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AAGTS NEWSLETTER

Albuquerque Association for Gifted and Talented Students

September 2008

Mark Your Calendars!

General Meeting

**Wednesday, October 8
7-8 p.m.**

**Manzano Mesa Multigenerational Center
501 Elizabeth SE**

featuring

Rocky Mountain Academic Talent Search

A program for students in grades 3-9, based on above-level testing, offering early experience in taking college entrance-type tests, assessment information, and summer program opportunities.

AAGTS 30th Annual Conference

**Saturday, October 25, 2008
7:45 am-4:30 p.m.**

at Albuquerque Academy

Guest Speaker:

James R. Delisle, Ph.D.

**“Understanding your gifted children from the inside-out:
Meeting their intellectual, social and
emotional needs at home and in school”**

November 12-14, 2008

Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented

31st Annual Professional Development Conference

Details and online registration information can be found at

<http://www.txgifted.org/2008-annual-conference>



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Trevor Carter

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Lani Held
info@aagts.org

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Lang Ha Pham

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Newsletter

Lori MacKenzie

Mary Bratzler

newsletter@aagts.org

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Meetings

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Awards

TBD, Coordinator

Trevor Carter, Liaison

info@aagts.org

www.aagts.org

The AAGTS Newsletter is published quarterly by The Albuquerque Association for Gifted and Talented Students, a nonprofit organization. We welcome your comments and questions.

An AAGTS membership form is located on the last page of this newsletter. We invite you to join, even if you are unable to attend meetings or assist with committees. We need and appreciate your financial support!

President's Column

Dear AAGTS Members,

Fall is a busy time for AAGTS this year. As we prepare for the October 25th conference, we are also trying to move forward with our legislative advocacy and program development. We hope you all will be able to join us in our established activities as well as help us develop the new.

First, the conference on **Saturday, October 25**. We are delighted to have an expert such as Jim Delisle presenting this year. In addition to the practical advice and insights he will be providing, he has requested that we put together a panel of gifted students with whom he can lead a discussion, providing an opportunity to voice their views about growing up gifted. Conference registration is in progress and we encourage you to register as soon as possible. The forms have been mailed and are also **available on our web site**. Let us know if you have any difficulties accessing these forms. Our "web wizard" Subhasish Mazumdar has simple solutions for the technology-challenged such as myself!

Many of you have already read AAGTS' response to the LESC's request for input on House Bill 241, and I have been heartened by hearing that you also took time to send your personal input.

I will be meeting with Representative Stewart this month to discuss our input and any changes she is considering for the bill. Please **check our web site for updates** on the status of HB 241 and our responses. I welcome your input, so e-mail me or feel free to speak with me at the AAGTS table during the conference.

Superintendent Brooks has made time in his busy schedule to meet with me this month. I hope to learn more about his previous experience with gifted services as well as introduce him to AAGTS and

our members' concerns. Look for a write-up of this meeting in our next newsletter.

A new feature in this issue of the newsletter is the *Community Bulletin Board* — a listing of activities of interest to our AAGTS community. If you have activities that would fit the needs of our membership, please e-mail us (info@aagts.org). NOTE: our criteria for inclusion will be the match of the activity with the interests/needs of the gifted and that as a non-profit ourselves — we will not market for-profit materials or activities.

Another new feature starting with this issue of the newsletter is titled *Student Perspective* — a section dedicated to giving gifted students a voice. If your child would like to submit a book, game, or activity review or an original work that provides other gifted students inspiration, please send it in to info@aagts.org!

A general membership meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, October 8**, featuring a presentation about the Rocky Mountain Talent Search, a program which offers gifted students an opportunity to participate in summer and other programs. Watch for a postcard with more details.

Please be sure your membership is up-to-date so that you continue to receive reminder postcards (send an e-mail if you need to check on your membership status). Working together we can make a difference in continuing and developing gifted education in Albuquerque.

