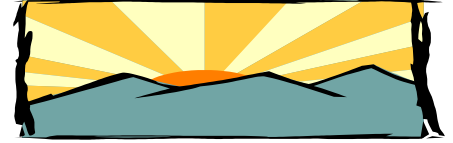


# On the HORIZON

Cypress-Fairbanks Gifted and Talented Department  
10300 Jones Road, Room 721  
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## Special Interest Articles:

- Counselor  
Cynthia Powell's  
Column on  
Resiliency
- Annual  
HORIZONS  
Student  
Showcase
- Resources
- Celebrations!
- Looking Ahead-  
dates to  
remember

## The Magic of Resilience

by counselor Cynthia Powell, Kirk Elementary

In the 1970's a group of researchers became interested in children who despite great odds (i.e. illness, poverty, parental illness, family alcohol and drug use) overcame their adversities and went on to become successful students and adults. The term "resiliency" was coined to label these individuals and numerous definitions were put forth to describe the resilience phenomenon. Of all the definitions of resilience that I have heard, I think the one that rings true with me is the one used by a fifteen year old "resilient" student. She said that resilience is "Bouncing back from problems and stuff with more power and more smarts".

All of us are moved by stories of people who survive and thrive in the most difficult circumstances. Stories of people like Anne Frank, Helen Keller, Abraham Lincoln, or 9-11 heroes are often shared with our children and students. We hope to motivate them and spawn that sense of resilience in them. However, I have come to believe that resiliency is not a term that applies to only the most exceptional, the most unusual, and the most innately gifted individuals. I agree with Ann Masten, a renowned researcher on the study of resiliency. She stated, "**What began as a quest to understand the extraordinary has revealed the power of the ordinary. Resilience does not come from rare and special qualities, but from the everyday magic of ordinary, normative, human resources in the minds, brains and bodies of children and adults.**"

If resiliency is indeed within all of us, why is it that some students find an island of protection in the sea of adversity while other students are tossed by the waves of disabling risks that threaten to keep them from the shores of school success, family participation and meaningful relationships? Although this article does not allow for an in depth discussion of the factors that promote resiliency (protective factors) and the factors that contribute to the lack of resiliency (risk factors), we can briefly consider how systems, be it family, school, or community, can promote resilience in our children.

**First, we can see that children are surrounded by positive adult role models.** Role models can communicate to children that they belong and are of value to the family and community. They learn that they have something to offer to others as others give to them. **Next, we can develop self-efficacy (the belief that one can be successful) in our children by providing them with increasingly challenging learning tasks with enough instructional support that they will be likely to succeed.** As self-efficacy develops, children will earn higher grades, perform better on tests, and be more willing to make wise decisions. **Third, we can promote resilience in our children by teaching them to monitor their own behavior and to make decisions about how to behave appropriately.**



**The Magic of Resilience, continued from page 1**

As they learn to take responsibility for their behavior, they also learn to become change makers rather than letting things happen to them. **Fourth, we can be proactive in helping our children develop connections and take relationship risks.** Children can benefit from opportunities to meet others through outside activities. Lend your support and allow your child to learn from hits and misses in creating and developing friendships.

**Last, establish home-school connections.** This statement is often interpreted as being involved in parent organizations, attending conferences and being present in the child's school. Although these steps are important, actions that parents take in the home are equally if not more important. Monitoring TV, checking homework, reinforcing teacher discipline, and speaking positively about your child's school and teacher suggests that you and the school are on the same team. Studies show that up to 60% of the differences in students' school success is attributable to the home "curriculum".

Today's children and parents are faced with huge challenges. Promoting resilience in your children can begin with recognizing resilience in yourself. Using the language of resilience is a tool to help promote resilience. "I am" suggests that I have the personal strengths feelings and attitudes, that help me through difficult times. "I have" implies that there are people and resources to support me when the going is tough. "I can" signifies the ability to reach out to others and ask for help when it is needed.

