



# OPUSD GATE UPDATE

Oak Park Unified School District

Spring, 2015

## What is GATE

The purpose of Oak Park's GATE program is to ensure that all students are able to grow and flourish and to set in place the cornerstones for a lifetime of learning and global citizenship. The program provides gifted learners with differentiated curriculum experiences including critical thinking, inquiry, problem solving, and creativity. Classroom instruction differs in pace, depth, and complexity of study in order to better meet the needs of gifted learners. The characteristics of gifted learners include intensity, complexity, and precocity. Individual learning styles and the social-emotional needs of students are also considered, as well as exceptional abilities and special talents. Oak Park USD earned the prestigious FIVE STAR GATE AWARD from the California Association for the Gifted (CAG) in the State of California. The purpose of the award is to highlight exemplary programs in gifted education to serve as models for other school systems to emulate. Each of the schools in Oak Park Unified has dedicated resources to ensure this program works efficiently. Wikipedia defines "GATE" as Gifted education (also known as Gifted and Talented Education (GATE), Talented and Gifted (TAG), or G/T) which is a broad term for special practices, procedures, and theories used in the education of children who have been identified as gifted or talented. There is no standard global definition of what a gifted student is.



## Mission Statement

In order to increase awareness of the GATE program within the Oak Park Unified School District, we will be disseminating this newsletter. Within this publication, we will provide individual school updates as well as upcoming events, accomplishments, etc. In 2014, an extremely impressive brochure was distributed which provided parents of identified students with updated information and website links. Currently, within OPUSD, there is a GATE District Advisory Council that meets regularly and reviews ongoing activities.

## A Student's Meaning of GATE

A drop of fun. A touch of challenge. That may be part of what GATE is, but there's more. Last year, when I was in fifth grade, we had meetings every week to share our knowledge or any other intriguing information we had found. We could make PowerPoint presentations, watch videos, or even share orally. Every GATE student in the school came, with exceptions being when they were sick. It was like a little family, full of people that understood each other in ways other people couldn't, sharing what they learned. Yes, I think the meaning of GATE is that little family of people on the same level of understanding, who share wisdom for the benefit of themselves and others.



## SUMMER PROGRAMS

There is no shortage of summer activities for kids, and it is also important for them to have down time to create, imagine, socialize, read, explore their interests, etc. As part of your summer planning, you may want to look into some of these programs and resources which are geared toward the needs of gifted kids. Below are a few camps for your review.

### Camp Summit

<http://campsummitforthegifted.com/>

### Yunasa Camps

<http://www.educationaladvancement.org/programs/>

### Institute for Educational Advancement in Pasadena

<http://www.educationaladvancement.org/programs/>

### Duke TIP

<https://eog.tip.duke.edu/>

### Hoagies Gifted listings

<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/summer.htm>

**PLEASE FEEL FREE TO  
PROVIDE FEEDBACK,  
SUGGESTIONS, ETC. TO:**

**[OPUSDGATE@gmail.com](mailto:OPUSDGATE@gmail.com)**



Brookside held a morning coffee for parents of current GATE students. The team discussed ways Brookside is meeting the needs of GATE students within the classroom. Julie Hearst shared some highlights from field trips and experiences parents and students have been participating in (thanks to her emails). Denise Keane discussed the 4th and 5th grade teacher experience with the UCLA/ Critical Thinking Institute professional development. Teachers are finding this to fit really well with reaching our gifted population. Teachers attend the training at the district office monthly. Mrs. Ahl has been speaking to our math aides about adding enrichment for students at the primary grades in the area of math. Many parents shared their positive experiences with SENG and Judy Wiener's workshops. There is a lot of interest in Odyssey of the Mind. Many of our GATE students plan to participate. The coffee gave parents a chance to talk about resources that have been helpful to parents of the gifted.



Red Oak Elementary School GATE group had the idea to promote more friendships at school. We decided to write a grant to ask for supplies and materials. After our grant was declined, Dr. Tony Knight visited our group and provided us with the money we needed to buy our games. We decided on our idea to set up a table outside every Friday at lunch, with exciting games such as, Candyland, Spot It, and a few others. We came up with the name F.A.F., which stands for Find a Friend! We

created posters and wrote a song to invite children to come and play. Also, we made badges to introduce ourselves. After we put our plan into action, it succeeded, and we felt proud. We would love to spread the idea to others, so we could see friendships all around. We are very glad to see all of the smiles around school, all of the children playing games, and most importantly, all of the friends that are being found!