—Lani Held





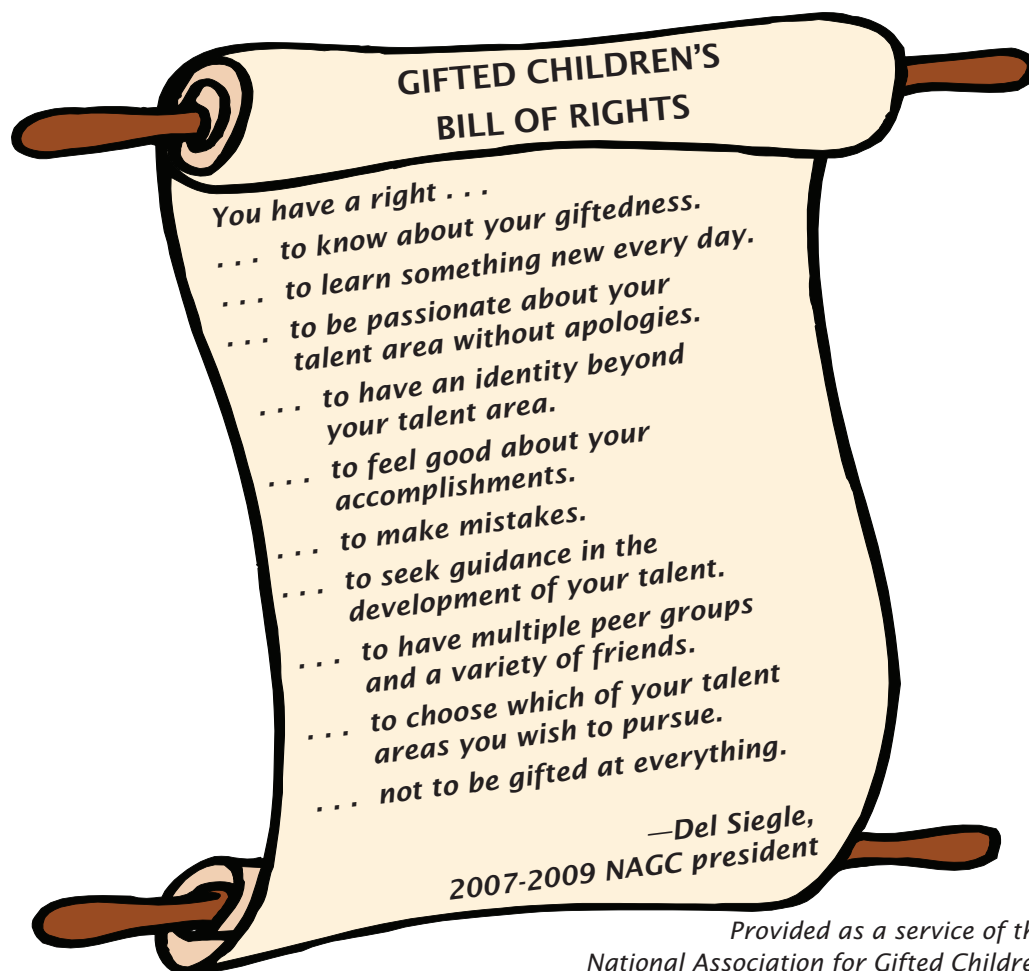
NAGC 2008 ANNUAL CONVENTION

Growing Gifted in the Sunshine State

**NAGC 2008 Annual Conference
Tampa, Florida**

October 30-November 2, 2008

www.nagc.org



Provided as a service of the
National Association for Gifted Children

Gifted Child Quarterly (GCQ) is the scholarly journal of the National Association for Gifted Children, publishing manuscripts offering new information and creative insights about giftedness and talent development in the context of the school, the home, and the wider society.

Parenting for High Potential is the quarterly magazine designed for parents who want to make a difference in their children's lives, who want to develop their children's gifts and talents, and who want to help them develop their potential to the fullest.

To find out more about these publications, visit the [NAGC web site](http://www.nagc.org).

