

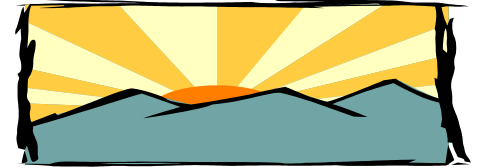
On the HORIZON

Special Interest Articles:

- Teacher Time with Goodson Middle School teacher Julie Pitt as guest columnist
 - The Power of Engagement
 - NaNoWriMo
 - Education in Action
 - Think About It, Talk About It, Tell Us About It!
 - Mark Your Calendar! -dates to remember
- and more!



*Cypress-Fairbanks Gifted and Talented Department
10300 Jones Road
Houston, TX 77065*



Department Updates:

We have all gotten our back to school routines down pat, we have survived a hurricane, the cooler weather is slowly making it's way to us, and the holidays are approaching. 'Tis the season when things start happening fast and furious! Same goes for the HORIZONS department!

As of October 31st, registration of Destination ImagiNation teams will have come to a close and we will know just how many teams and campuses will be taking part in this wonderful opportunity! We are looking forward

to a very busy year with DI competitions at the regional and state levels occurring right here in our district. Even if you are not part of a team, this would be a great chance to learn more about it, witness a competition, and generate some interest for possibilities in the future. We'll have more details on that in future editions and posted on our website as well.

The period for student referrals for the GT program is also underway and keeping us busy.

In addition, we want to make sure we continue to offer new and exciting

opportunities for our students and parents. With that in mind, we are currently working on hosting a summer camp expo at the Berry Center on January 22nd! This promises to be a very special event!

Working to find the best possibilities for our students, both in and out of the classroom, we will use this forum to keep you updated on those things we come across! Please feel free to be an active contributor to our newsletter by sending us your findings! Together, we make a great team and we serve our children the best way possible!

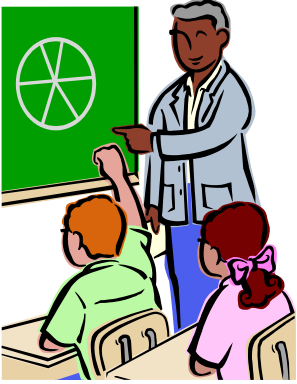
Teacher Time

By Julie Pitt, Goodson Middle School teacher, and students Derielle Keiser and Mallory Smith

In the 2007-2008, Cy Fair ISD 6th grade HORIZONS social studies students began an extraordinary journey in World Cultures. Their class was unique, never before had Cy Fair World Culture's students participated in a pure HORIZONS class for social studies. Throughout the year, students created incredible projects that were based on specific World Cultures criteria. As a teacher, one of my favorite projects focused on poverty and its impacts in Africa. All of the projects the students turned in were wonderful; however, two young ladies went above and beyond the generalities of the project's basic requirements. Derielle Keiser and Mallory Smith teamed up to transform the research project into a community service project. Here is their story:

When Mrs. Pitt assigned the project over "Endangered Children in Africa," we wanted to make this one different; therefore, we began to brainstorm ideas and concepts that were unconventional.

Teacher Time (continued)



“Genius without education is like silver in the mine”- Benjamin Franklin ”



“It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge”- Albert Einstein

Instead of using the choices given, we decided to come up with our own. We began by searching online about the problems in Africa that could endanger the children of that continent. Through our research we began to be concerned more with the idea of how to help the children of Africa versus the impact of poverty on the children. Our original plan was that we could “adopt” a child and to help with the problems of poverty the children face today. However, we found it hard to choose just one child in need, when there was so many. We felt as though we had to come up with a way that we could help all of them, and that is how we came up with the idea of a fundraiser.

After deciding on a fundraiser, we searched online and found some information on common fundraiser ideas. We grasped onto the idea of being a “star” by helping others, so we decided to use stars as our fundraiser’s icon. With the help of student volunteers from our HORIZONS World Cultures class, we were able to put together about 10 giant stars on wooden stakes. The front of the star said “Take a Stand Lend a Hand” (which we got from our wonderful principal, Mrs. Hamilton) and had pictures of children in need which we got from www.planusa.org. On the back of each star was “You’re a Star” and a brief informational sheet about our project. We put approximately ten signs out in the neighborhood, again, with help from volunteers within our HORIZONS class. All in all, the project took about two weeks to complete. In these two weeks, we received donations that totaled to \$208.00. We allowed the students from Mrs. Pitt’s classes to vote on which charity organization we should donate the money. In the end, the proceeds were donated to the Children’s Emergency Medical Fund at PLAN USA.