In my years as a teacher and school counselor, I have come to believe that we all have within us the ability to achieve and succeed. It is the resiliency language in us that allows us to move forward. "I am", "I have" and "I can" are the words to begin the shift toward "bouncing back with more smarts and stuff" and tapping in to the magic of resiliency.

***Fun and Facts At Farney! From Karen Richardson, Farney 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher***

Genealogy is the topic of interest for this year's Farney Elementary HORIZONS fourth grade students. Through the use of safe internet sites, students are exploring their own family history. Using the United States census, birth and death certificates, and online family history sites, the students are creating an interactive personal family tree.

Once the family trees are developed, each child chooses an event in history that one ancestor might have read about, or lived through. The students will research the event thoroughly to understand the impact of the event in history.

Lastly, these creative fourth grade Horizons students will create a historical fiction piece in Writer's Workshop to place his or her relative into the historical event. The student will use historical figures and events from the time period to interact with his or her relative. The project promises to be a great blend of reading, writing, and social studies concepts!

# Annual HORIZONS Student Showcase, 2009

Beginning in the spring of 2004, students participating in the HORIZONS program were selected and allowed the opportunity to participate in the HORIZONS Student Showcase. The brainchild of Laurie Westphal (former HORIZONS Helping Teacher), the showcase was designed to celebrate and recognize the accomplishments of HORIZONS teachers and students as well as to meet the state recommendation for sharing student advanced-level products and/or performances with the community.

*“Students who participate in services designed for gifted students will demonstrate skills in self-directed learning, thinking, research, and communication as evidenced by the development of innovative products and performances that reflect individuality and creativity and are advanced in relation to student of similar age, experience, or environment. High school graduates who have participated in services for gifted students will have produced products and performances of professional quality as part of their program services.” State Goal for Services for Gifted Students – from the Texas State Plan*

In the spring of 2008, more than 450 students and 230 teachers participated in the showcase. Dr. Anthony opened the showcase with the remark that we had outgrown the Berry Center Conference area. There was a great diversity of products exhibited ranging from the water cycle to the importance of recycling, the comparison of government to an electric guitar and a demonstration of heat lamps on food products.

Products are the outcomes of instruction that consolidate learning and communicate ideas. Advanced products should...

- Possess characteristics that are professional in nature.
- Address real problems, audiences, and concerns.
- Synthesize rather than summarize information.
- Include a self-evaluation component.



The 2009 HORIZONS Student Showcase will be held in the Berry Center's Arena on March 24, 2009 from 6:30 pm. – 8:00 pm. Please join us as our students share their products and performances with the community. It is a wonderful opportunity to experience the critical and creative thinking of our gifted students.



## **Links to Linger Over:**

[www.jacksonpollock.org](http://www.jacksonpollock.org)

[www.jigzone.com](http://www.jigzone.com)

[www.bestcrosswords.com](http://www.bestcrosswords.com)

## **Check out these books of interest!**

- ☞ Bringing Out The Best: A Guide for Parents of Young Gifted Children by Jacquelyn Saunders
- ☞ College Planning for Gifted Students: Choosing and Getting into the Right College by Sandra L. Berger
- ☞ A Love for Learning: Motivation and the Gifted Child by Carol Strip Whitney; Ph.D.; with Gretchen Hirsch

## Loving Learning at Lowery

by Joanne Danaher

Alana Wilkin's fourth grade class at Lowery Elementary is expanding on their writing skills by participating in a pen pal project this year in conjunction with a fourth grade class at Ward L. Myers Elementary School in Muncy, Pennsylvania. Students are writing letters back and forth, comparing life in Pennsylvania to life in Texas!

After reading the book "Flat Stanley", students decided to exchange stick people, which were made out of popsicle sticks. Each student received a popsicle person from his/her pen pal. On Fridays, students write about the adventures with their stick people! After taking pictures with their stick people, the students create several photo stories on the computer and e-mail them to the school in Muncy, Pennsylvania. The teachers present the exchanged photo stories using the Smartboard or TV monitors. The stories are also shared with the parents via an e-mail group and eventually collected on a DVD for the children to keep in their writing portfolio. Check out the following link to see samples of the finished products.