Lessons from an Accidental Teacher

Jim Delisle is Distinguished Professor of Education at Kent State University and a part-time teacher of gifted children in Twinsburg, Ohio. The author of 200+ articles and 14 books, Jim's newest publications include Parenting Gifted Kids (Prufrock Press, 2006), Smart Talk, and More Than A Test Score (both with Robert Schultz, Free Spirit Publishing, 2007).

by Jim Delisle

Reprinted with permission from the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented (TAGT). This article originally appeared in the Summer 2006 issue of Tempo Magazine, a professional journal produced quarterly by TAGT.

In less than two years, I retire from a 30-year career I discovered by accident. Almost three decades ago, I began teaching in an area that I thought would remain my calling forever: special education for children with disabilities. But thanks to a brilliant, troubled 5th grader who caused me to look beyond his aberrant behaviors, the gifted realm I entered.

Early on in my experiences, I assumed I would learn everything I needed to learn about gifted children by reading about them from the cozy confines of higher education. Ph.D. in hand, I assumed my graduate students—every one a teacher—would present me with all the realities about gifted children that I would ever need to know. From my removed, vicarious, ivy-coated perch, I began to explore giftedness.

That didn't work.

The longer I was a professor, the more I came to realize how much like a fish out of water I felt. Many of my colleagues had not been K-12 teachers for decades—if ever—yet, collectively, our faculty was entrusted to mold the next generation of America's teachers. "How could we do this effectively" I began to ask myself, "without current

and sustained involvement in public school classrooms?" For reasons both professional and personal, I felt the need to return to my K-12 roots. That was in 1991, and so my journey began as an accidental teacher of gifted children.

While remaining as a tenured full professor (...is there a cushier job?), I dipped my toes back into the public school pool. During sabbaticals in 1991, 1997 and 2005, I taught grades 2, 4 and 8 in suburban Ohio and rural (...very rural) South Carolina. And, in 1998, due to a confluence of coincidences too numerous to list, I became a part-time teacher of gifted children in a middle school a few miles from my home. It's been nine school years that I have been "Mr. D." every Wednesday to my 7th and 8th graders and "Dr. Delisle" to my college students when I stepped foot back on campus. This hybrid career has energized me in ways that allowed me to stay in education instead of chucking it all for a more lucrative career as a shoe salesman at Nordstrom's. The kids keep me going, and here is a smidgen of what they taught their accidental teacher:

#1. Teaching gifted kids is easier than identifying them.

State regulations dictate who the gifted are and how we must identify them. Most of these provisions—and every state has them—are well-designed and effective.

Except when they aren't.

What do you do with Josh, an 8th grader

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Accidental Teacher

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who looks like an adult and has the mind of a physicist, but who refuses to construct his ‘lame’ biome-in-a-shoebox homework assignment? Or Anna, whose knowledge and love of football and theatre are so severe that she hides copies of the arts and sports sections of the daily paper between the pages of the social studies text she has never read? These students, neither identified as gifted by State standards, have intellectual acuity far in excess of the typical 8th grader. How do I know this? I taught them both and, even more importantly, I talked with them both—repeatedly. And, as anyone knows who has worked with gifted kids for any length of time, a 20-minute talk with a boy like Josh or a girl like Anna is all you need to determine their giftedness. Gifted children taught me—and they still do—to keep the numerically-based definitions of giftedness in perspective, knowing that intellectual and emotional depth are not always noted in too-low test scores.

#2. There really are ‘truly gifted’ kids.

The only area of giftedness more convoluted than identification is the definition of giftedness itself. Even within our field, different definitions abound—and they often conflict. While it is difficult to argue the ‘rightness’ or ‘wrongness’ of particular definitions without getting into philosophical arguments, one thing I have learned: some children are so exceptional in their abilities to perceive the world from a vivid, complex perch that they qualify as “truly gifted” individuals by any

definition. The conception of giftedness that captures this essence most accurately was penned in 1982 by my “gifted grandmother,” Annemarie Roeper:

“Giftedness is a greater awareness, a greater sensitivity, and a greater ability to understand and transform perceptions into intellectual and emotional experiences.”