At Oak Hills Elementary, fifth grade students are participating in a lunch enrichment program, Science of Disney Imagineering (SoDI). In this class, students are able to extend their learning in science. Students have the opportunity to communicate and collaborate with peers, as well as apply critical thinking skills. Every other week students complete an experiment that is hands-on which promotes creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking skills. In addition, students use reading, writing, art, math, and computer knowledge to further their understanding of the science content that is being taught. So far, the students have extended their knowledge in animal adaptations, fluids, electricity, and magnetism.



Students are currently involved in numerous Honors and Advanced Placement or AP classes. Our AP classes give students the chance to try college-level work in high school, and to gain valuable skills and study

habits for college. If a student gets a "qualifying" grade on the AP Exam, there are thousands of colleges worldwide that will give credit or advanced placement for your efforts. AP courses and exams represent the beginning of the journey through college-level academic challenges. Our students are currently preparing to take their AP Exams. Our current 9th, 10th, and 11th grade students have attended informational meetings for Honors and AP classes and are selecting their classes for next year. Students will then be meeting with their counselors one on one to review and finalize their class selections. For more information on Honors and AP classes follow the link to the OPHS website. <http://www.oakparkusd.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=876>



All students at Medea Creek Middle School are encouraged to participate in our programs and activities that extend learning beyond the classroom.

- > CURRICULAR TRIPS
- > PROFESSIONAL MENTORS
- > HISTORY DAY CHALLENGE
- > VENTURA COUNTY SCIENCE FAIR
- > IDEA TO IMPACT CHALLENGE
- > MAGICMOUNTAINMATHSCIENCE DAYS
- > CLUB LIVE
- > ODDYSEY OF THE MIND
- > MATH COUNTS COMPETITION
- > SPELLING BEES
- > GEOGRAPHY BEES
- > OUTSIDE SPEAKERS



## *History Day Competition*

Medea Creek Middle School celebrated National History Day with a competition of exhibits and documentaries on Friday, March 20. Twenty-one groups of students presented exhibits or documentaries depicting the annual theme, "Leadership and Legacy." For their commitment and participation, 8th grade students will graduate with the designation "History with Honors." Three top honors were awarded to the following students: In third place was Monique Savor with her exhibit "Gabrielle Coco Chanel: The Fashionista Who Changed the World." Second Place went to Harmon Ban and Rasjot Singh for their exhibit about Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Finally, first place was awarded to Sylvia Cruz-Albrecht for her William Penn exhibit. Judges for this event were teachers from Oak Park's elementary, middle, and high schools. National History Day is an international event that engages over half a million middle- and high-school students around the world annually in conducting original research on historical topics of interest. Skills learned and utilized include critical thinking and problem solving, research and reading, oral and written communication, and cooperative involvement in the democratic process. Medea Creek Middle School has held this competition for the past three years. Each year, more students compete to earn their honors designation in history. The program is voluntary

and goes beyond the classroom for our students. History Day is an outstanding example of project-based, inquiry-based learning.

## *Gifted Education*

### *Giftedness: A Motivational Perspective*

Carol S. Dweck, PhD  
Duke TIP Digest of Gifted Research

#### *True or false?*

Some people are born gifted, and others are not. You can tell who will be gifted from early on. Gifted children should be labeled and praised for their brains and talent. All of these statements are accepted by many as true. However, as evidence has accumulated over the past decade, another view has been gaining credence that portrays giftedness as a more dynamic quality that can grow or stagnate. With this outlook comes a shift in emphasis from how to identify gifted children to how to cultivate giftedness and talent—a change in focus from measurement psychology to cognitive and motivational psychology. Genius and great, creative contributions are the product of passion, learning, and persistence.

