

## IN THE SPIRIT OF CREATIVITY

### Ode to Creativity by Dr. Jim Granada, Director

Creativity, a concept of mystery, of wonder  
To define it we don't know quite what to look under...  
Is it a spark possessed by the artist,  
Or a characteristic of only the smartest?

Is it a way to solve problems, you ask?  
Unique ways of trying to complete a task?  
Is it what causes original thought?  
Can it be measured? Can it be taught?

What about the flexible thinkers?  
Let's not forget the inventor who tinkers!  
Then there's the person who generates lots  
Of responses when asked,  
"Will you please share your thoughts?"

We all knew the kid who, when called on in class  
Gave an answer that caused us to snicker en masse  
Because his (or her) "left-field" response was quite strange  
A negative outcome would the teacher arrange

But what if that teacher had taken a pause after asking  
And probed for the link that this answer was masking  
Perhaps a connection was there, not so odd...  
Or a brilliant idea that just needed a prod?

But, alas, I have strayed from the question at hand  
Being, "What of this concept can we understand?"  
So we journey right now to the core of the matter  
As I try to explain both the former and latter

Creativity stems from problems to solve  
When much more than logic the mind must involve  
The reason so many of us fail to use it  
Is because our society won't allow us to choose it

We get so caught up in our efficiency  
That we choose the quickest route from point A to point B  
Or rely on the past, on experts, on norms  
Or get bogged down in filling out zillions of forms

The act of creating takes a little more time  
It may not be direct but, instead, be sublime  
Creative may veer from the logical route  
May require techniques that you don't know about

For example, try taking a shoe and a sack  
And use them to think up a nutritious snack!  
Or maybe by using attributes of a mouse  
You could think up a brand new design for a house!

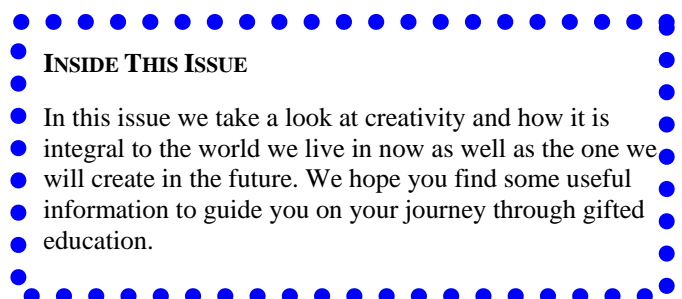
Try asking someone from a whole different place  
To assist in the solving of a problem you face  
Then take the suggestions and in context apply them  
And see if there might be a way you can try them

Try looking at things from a different perspective  
Magnify, minimize, be a tad less objective  
Take an idea and view it from over and under  
Fear not the perception that stems from, "I wonder..."

See what you're doing through the eyes of a child  
Be playful, have fun, take a chance and get wild  
Observe how a child who's "untrained" solves a task  
Then allow your own childlike ideas to unmask

These are but a few of the techniques to use  
There are volumes and more about this you can choose  
But the key to success is to look deep within  
And convince yourself over and over again

That creativity dwells in each person, untapped  
And for some it's in areas that have yet to be mapped  
So pick out some tools and begin searching today  
To learn how to be more creative your way!



## Winner's Circle by Debi Torres

Rita Hanson, counselor at Covington Middle School, has been selected to represent Region XIII as the 2007 GT Advocate of the Year by the Texas Association of the Gifted and Talented (TAGT). Rita raised two gifted children and is a passionate and active advocate of the gifted. She is the campus GT Advocate at Covington where she oversees the gifted program and works with the faculty and parents to help them better understand the needs of gifted children. She also uses her counseling background to help gifted children adjust to life at middle school. At the district level, Rita has presented to parents, teachers, and administrators on various topics in gifted education. She has a very special way of communicating her passion for gifted education to all groups of people. Her devotion to training teachers and working with gifted students to enhance their lives is evident in all the work she has done for the district.