Such highly gifted children and adults require us to realign our views of intelligence to incorporate their social and emotional selves, not merely their academic prowess or intellectual acumen.

#3. Gifted kids don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.

I realize this sounds trite, and it can be argued that this maxim is true for all children. That is probably so, but the keen insights of gifted children surface quickly; thus, we have but a small window of time to show them the depth of our convictions regarding the unique qualities they possess and the urgency we feel, as their teachers, in addressing them. Too often maligned by a society that holds stereotypic images of gifted individuals, gifted children need us for so much. We must be the people who advocate for those gifted students who underachieve, or those whose intellectual prowess screams out “accelerate me! accelerate me!” or those who need the comfort of a dry, caring shoulder when classmates don’t understand their need for complex games or meaningful conversations.



“The only area of giftedness more convoluted than identification is the definition of giftedness itself. Even within our field, different definitions abound—and they often conflict.”

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Accidental Teacher

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Teachers of gifted children often share the traits of those they have chosen to teach. We must use this connection to our mutual advantage.



#4. Intensity comes with the territory.

The single word that describes most accurately the gifted people I know is 'intense'. With brains that work overtime, emotions that push the

extremes of sorrow and joy, and a sensitivity to the needs of others that is deep and constant, these intense individuals are often perceived by others as ...well ...just a tad "too much." Chided with directives to 'chill out' or 'not take things so personally,' gifted individuals with these intensities may come to feel that what comes naturally to them is, in the eyes of others, unnatural.

I prefer another angle. To me, intensities are assets that allow gifted individuals to experience the world in a higher key; to see the forest and the trees; to perceive the difference between magenta and mauve; and to listen to a piece of music and grasp the composer's frame of mind that created such beauty. The gifted children I've taught and counseled who remain foremost in my mind are those who embraced these inborn intensities. Sometimes, the intensities hurt, and at other times they cause unbridled ecstasy. But those who see their intensities as assets to be exploited and not deficiencies to be downplayed are the ones who understand the richness that can accompany a gifted mind.

"To me, intensities are assets that allow gifted individuals to experience the world in a higher key; to see the forest and the trees; to perceive the difference between magenta and mauve; and to listen to a piece of music and grasp the composer's frame of mind that created such beauty."

#5. Underachievers can teach us what we need to do to improve the school experience for most gifted students.

I've always held a soft spot in my heart for those high-potential kids who choose to do poorly in school (My special education roots are showing!!). Generally, they are an inquisitive and principled bunch who don't buy into the idea that high grades indicate much of anything, especially when the curriculum that garnered you the high grades is low level and lacking in true substance. Gifted kids who underachieve push our buttons, they demand relevance, and they force us to question the legitimacy of our educational practices.

"This is boring!" they say. (...and they're right.)

"What does this have to do with anything in the real world?" they ask. (like us, they search for meaning in their learning.)

"Didn't I learn this 2 years ago?" they utter in frustration. (We know they did, but we've got to prepare them for the TAKS, don't we?)

Collectively and individually, gifted underachievers have more to teach us about making schools right and relevant than do their high-achieving counterparts who go through school passively, "earning" unearned A's on material they already knew before the class began.

If I had as much time as I do inclination, I would convene regularly a series of meetings with gifted kids with low grades. I'd ask them for help in designing learning options that would tap into their talents and passions. My

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Accidental Teacher

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hunch is that I'd hear that they want these things:

- intelligent, enthusiastic teachers who see learning as a journey to pursue alongside students rather than just a bucket of facts to spew out in disconnected fashion
- an emphasis away from textbooks and towards hands-on experiences inside and outside of the school building and calendar, led by experts in the domains of science, literature, the arts, and more
- classroom conversations about seemingly absurd propositions—"why doesn't gravity make things go up instead of down?"—as well as open talks about relationships, politics, family and friends

Like canaries in a coal mine, who warn of dangers ahead, gifted underachievers are the harbingers of all that might be good, and that might be worthwhile to enrich the minds and hearts of all students. Why won't we listen to them?

