. Lack of interest can lead to poor performance and the student to disconnect and not be engaged in the learning process. Going to school becomes a place where learning new information and ideas is a rare occurrence.

Teaching the Gifted

Experts say that in order to teach these students, gifted education services should be available from Kindergarten to twelfth grade. For a gifted program to be adequate, it requires:

- Flexibility
- Tiered Assignment
- Elastic Grouping
- Room for students to Accelerate
- Dual Enrollment
 - Taking College courses while still in High School
 - Taking High School courses while still in Senior Public school)
- Teachers open to using different tools
 - Pre-testing—testing the student to see what they already know, and letting them move ahead if they know

- Curriculum Compacting - the teacher will give the student fewer problems

Providing gifted students with what is commonly referred to as “Busy Work”, simply reiterates what the student already knows rather than advancing the student's knowledge. This can make students oppositional, and even angry and resentful. The results again, can be the disengagement of our future's brightest.

Gifted education is a necessity for some children and without it, some of these children will suffer and be thwarted in their thirst for knowledge. Wouldn't it be a bonus to all passionate about education that that all facets of education deliver their best to all students!

Editor's Notes:

Please note that the comments below are *my opinion only* and may not necessarily reflect the opinion of others within ABC Peel.

What always arouses my curiosity is one of Gifted Education's most steadfast and a fascinating enemy: social resentment. There is such a huge resentment of the gifted and of gifted education. Some of this resentment comes from a supposed thinking that those who think they are gifted feel they are special or somehow above other people.

Gifted does not mean better than someone else, or hold a higher ranking. What it calls for in my humble opinion is for an education that is stimulating and allows these students to learn at the pace they need, and to learn something new and challenging with their intellectual peers. A place where they can be accepted and be themselves, warts and all, just like everyone else.

In the News: State Funeral for Last Veteran of WW1

As a follow-up from November's Newsletter, the Government of Canada has announced their plans to provide the last Veteran with a State Funeral.



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ARE THERE TOO MANY CHOICES FOR GIFTED CHILDREN?

Here in Peel there are so many choices for our gifted children. The problem may start as early as grade 1 when parents have the option to send their children to French immersion. The parent usually already knows that the child is bright, and realizes that a regular classroom setting just won't be enough. But, most parents do not realize that enhanced classes start in grade 1 in Peel. So, the parent sends the child off to French immersion for grade 1 thinking that it will be enough stimulation. After a few years, the novelty wears off, and the child is bored. Usually around CCAT time in the spring of grade 4, or sometimes much earlier, a WISC test reveals that what the child really needs is an enhanced learning class, and to be with intellectual peers. So, the parent now has the decision of whether or not to remove the child from French immersion and all of their friends, to join the enhanced class.

Another tough decision can be in grade 5 or 6 when all of the other options become available, such as IBT, Arts, IB, Sci-Tech or Extended French. Although many of these programs are great and offer a very focused education, parents should remember that they are *not* gifted classes. Yes, many gifted children end up in these programs, but, was the choice made because it is what the child truly wants and needs, or was it because of a lack of information about gifted programs at the high school level? Many of these other programs have fancy marketing brochures and have teams of full-time staff that promote them. The gifted programs however, do not have that same promotion or the fancy brochures. Why is that?

There seems to be a lot of misinformation about the regional gifted programs at the high school level. Some individual schools do a great job of trying to promote and de-mystify, others do nothing. There are some schools whose numbers of gifted students grow each year, while others are declining to the point of extinction.

We need open information sharing. Parents need to be made aware of all the options, so that they can make an informed choice.

Sometimes the lack of information can force a parent to move to a better area in Peel that has a well-run gifted program. Some children have left the program at the high school level because of rumours about a certain school and its' program, or lack of a properly run program.

If you have made the decision to leave the gifted program for one of these other programs, we would like to hear from you. Even if you are considering leaving the program we would still like to hear from you. We need to know what can be improved in the gifted classes to make you stay, or return. Please ask your friends that have chosen these programs to contact us to tell us their story. Invite them to come out to our January Parents' Night meeting on January 25, 2007, or, send us an email with your thoughts to support@abcpeel.org

FUTURE PARENTS' NIGHTS:

January 25, 2007 - Why Choose Regional Gifted in High school? Please share your stories, or have your questions answered.

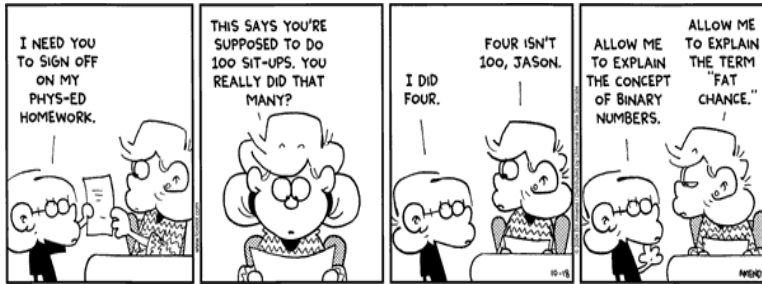
February 22, 2007 - Cognitive Science and Artificial Intelligence Program at U of T. Prof. John Vervaeke and 2 senior students from the program will be speaking about this amazing program at U of T. Children in grades 7 and up are welcome.

March 29, 2007 - Catharsis Night—panel of speakers to be announced at a later date.

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MATHEMATICAL COMICS AND QUOTES:

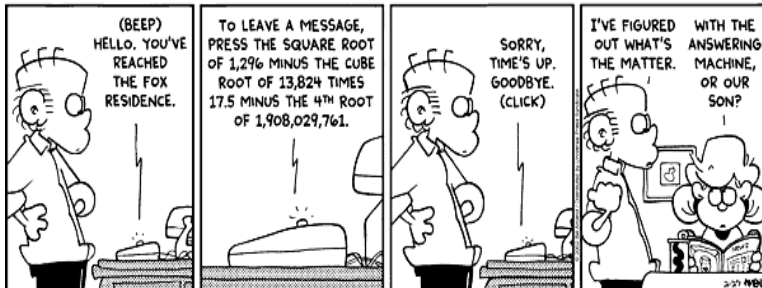
FoxTrot- comics by Bill Amend



"Math illiteracy strikes 8 out of 5 people."

"God is real, unless declared integer."

"According to my calculations, this problem doesn't exist."



MEMBERSHIP ISSUES:

ABC Peel memberships can now be paid online. Please visit:

https://www.beanstream.com/scripts/cart/view_products.asp?merchant_id=117484753

Payment can be made with credit cards such as VISA, MASTERCARD and AMERICAN EXPRESS.

Or, you can bring a cheque or cash with you to any Parents' Night meeting.

WEBSITES OF INTEREST:

<http://adifferentplace.org>

This is a place on the web to find differentiated activities in all content areas. There is a link to a Peel related website made by Jeryl Phillips who is a special education consultant for the Board. Scroll down to the bottom of the main page to "So, You're Gifted—a Web quest of Self-Discovery"

http://nobelprize.org/educational_games

These are games and simulations based on Nobel Prize winning achievements that teach and provide fun also.

<http://www.2enewsletter.com/>

For those of you with gifted-learning disabled children, here is a link to a twice-exceptional newsletter from the United States.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Telephone support: * 905-230-8281 (new number)

E-mail support: support@abcpeel.org

Website address: <http://www.abcpeel.org>

Membership Information: membership@abcpeel.org

Parent's Night Information: activities@abcpeel.org

Children's Programs: activities@abcpeel.org

Webmaster: webadmin@abcpeel.org

Communication Team (Newsletter):
abcpeelnews@hotmail.com