This made a big impact for us in our sixth grade year in the HORIZONS program. It made us and others around us take action for the children in Africa that have less then we as Americans have. Completing this project made us take pride in ourselves and all the hard work that we, fellow students, family, and community members contributed to make the fundraiser a reality. Thanks to all of our volunteers, contributors, Goodson administration, and Mrs. Pitt for being so supportive!

As a teacher, my heart nearly burst from pride with these two young ladies. They had the courage to fulfill their vision on their terms. My job as their teacher was to get out of their way and let them complete their desired mission on their terms. Throughout the project, they ran into problems and road blocks, but they never lost sight of their original goal or gave into pressures. Additionally, I had the privilege of seeing how their ideals impacted the other students in my classes. Their project infused my classes with a sense of purpose and community. Personally, I think this is a project that NONE of my students or their teacher will ever forget!



Brief Bio:

I have been teaching for about 10 years, most of which has been in the Cy Fair ISD district. Over the 10 year time period, I have taught a variety of social studies courses including: World Cultures, Texas History, U.S. History, and World Geography. I received my undergraduate degree from Texas A&M University and I am currently in the final stages of finishing my master degree in curriculum education from Sam Houston State University. My personal approach to teaching HORIZONS students is to guide and lead them through the necessary curriculum, ensuring that I do not hinder their own learning style or creativity. As I always tell my students...not more work, just different.

-Julie Pitt

What is NaNoWriMo?

The Young Writers Program of National Novel Writing Month is a fun, seat-of-your-pants approach to novel writing. Participants begin writing November 1. The goal is to write a novel by midnight, November 30. The word-count goal for our adult program is 50,000 words, but our Young Writers Program allows participants who are 17 years old and younger to set reasonable, yet challenging, word-count goals.

The *only* thing that matters in NaNoWriMo is output. It's all about quantity, not quality. The kamikaze approach forces you to lower your expectations, take risks, and write on the fly.

Make no mistake: you will be writing a lot of strange stuff, and some of it will be just plain bad. But that's a good thing! For 30 days, you get to lock that inner editor in the basement, let your imagination take over, and just create!

As you spend November writing, you can draw comfort from the fact that, all around the world, other National Novel Writing Month participants of all ages are going through the same joys and sorrows of producing the Great Frantic Novel.

In 2007, over 100,000 adults participated through our main site, and 14,000 young writers participated through our Young Writers Program.

So, to recap:

What: To meet your word-count goal, and write a novel from scratch in one month's time. You will be able to enter your chosen word-count goals in your profiles starting September 1.

Who: You! (You should sign up on the Young Writers Program site if you are 17 years old or younger participating on your own, in a K-12 teacher-led class that is participating in NaNoWriMo, or an educator facilitating NaNoWriMo in your classroom. If you are **13 or older** you can choose to sign up on the main site at www.nanowrimo.org. Just know that you will have to write 50,000 words since the adult site doesn't allow you to set your own word-count goal.

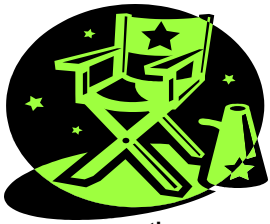
Why: The reasons are endless! To write freely without having to stress over spelling and grammar. To be able to talk about how cool our novels are any chance we get. To be able to make fun of real novelists who take *far longer* than 30 days to write their books.

When: You can sign up whenever you'd like to add your name to the roster of budding young authors and to participate in the forums. Writing begins November 1. To be added to the official list of winners, you must reach your word-count goal by November 30 at midnight. Once your novel has been verified by our web-based team of robotic word counters, the celebration begins.

Still confused? Just visit www.nanowrimo.org for more information! Have fun!

And drop us a line at Sandra.Stocks@cfisd.net if your child participates!





SXSW 5th Annual Texas High School Film Competition

We know gifted students and adults are capable of doing great work academically, but they are also some of our most interesting and gifted artists, musicians, and filmmakers! Here's just one opportunity for your high school student to express themselves in another medium and possibly win some fantastic prizes! Taken from the website, http://sxsw.com/film/screenings/submissions/texas_high_school, we have found the following information regarding this event.