#6. Giftedness is someone you are, not something you do.

There are those who believe that giftedness is manifest in the books a person writes, the artworks they paint or the theories they postulate. "Gifted behaviors", they shout, "not gifted children".

How naive; how wrong.

What these behavior-based zealots call "giftedness" is little more than a manifestation of specific talents, honed over time and put forth for others to enjoy or critique. I do not diminish the merits of these productions; nor,

though, do I confuse these creations with giftedness, that innate ability to see what others your age do not yet see; to feel emotions at levels that the majority do not express; and to analyze seemingly disparate pieces of life and learning into a whole that is cohesive only to those others with intellectual depth that is equal to their own.

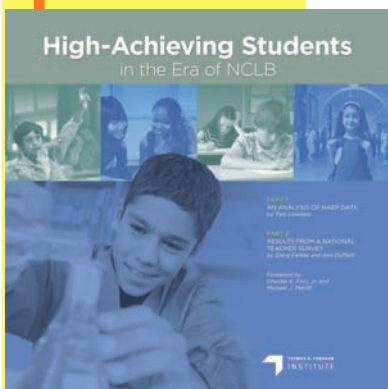
Giftedness does not come and go; it is as permanent as eye color and as indelible as a birthmark. It is a part of daily living that affects one's learning, social relationships and emotional bonds. Unlike with talents, you can't train someone to be gifted with continued exposure and practice. Instead, gifted people simply are, and the insights they possess naturally will be with them forever. Giftedness is not a transitory preoccupation with an interest, it is a forever passion to always crave more—from yourself, others and the world in general.

Conclusion

These things I learned from gifted children. And every week, as I walk into my classroom of 30+ gifted middle school students, my beliefs are reinforced and my appreciation of them grows exponentially. May you experience a similar joy with those gifted children and adults who enter your days and nights, whether you meet them on purpose or, like me, as an accidental teacher.

"Giftedness does not come and go; it is as permanent as eye color and as indelible as a birthmark. It is a part of daily living that affects one's learning, social relationships and emotional bonds."





Thomas Fordham Institute Publishes Two Reports on High Achieving Students

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute has published two reports on the state of high-achieving students in the No Child Left Behind era.

Part I: An Analysis of NAEP Data, by Tom Loveless, looks at the performance scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) between 2000-2007, concluding that the lowest-achieving students are indeed making respectable progress, but students in the top 10 percent have made minimal gains.

Part II: Results from a National Teacher Survey, by Steve Farkas and Ann Duffett, reports from the teachers' own perspective, on how even though teachers hold a strong conviction that students of all talents deserve equal attention, it is the low-achieving student who receives dramatically more attention.

Click here to download and read these two reports (84 pages) and other important information from the Thomas Fordham Institute web site at

www.edexcellence.net/detail/news.cfm?news_id=732&id=92

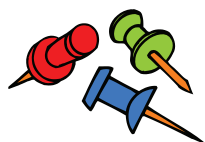
Wanted: Newsletter Editor

No Experience Necessary

Learn about gifted children and gifted education while putting together the AAGTS Newsletter.

Four issues per year. Benefits include free admission to AAGTS Annual Conference, networking with gifted administrators and educators in public and private schools, an opportunity to attend the NAGC (National Association for Gifted Children) Annual Conference. For more information e-mail Mary Bratzler at bratzler@swcp.com.





Community Bulletin Board



Opportunity for Education at Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire! A new financial aid initiative allows admitted students of families whose yearly income is \$75,000 or less to attend free of charge. Exeter enrolls students at every grade level and offers a post graduate year along with very popular summer programs. Facilities include the world's largest secondary school library, a \$38 million state-of-the-art science center, extensive athletic complex, and separate facilities for theater, music, and art. A representative from Phillips Exeter will be in Albuquerque on **Wednesday and Thursday, October 1 and 2**. Anyone interested in meeting with the rep should e-mail info@aagts.org.