According to TAGT, "Rita was chosen because of the way that she has positively impacted gifted education at the local and regional levels as she continues to influence students, parents, and educators. A personal thanks and appreciation to Rita for her continued efforts to lay strong foundations in social values, and for addressing and training parents, teachers, and administrators so that we can work together as a unified force to meet the needs of gifted children."

Rita will be recognized for her award at the annual TAGT conference November 14, 2007 in Houston, Texas. Our department nominated Rita for this award and we are proud to congratulate her on this honor.

## Mark Your Calendar!



### PARENT FORUM

*Positive Parent Advocacy  
for Your Gifted Child*

Wednesday, October 3, 2007  
6:15 – 7:30 p.m.

Professional Development Center  
3808 Keats Drive



### Fall GT Parent Symposium

*Creativity and Leadership*

Saturday, October 13, 2007  
9:00 a.m. — 12:30 p.m.

Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders  
2206 Prather Lane



## Imagery and Visualization: Picture the Future by Rhonda Boyer

Using imagery and visualization doesn't have an age limit; children as well as adults can use this technique as a part of setting and reaching goals. Using visual images of goals combined with the other senses, words, thoughts, and feelings tap both the left and right sides of the brain.

Teach your child to spend a few minutes a day visualizing themselves reaching their goals. Encourage them to think about the sounds, smells, and tastes associated with the pictures they form in their head. Have them put themselves into the picture. What are they doing? How are they feeling? The goal is to try to create a vision that stirs motivation, passion, and enthusiasm. Have your child talk to you about their goals and what they "see" when they use imagery and visualization.

Joel Frankel and Teddi McDonald suggest the following creative tools that are concrete ways of using visualization and imagery. Try them out for yourself and then teach them to your child. You may be surprised by how powerful these tools can be!

- **Create a goals list poster.** Using a piece of poster paper, write out your goals list in colors. You can use "Mind-Mapping" and put the goals anywhere on the page rather than in linear order. Don't forget to add sub-goals with lines linking them to the major goals. Decorate the poster with colorful pictures or stickers. Draw things on the poster or paste on pictures you cut out of magazines, whatever appeals to you. It should be exciting and make you feel great when you look at it.
- **Create a collage to support your vision.** To make a goals collage, cut out pictures and words that you like from magazines and glue them onto a piece of paper the size of a placemat or larger. Be sure to put your photograph on the page as well. Display it in a location where you notice it at least once a day. One idea is to laminate the paper at a copy shop and use it on your dining table to remind you of what you want to create.
- **Use images that inspire.** Find an inspiring picture and write a few motivating words on it. Try writing the words with brightly colored markers or finger paints. Hang this picture on your wall at home or at work to inspire you and build energy for your goals. You can use pictures of anything including animals, nature, and mythical figures.
- **Try writing goals with non-dominant hand.** One interesting technique that can help break through linear thinking and tap creative thinking is to write goals and detailed plans with the opposite hand from the one you normally use. This technique can reveal hidden aspects of plans and dreams and new goals, too. According to a recent article in the magazine *Utne Reader*, this process is an excellent technique for tapping into creativity and intuition.
- **Use the computer to support you in reaching goals.** There are many ways you can put goals on the computer. Scan your collage or a poster/picture that inspires you into your computer, convert it to a graphic and use it as wallpaper. You can create a screensaver with your scanned images or just put up a digital "post it" with your goals list. You can also create your own custom posters, personal stickers, and printouts using a graphics program.

Remember, the only way to reach a goal is to have a goal! As George Bernard Shaw once said, "Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire, you will what you imagine and at last you create what you will."

# Answering Kids' Questions: Tips for Parents of Curious Kids

by Christopher Essex, University of Indiana

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Do you ever wonder how even the most mundane of situations can inspire a child to launch a string of "But WHY?" queries that leaves the nearest adult either frantically searching for answers or suddenly very irritable?