“To support and cultivate the next generation of filmmakers, the South by Southwest Film Conference and Festival presents a special film competition for students enrolled in Texas high schools. Submissions will be judged by a panel of independent filmmakers and industry figures; with prizes including SXSW Film registrations and scholarship money awarded for first, second, and third place. All films chosen as finalists will be shown in a special program as part of the regular 2009 Film Festival schedule.

Eligibility is limited to Texas students enrolled in the 9th through 12th grades for the full 2008-2009 academic year. Films must be 5 minutes or shorter and completed between January-December 20, 2008.”

Please visit the South By Southwest Film Festival website listed above for additional rules and regulations!

The Power of Engagement

Talking with your children about their thoughts and feelings can sometimes be difficult. As they become teenagers, it may seem downright impossible!

As you know, the best conversation starters are those open-ended questions. They work both in the classroom setting and at home to elicit a response. Instead of “How was your day?”, using “What was the most interesting thing that happened to you today?” may work better and lead to the most interesting conversations and exchanges!

Talking things over in a car also has a strange effect. Children may open

up knowing that this environment is less intimidating than the face-to-face heart-to-heart.

Finding ways to increase communication also has the benefit of nurturing a child's self-esteem. They feel they have someone in their lives who values their thoughts and feelings.

The confidence that is built and the engagement in the exchange of thoughts, ideas, and perspectives is power: the power to change, the power to accept, and the power to go further than they ever thought they could!

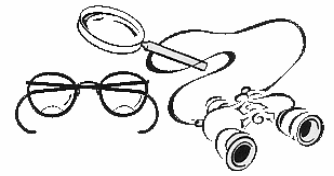
Check these out!

Books on perfectionism:

- [Perfectionism: What's Bad About Being Too Good](#) by Elliott Miriam, Ph.D.
- [What's Wrong with Perfect?](#) By Sylvia Rimm, Ph.D.
- [Being Perfect](#) by Anna Quindlen
- [What to Do When Good Isn't Good Enough: The Real Deal on Perfectionism: A Guide for Kids](#) by Thomas S. Greenspon

Books on underachievement:

- [Why Bright Kids Get Poor Grades and What You Can Do About It: A Six-Step Program for Parents and Teachers](#) by Dr. Sylvia Rimm
- [Bright Minds, Poor Grades: Understanding and Motivating your Underachieving Child](#) by Michael D. Whitley
- [Empowering Underachievers: New Strategies to Guide Kids \(8-18\) to Personal Excellence](#) by Peter A. Spevak
- [Smart Kids with School Problems: Things to Know and Ways to Help](#) by Priscilla L. Vail

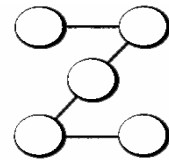


What are the Icons of Depth and Complexity?

When faced with the many challenges of differentiating curriculum for their students, teachers need every tool at their disposal. The ‘Icons of Depth and Complexity’ created by Dr. Sandra Kaplan and Bette Gould have had a track record of success with gifted and ELL learners. All good teaching should begin and end with appropriate questions that elicit information from students, challenge them to think about the possibilities and engage them in activities that allow for personal discovery. The questions become a bridge from the previously contained curricular lesson to opportunities to make connections between and across different disciplines within the specified content.

Each icon symbolizes concepts found within all topics of study, including trends, ethics, different perspectives, unanswered questions, language of the discipline, big ideas, patterns, and details. Each icon also represents a layer within the learning process. Teachers use questions prompted by the icons to dig deeper into topics to develop a broader understanding of the concept being studied and are challenged to think critically when dealing with abstract concepts related to multiple perspectives or making inferences as to how things have changed or might change over time.

For parent-friendly information on the Icons of Depth and Complexity, visit <http://district.ausd.net/docs/icons.ppt#1> or <http://www.texaspsp.org/all/DepthComplexity.pdf>



We have sought input from several teachers that have experienced using the icons in their own classrooms and want to share their testimonials with you. Three teachers from Lieder Elementary agreed to share their experiences using the icons of depth and complexity. Those experiences are identified below.

Laura Williams states, “Icons are everywhere and they are recognized in any language. They enable me to organize information and students to organize their notes. They build a safe environment and allow students to ask questions because all questions are valid. Scholars are always seeking answers to their questions. They encourage communication and higher level thinking skills and are not “threatening” to ELL students. They encourage students to ponder and look at the material with different perspectives. When thinking like a “scientist” or another discipline, the students need to know what tools a scientist uses and what vocabulary is needed to communicate effectively.