[http://schools.cfid.net/lowery/showcase/fourth\\_Nov08.html](http://schools.cfid.net/lowery/showcase/fourth_Nov08.html)

### EDUCATION IN ACTION'S 2008-2009 CALL FOR OUTSTANDING STUDENT NOMINATIONS

Education in Action invites you and your fellow teachers to nominate your outstanding 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students for participation in the Lone Star Leadership Academy online at:

<http://www.educationinaction.org/~eiatx84/educators/nominations.php>.

**FINAL NOMINATION DEADLINE FOR SUMMER 2009: FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2009.**

Education in Action is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering young Texans to be informed and active leaders in their communities. Education in Action's experiential learning programs take outstanding 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders from across the state of Texas on weeklong TEKS-based Lone Star Leadership Academy programs to the Dallas/Fort Worth, Austin and Houston/Galveston areas during summer break. Participants experience what they are learning in school during visits to historically, politically, scientifically and environmentally significant sites with a focus on leadership throughout. There is no limit to the number of students a teacher may nominate as long as they meet the application requirements.

#### Application Requirements:

1. **Are currently in the 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade**
2. **Maintain an 85 or higher average**
3. **Receive an educator recommendation (your nomination) based on demonstrated leadership ability.**

[View this list to see if student nominations from your school/district have already been submitted for summer 2009 Lone Star Leadership Academy programs.](#)

For more information, visit [www.educationinaction.org](http://www.educationinaction.org) or call 817-562-4957. Education in Action looks forward to receiving your nominations and to your outstanding students' participation in summer 2009 Lone Star Leadership Academy programs.

# Glorious Gains of Knowledge at Gleason!

By Bonnie Wiggin, M.S. Ed

It is always rewarding to watch students go from vague knowledge of a concept to deep understanding. That is why teaching CFISD's gifted and talented HORIZONS students at Gleason is a particularly enjoyable experience for me as a teacher. The task at hand is always to follow the scope and sequence as set forth by the district. As with any student at elementary level beyond third grade in Texas, all HORIZONS students must take every benchmark, every quiz, and all TAKS tests. There are no grade exemptions. Fulfilling these guidelines can be tedious and sometimes boring for a HORIZONS student. That is why the job of a HORIZONS teacher can be so taxing but yet so rewarding.

Right now in fourth grade we are reviewing patterns. For us, math is all about patterns. Our job together is to discover that patterns are found in numbers, in nature, and in the environment all around us. These discussions can be long or short, and we never know what kind of math can develop from such a discussion. For example, if we saw seven rows of pine trees in the Woodlands, and they were at least four rows deep, does that form an array? How many arrays would qualify to form a forest? Is this a natural pattern or a man made pattern? How can you tell the difference between the two?

Our pattern discussion had led us to the necessity to train our eyes to look deeper for patterns. This need has brought us to the world of M.C. Escher. There we have created our own tessellations, or pattern of shapes. We have created our shape by cutting and sliding a simple index card. We then test it out on a paper to see if it "tessellates." If it does tessellate, we move on to add details that compliment the shape in the flavor of M. C. Escher.

We will create several tessellations each before creating a final product that we will present. Each product will be cut, designed, and tested by each HORIZONS student. In order for it to be a tessellation, it must not have any gaps or overlaps.

Later on, we will use our understanding of shapes to create nets and polyhedrons. The polyhedrons we create will be the five platonic solids where we will count faces and vertices. These exercises flow right into our geometry unit and help the fourth grade HORIZONS student understand shapes on a 3-Dimensional level. This is an opportunity for each student to flourish in his/her own way.

According to a model of Quantum Learning, one particular way to tap into student learning is to reach all three modalities (VAK) visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. This is also true and critically important for our HORIZONS students. As Quantum Learning spreads throughout Cy Fair District, and as I have incorporated those strategies with my HORIZONS techniques, I have seen even greater strides with my students.

This approach to learning allows for simple instruction of patterns to not just be TEK 4.6a ("Use patterns to develop strategies to remember basic multiplication facts"), but a way to recognize and understand patterns on a deeper level as well.