Experts, educators, and parents know how important it is to acknowledge kids' inquiries – even if they do seem endless – but sometimes we could all use some creative advice and a little extra patience. Next time you find yourself alone with the insatiable curiosity of a child, follow these suggestions from *The Curious Learner* by Marjorie R. Simic, Melinda McClain, and Michael Shermis and learn to enjoy where this curiosity leads you.

- In place of a verbal answer, suggest an activity that might help your children discover what it is they want to know. When they ask, "What makes the grass grow?" you can be ready with some seeds to plant. Or you might let your child help with the flower, vegetable, or indoor herb garden you've been meaning to work on so that he can observe a plant from seed to something on the dinner table.
- To discover new things, encourage your children to use their own senses, like hearing, listening, tasting, touching, and smelling. Instead of telling your child how many legs a ladybug has, ask her to take a closer look--"How many legs do *you* see on that ladybug?"
- Ask questions that lead children to answer some of their own questions. Include questions like "I wonder where we could find out about that?" or "How can we solve this problem?" You may be surprised by your child's innovative solutions.
- Show children sources of information, such as encyclopedias and magazines, that can help them learn more about the things that interest them.
- Take family field trips to the zoo, museum, aquarium, and library regularly.
- Encourage your child to play with concrete objects such as blocks, boxes, string, and stacking objects. Stimulate experimentation by assembling a home science kit from everyday items. Substitute, for example, empty pill bottles for vials, soda straws for eyedroppers, panty hose for screening, and fishing line for wire.

By following these suggestions, parents can help kids engage with the world around them, which in turn aids in the development of flexible thinking, problem solving skills, and motivation.



*The cure for boredom is curiosity.  
There is no cure for curiosity.*

~ Dorothy (Rothschild) Parker

## The Workplace in the Creative Age by Rhonda Boyer

Too often people hear the word “creativity” and conjure up an image from the creative arts or technological inventions. However, creativity is multidimensional and exists in every facet of our lives in many forms and fields. “Creativity is pervasive and ongoing: We constantly revise and enhance every product, process and activity imaginable, and fit them together in new ways” (Florida, 2002). As our society shifts from emphasizing a knowledge-valued economy to a creativity-valued economy, the traits employers in a global community find most desirable also shift.

Of course, employees need to have at least a basic knowledge, but content is something that can be looked up, if not learned – everyone has the same potential for accessing that knowledge. Creativity on the other hand, is a transferrable skill that should be practiced to maximize the potential. Yes, practice. Creativity is not a talent, but a skill. A skill can be developed. So, what does it take to practice and develop creativity? According to Barry Fryer (2007) at Creativity Center Limited the following behaviors are vital:

- Building up other work-related skills
- Developing problem solving skills and applying them to real issues
- Being really motivated and refusing to give up



**Building up other work-related skills.** By building competence in the workplace, some of the energy and time expended to just “get the job done” is freed up. This energy and time can be used for creative approaches to the job – reorganization of time, streamlining the work, goal setting, and innovation.

**Developing problem solving skills and applying them to real issues.** Problem-solving skills require adaptability and flexibility in thinking. Children often learn in schoolwork that there is one best answer. When real issues are confronted, the possible solutions often have more than one best answer depending on the reasoning used. The more potential solutions you can generate, the more likely you will arrive at an original and creative solution that best addresses the problem.

**Being really motivated and refusing to give up.** Think about the people you would call creative. What characteristics do these people demonstrate? Regardless of how many characteristics you come up with, persistence is central to achieving creative outcomes. Thomas Edison made 3000 mistakes before he invented the lightbulb. Madeliene L’Engle, author of *A Wrinkle in Time*, received over 40 rejections by publishers. Oprah Winfrey was forbidden from talking around adults at home despite knowing her dreams of public speaking when she grew up. The fast-paced nature of our society makes it easy to give up if results and gratification are not instant. However, fostering intrinsic motivation in children is important to their future success in the workplace as well as in their personal life.