How do I know that this strategy works? I have had parents ask me “What are you teaching my child? I can not go to the grocery store without them asking-Are you sure this is the best store to shop at? Are there better prices at another store?” I told the parents that we were studying about ethics and looking at both sides of an issue. This lets me know that they are using these strategies outside of the classroom and that they are always thinking and questioning. My students’ test scores have improved because I tell the students that they are scholars and the icons help the students to remember the concepts.

One time a student asked if we still learned while we sleep, and the whole class investigated this question. Some students were neurologists, doctors, artists (created a brain out of clay), etc. I assigned students a job according to their ability and they were successful in finding that we do learn while we sleep. Thinking like a doctor or scientist helps students feel special. If they do not know the answer, then it is fine. The students do not feel inferior and know that sometimes there are



unanswered questions and scholars never give up looking for the answer. This strategy makes them feel important and it boosts their self-esteem.”

Ann Kennedy added, “I am also using Kaplan in class. I find it very helpful. It helps me to organize information, gets my students asking those important questions rather than me being the one who asks the questions much of the time. It is also helpful when looking for solutions when discussing ethical questions. For example, when studying about the environment, I have had students discuss litter as an issue that they want to do something about, so I have taken the time to let students create something to make recycling more fun. One year I had a group of students put a basket over the recycling bin so they could take shots. Just a couple of weeks ago, when we were studying about roots, I had several of my students asking why the roots on some plants were uprooted during the hurricane while others were not. We took the time to research this a little bit and the students enjoyed the learning process more because it was a question they had asked.”

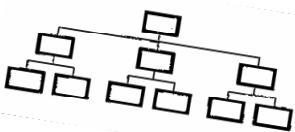
Douglas Lymer also added, “...The “Big Ideas” and making generalizations keeps the students focused. I had an activity the other day with the “Big Idea” statement of “Relationships between plants and animals”. About 75% of the students had their own ideas and showed and explained how plants and animals are inter-dependant. They also wanted to share their work with me personally. You should have heard all of the intellectual chatter going on at the tables.

When I was teaching first grade I could only really use big ideas, language of the discipline and details on a regular basis. I occasionally could refer to some of the other icons. Now teaching second grade I often use the rules, find a pattern, ethical issues, unanswered questions and ‘Think Like a Disciplinarian.’ This week we studied animal coverings and other criteria used for classifying animals.”

In Mr. Lymer’s class the students had to imagine themselves as Dr. Tony Sanchez, a veterinarian who was presented with a strange animal. Students had to review the characteristics to determine the type of animal presented.

Mr. Lymer believes that his students really enjoy his enthusiasm for science. He indicated that the use of big ideas and patterns are also appropriate in helping students with mathematical concepts. Students have to find the relationship between tens and ones when learning about regrouping and finding patterns to determine what needs to added to 7 to make ten?

All three teachers have used the icons to increase the opportunities for students in their classrooms to look at life and question why, how, what if or a multitude of other possibilities. In the words of Martha Stewart, “It’s a good thing.”



Teachers, if you would like to attend the Houston Area Co-Op staff development workshop (November 8th, Berry Center) titled “Increasing Questioning Using Icons of Depth and Complexity”, register with the Avatar system for course code #7103. This would count for 6 hours of GT credit in the area of Foundation Curriculum. Don’t miss the opportunity! Participants will receive a valuable tool to use in their classrooms. Seating is limited, so sign up now!!!!

Gifted Teacher and Administrator of the Year Contest!

Nominate your favorite teacher or administrator today...

Does your child have a teacher who's made all the difference for him or her in school?

Does one of your teacher peers do great things for the gifted students in your school?

Does your principal, superintendent, curriculum director, etc. demonstrate amazing support for the gifted teachers and students in your school or district?

Does your teacher or administrator "get it?" (Read [What Parents Want Teachers \(and Professionals\) to Know](#) for a great definition of "it!")

If you answered "Yes" to any of these questions, then nominate your teacher or administrator for Hoagies' Gifted Teacher and Administrator of the Year contest. Submit a short description of the great work your teacher or administrator has done for gifted kids, whether for a single child or the whole district's gifted population. We'll publish your success stories here, and in December of each year, and for 2008 we'll select **two** teachers and one administrator to win our Hoagies' Gifted Teacher and Administrator of the Year Contest.

What's the prize, you ask? Besides the honor of being recognized, the winning teacher and administrator each year will receive a Hoagies' Gifted Education Page mug, and a certificate of recognition. They'll also receive a selection of books and learning tools from Hoagies' Gifted Education Page and our sponsors, to build their gifted resource collection. But more importantly, they have the knowledge that they have made a difference in the life of a gifted child.