### *Gifted People Are Made, Not Just Born*

More researchers are regarding motivation as the key ingredient for exceptional achievement. Their work suggests that creative genius itself grows out of the ability to sustain intense commitment for extended lengths of time in the face of

obstacles. They tell us that many well-known geniuses—Edison, Darwin, even Einstein—were ordinary bright children who became obsessed with something and because of that obsession ended up making enormous contributions. Mozart, whom we think of as composing in early childhood, did not produce original and noteworthy works until after more than ten years of non-stop composing; Beethoven talked about long periods of time when he carried his musical ideas within him and revised them over and over in his head before he started writing them down. Studies of other musical performers reveal a similar pattern. Brilliant pianists and violinists are different from their promising peers in their devotion and practice—not in their natural talent. Researchers who study creative genius have debunked the idea that full-blown creative contributions emerge effortlessly or naturally from talented and gifted individuals. Instead, they suggest that genius and great, creative contributions are the product of passion, learning, and persistence.

#### *Mindsets*

So, what makes some people more passionate, learning-oriented, and persistent than others? Through 30 years of research and collaboration, I have found students' mindsets—their beliefs about the nature of their intelligence—play a key role.... (See the rest of this article at <http://tip.duke.edu/node/888>.)



Both Dr. Knight and Mrs. Miller at Red Oak have encouraged everyone to apply for grants from the Tri-County GATE Council. In order to supplement the learning opportunities of gifted students, the Tri-County GATE Council wishes to assist local parents and students to augment and enrich programs for GATE students in their schools and/or districts by awarding grants. Grants may include, but are not limited to:

An original project that promotes GATE student academic, creative, and/or leadership potential; a research or community project involving GATE students; or an opportunity for GATE students to participate in an enrichment activity. Up to two grants of \$200.00 will be awarded to parents. Up to three grants of \$100.00 will be awarded to students. If someone in your family has a project in need of funding, please check out this opportunity.



## *California Department of Education Student Art Exhibit*

The California Department of Education (CDE) Literacy, History, and Arts Leadership Office is seeking student art donations to be displayed in the CDE building at 1430 N Street in Sacramento, California. The CDE building currently has art work on display that was donated by students in 2006, and we are excited to have the opportunity to update the art work with new donations and give the opportunity to showcase the creativity, imagination, and expertise of our visual art students throughout the grade levels. The CDE looks forward to your participation in making outstanding art work created by California's students accessible to the public. If you have additional questions, please contact us by phone at 916-323-3927 or by e-mail at [lmoreno@cde.ca.gov](mailto:lmoreno@cde.ca.gov).



## *Birdwatching Opportunities*

We have more birdwatchers in the group! The Radick family wanted to let people know about birdwalks

throughout the Santa Monica Mountains each month

<http://www.nps.gov/samo/naturescience/monthlybirdwalks.htm>



Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth offers Family Academic Programs designed for CTY Talent Search participants and their families to expose talented students to the exciting range of possibilities included in a broad-based education and life-long learning curriculum. They offer a broad range of activities at various locations and offer an excellent way for CTY students to meet other talented peers and for parents to engage in their child's educational experience. Qualifying test scores are not required to participate in the family academic programs. Visit <http://cty.jhu.edu/family/index.html> to see the variety of programs offered to different grade levels.



We lucked out! The Museum was hosting The Taylor Swift Experience, featuring never-before-seen personal photographs and home videos, interactive experiences, handwritten lyrics of Taylor's top-charting hits, and many of her most beautiful costumes and gowns. All the tween girls were in heaven. Kids and grownups alike enjoyed exploring the many

additional interactive exhibits throughout the museum, playing electronic instruments, and making music in simulated recording studio experiences.



## *Odyssey of the Mind*

Odyssey of the Mind is a creative problem-solving competition for students of all ages. Teams of students select a problem, create a solution, and then present their solution in a competition against other teams in the same problem and division. There are many fascinating complexities of this program explained in the online guide. Please refer to this for more info. This amazing competition is for K-12 and is dependent on parents to volunteer to coach. Volunteers will be needed at the beginning of next year.

For more information, please email Debra Hammill [DHammill@oakparkusd.org](mailto:DHammill@oakparkusd.org).

This program teaches students creativity, STEM skills, and 21st century learning. Friends of Oak Park will be putting more information on their web page as well.