## Dates to Remember!

(All events to be held at the Berry Center.  
Watch for more information on [www.cfisd.net](http://www.cfisd.net)):



**March 24<sup>th</sup>-HORIZONS Student Showcase**

**April 4<sup>th</sup>- Destination ImagiNation State Tournament**

## Coordinator's Column by Carla Butler

We are sliding into a new year with great opportunities for our students. CFISD hosted the first Houston Area Cooperative for the Gifted and Talented Summer Camp Exposition held at the Berry Center on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. Students from CFISD and surrounding school districts were able to visit booths and walk away with materials about a variety of summer opportunities both in and outside of the Houston area. It was delightful to see the faces of students who were eager to investigate new opportunities to explore and learn. We also offered sessions to the parents to inform them about scholarship opportunities available to gifted and talented students through the TAGT Scholarship Fund. If you missed the opportunity, you will find the links to the camps on the HORIZONS website. Included also on the website is information regarding the TAGT Scholarship Applications.

I would like to give a great big thank you to the Houston Area Cooperative for the Gifted and Talented and Dr. Lynette Breedlove, Director of Advanced Academic Studies in the Spring Branch ISD for assisting in making this a successful event. I would also like to thank Dr. Joan Slater from Tomball ISD, Marva Rasberry from Stafford ISD, Cathy Wappler from Katy ISD and Wendy Montoya from CFISD for presenting information regarding the TAGT Scholarship Applications. Thanks also go to the many GT Coordinators from surrounding school districts and our student volunteers who were phenomenal in helping us to organize this big event. Lastly, I would like to thank Roy Garcia, Pam Wells, Beth Wade, Sara Joyner, Marc Newman and a host of Berry Center staff for supporting us in bringing this event to CFISD. I am so very proud to be a part of this great school district!

*Special thanks go out to the following student volunteers whose help was greatly appreciated: Cy Creek students Meagan Bunck, Tina Doucet, Margaret Fleming, Haley Fuller, Shoshauna Harrisson, Daniel Le, Terah Parker, Jacob Thayer and Kyrsten Bunck, Cy Ranch students Kendall Davis, Zack Jimenez, Eric Kelly, Fabianna Latorre and Geoff Rielly, Cy Springs students Andrea Brown and Jenny Ma, Cy Woods students Chelsea Keeland, Megan Kaltenbach, Mica Radu, Zac Carlson, Lexie Giddings, Hannah Lewis, Christine Wengler, Ryan Baker, Olivia Guillory, Sydney Leach, Alyssa Martinez, Brooke Whitenburg, Chanelle Dozier, Jeremy Horton, Emily Laurel, and Sulma Segovia.*

### **HORIZONS Department Staff**

*Carla Butler, Coordinator*

*Debra Woolley, GT Helping Teacher*

*Sandra Stocks, Secretary & Editor, On the HORIZON*

*Sandra Beehner, Special Programs Assistant. (GT Focus, BIL-ESL Records/Assessments)*

*Allison Tucker, Office Assistant*

### **Be "In the Know"!**

This newsletter can be found on the [www.cfisd.net](http://www.cfisd.net) website through the following pathway: Departments, Curriculum & Instruction, then scroll down to Special Programs and click the link titled Gifted and Talented.

On this portion of our website, you will find both parent and teacher resources and we will use that space to help keep our parents, teachers, and community informed!

Also, we want to inform you that we are accepting submissions for possible future newsletter inclusions! Please share your insights into special programs, activities and student successes. All submissions are subject to review and will be included at our discretion. If you have an item for us, please email [Sandra.Stocks@cfisd.net](mailto:Sandra.Stocks@cfisd.net). We'll keep you connected!

## HORIZONS Department Mission Statement:

The Cypress-Fairbanks ISD HORIZONS Department, along with parents, teachers, and administrators, will recognize and support the unique academic, social, and emotional needs of the gifted to enable HORIZONS students to develop their talents and gifts to their greatest potential in the classroom and community.