For more information, please visit www.hoagiesgifted.org!

First In Math Online program

What does the First In Math Online Program do?

First in Math is a curriculum supplement that gives students the fundamental skills they need to achieve their academic goals. It delivers fluency in basic addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, while advancing higher-order thinking skills such as mental math, problem solving, pattern sensing, reasoning, and number sense.

The program employs a sequential approach to learning; students start on "easier" material and work through more challenging content. Each module includes positive feedback to boost confidence—students experience the satisfaction of knowing they are gaining speed and accuracy and are becoming "good in math"!

Can I use it with all my students?

First In Math can be used with all students. The site offers broad content, with an open-ended, self-pacing design that is ideal for differentiated instruction.

This easy to use, effective program is relatively low-cost, at \$8 or less per student. Volume discounts are available. For more information, check out www.firstinmath.com.

Outstanding Young Authors:

- Mary Shelley wrote Frankenstein when she was only 19 years old.
- Christopher Paolini began writing Eragon when he graduated from high school at the age of 15!
- Critically acclaimed novel The Outsiders was crafted by S.E. Hinton when she was just 16.
- Amelia Atwater-Rhodes is our youngest published novelist for this newsletter edition, writing In the Forests of the Night when she was 13 years old.



Education In Action's 2008-2009 Call for Outstanding Student Nominations

Education in Action invites you and your fellow teachers to nominate your outstanding 5th-8th grade students for participation in the Lone Star Leadership Academy online at : <http://www.educationinaction.org/~eiatx84/educators/nominations.php>. Fall nomination deadline: Friday, November 7th, 2008.

Education in Action is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering young Texas to be informed and active leaders in their communities. Education in Action's experiential learning program stake outstanding 5th-8th 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 5th-8th grade**
2. **Maintain an 85 or higher average**
3. **Receive an educator recommendation based on demonstrated leadership ability.**

For more information, visit www.educationinaction.org or call 817-562-4957. Education in Action looks forward to receiving teacher nominations and to outstanding students' participation in summer 2009 Lone Star Leadership Academy Programs.

Think About It, Talk About It, Tell Us About It!



Ask your child this question:

“If you could make any dream come true, what would you do and why?”

If you wish to share your child's response to this question, please email Sandra.Stocks@cfisd.net with your child's first name and age and their answer. We will include some of our favorite responses in our next newsletter!

Coordinator's Column

by Carla Butler,

HORIZONS Department
Coordinator, CFISD



I hope everyone has recovered from Hurricane Ike. If not, I wish you and your family well as you continue to recover. As we all look back at our racing thoughts in preparation for the impending storm and ominous looking clouds, I think we could draw many parallels between our gifted children and the manner in which they look at the world. Does the word tornado or hurricane come to mind when you think of your child? It would be quite interesting for them to capture and compare how they view their lives to changes in the weather. If your child is interested in sharing his or her perspective for publication in our newsletter, we invite them to take the challenge and submit a poem or short narrative comparing themselves to a change in the weather.

I have watched many students in my journey as an educator and have always enjoyed observing the excitement in the flurry of new ideas and the anticipation of discovering something new. The tenacity and fury of emotions often lie on the surface as they embrace new opportunities to learn and struggle with the urgency of righting a wrong or in seeking justice. I look forward to embracing the spirit of an unfettered mind seeking new opportunities to learn. Join me in celebrating the journey of new discoveries!

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

Sign up to be "In the Know"!

This newsletter can be found on the www.cfisd.net website but we are also in the process of creating an email group for newsletter recipients!

If you would like a copy of this newsletter to be sent to your inbox, simply send your name and email address to us care of Sandra.Stocks@cfisd.net. We'll get you connected!

Receipt of this newsletter is open to all parents and district personnel!



Links to Linger Over:

Parenting Resources:

www.hoagiesgifted.org

www.txgifted.org

www.familyeducation.com

<http://www.education.com/reference/gifted/>

Fun Site for this issue:

www.howstuffworks.com

Save the Dates:

November 12th - 15th TAGT Conference, Dallas, TX

February 28th DI Regional Tournament, CFISD

March 24th HORIZONS Student Showcase, Berry Center

April 3rd-5th DI State Tournament, CFISD

We're on the web!

<http://www.cfisd.net/dept2/curricu/gifted/gifted.htm>