Florida, R. (2002). The rise of the creative class. New York: Basic.

Fryer, B. (2007). Creativity at work. Microsoft at work.

Retrieved 7-23-2007 online at:

<http://www.microsoft.com/uk/atwork/work/creativity.msp>

# Tips for Parents: Finding a Mentor for Your Child

## by Davidson Institute for Talent Development

Does your child show a spark of interest and motivation in a particular area? Does she/he find aspects of school unsatisfying? Is there an insatiable curiosity that you're not sure how to address? If these questions describe your child, he/she may benefit from a mentorship. A mentorship pairs a student with a professional in the student's field of interest. The opportunity to pursue interests outside of the classroom can produce remarkable results for young people, both academically and personally.

### Things to keep in mind when your gifted child is seeking a mentorship:

- **Successful mentorships are goal-driven.** A mentorship will be most beneficial and most productive if it is focused on a project. This gives the relationship direction and a tangible goal to work toward.
- **Each party has a specific role**

**Parents:** Your role as a parent is to supervise you child's interaction with his/her mentor and to provide support as needed.

**Mentor:** The role of the mentor is to provide direction and advice on completing the project.

### The Gifted Child:

- establish the relationship (with your assistance).
- make a conscious effort to learn as much as possible.
- have a plan for the mentorship and how to complete the project.
- meet the deadlines for the project.
- ask questions and propose solutions.

### Six steps to establish an effective mentorship

#### 1. Assist your child in determining his or her readiness

- A successful mentorship requires dedication and commitment. If your son or daughter is unwilling to put forth the effort to find and establish contact with a mentor, a mentorship may not meet your child's needs at this time.
- Before pursuing a mentorship, it's important to have a family meeting to discuss commitment levels. Setting guidelines in relation to time and money up front will alleviate disappointment later. Establishing how many hours per week your child has to devote to a mentoring experience is also critical. We recommend coming up with a plan for handling stress and conflicting responsibilities before they arise.
- Be aware of your responsibilities to the child's mentor. For example, make sure your child is available at the designated meeting time, and check in periodically to ensure your child is fulfilling his/her responsibilities.
- Prior to beginning a mentorship, you should determine your guidelines and expectations for the relationship including what type of mentorship (one-on-one or telementoring) would be best for your child, and when, where, and how often meetings will take place, etc.

**2. Determine in what area your son or daughter would like to pursue a mentorship.** Help your child explore what her/his interests are and what she/he hopes to accomplish through a mentorship. Perhaps completing an online career or interest survey would be helpful in narrowing down his/her interests.

**3. Assist your child in researching potential mentors.** An effective mentor should share your child's interests. Professional and religious organizations, universities, and community groups are all good sources for potential mentors. Contacts you have may also be helpful. Even if your friends, acquaintances or professional contacts are not the right fit, they may have suggestions for you. There are several organizations that facilitate the mentoring process by helping students find appropriate mentors. If you cannot find a local mentor, you may want to consider a distance mentoring experience.

**4. Let your child make the contacts.** You can support your child in researching and locating potential mentors, proofreading initial contact letters/emails to the potential mentor, or other efforts of that nature; however, it is still his/her responsibility to take the leading role in forming the relationship. Encourage your child to keep a log of all contacts made and any actions associated with them. This will help clarify communications along the way and minimize misunderstandings in the process. Your child's commitment at this stage will reflect her/his interest in the whole process.

**5. Participate in the interview process.** Once your child has found a potential mentor, arrange a face-to-face or telephone interview. Allow your child to take the lead in the meeting, but be prepared to ask questions. If the interview does not go well, it is likely your son or daughter will be disappointed. Help him/her to understand that it may not be easy to find a good match and encourage her/him to keep trying.

**6. Follow your child's lead.** If the interview goes well, help your child develop a plan for the mentorship. Remind him/her to be an active participant to gain the most from the experience. Keep in mind, even though this is your child's endeavor, the mentorship is still going to require your supervision.



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