The Fractal Foundation and the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science invite you to **First Friday Fractals** at the planetarium in the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science. Suitable for all ages, the show features both the science and the art of fractals, and includes dramatic animated footage of ultradeep fractal zooms, together with original, locally produced music. Showtimes are at **6 p.m., 7 p.m., 8 p.m., and 9 p.m.** \$8 adults, \$7 seniors, \$5 ages 3-12, which includes a \$1 service charge. Tickets available online at www.fractalfoundation.org/index.html.



The Davidson Academy of Nevada is specifically designed to meet the needs of profoundly gifted middle and high school students who score in the 99.9th percentile on IQ or college entrance tests, such as the SAT or ACT, starting at the sixth-grade level and beyond. **Applications for 2009-1010 school year at are now available.**

Go to www.davidsonacademy.unr.edu/ for more details.



Davidson Institute Seeks Extraordinary Achievers to Receive \$50,000, \$25,000 And \$10,000 Davidson Fellow Scholarships

The Davidson Institute for Talent Development is offering high achieving young people across the country the opportunity to be named as 2009 Davidson Fellows, an honor accompanied by a \$50,000, \$25,000 or \$10,000 scholarship in recognition of a significant piece of work in science, technology, mathematics, music, literature, philosophy or outside the box. To be eligible, applicants must be under the age of 18 as of Oct. 1, 2009, and a U.S. citizen or permanent U.S. resident residing in the United States. There is no minimum age for eligibility. The deadline to apply is March 4, 2009. Applicants must submit an original piece of work recognized by experts in the field as significant and it must have the potential to make a positive contribution to society. The scholarship must be used at an accredited institute of learning. For more information on the Davidson Fellows scholarship, or to download an application, please visit www.DavidsonFellows.org.



The Write Thing To Do Essay Competition 2008

Write Thing To Do is an annual scholastic essay program. The 750-word essay program adds a special experience for high school students in the areas of science, engineering and mathematics. Scientist and engineers at Sandia National Laboratories pose the essay questions and also judge the essays. Sandia National Laboratories awards five high school students with \$2000.00 in U.S. Savings Bonds every year, presenting the award in front of their classmates. Go to www.sandia.gov/about/community/wtttd.html for more information.



Theatre-in-the-Making seeks fun-loving and creative kids aged 10-18 for our fall workshop and production of William Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. For more information and registration form, call Brian Haney at 505-243-9984 or visit the web site at www.titm.org.

PlayWrite 2009: For its eighth season, Brian Haney will take a company of students ages 13 and up through the PlayWrite process: select and develop a theme, write or collect material, and present the ensemble's work in an original production on a local stage. The results are sometimes provocative, but always rewarding for both actors and audiences. Classes begin in January 2009. Registrations are now being accepted. Cost is \$50/month. For more details go to www.titm.org/Pages/PlayWrite.htm.



Did you know that AAGTS is a 501 c(3) organization? If you donate to the **United Way**, and direct your donation to AAGTS we will use the donations to fund programs and advocacy, and continue to fight for the rights of gifted children in the state legislature.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

The Storm

The storm is brewing, waiting, gaining
the storm can do nothing to stop you from fate
unless you let it it has no knowledge
unless you let the messenger in
the messenger is despair
for if you think a cause is lost doom will know
it will bid you to what you brought upon yourself
the storm, the storm of doom
the messenger will get its fill of the fear you let it bring
it will nibble, then bite, then tear at your soul
using your fear as flavoring for the main course of your doom
but through this time you must remember it was you who brought the storm
and calmly accept your fate...
but you must also remember doom brings peace
but in peace is nothing...

— *Sasha Held, Grade 5*

Parent's note: This poem was published in *A Celebration of Poets, Spring 2008*, published by Creative Communications, a nonprofit organization dedicated to encouraging young writers. Parents and teachers can go to www.poeticpower.com for information.

Sasha loves words and ideas but used to resist the physical aspect of writing. To encourage him, I had him enter a poem several years ago and again this year. Both poems were published to his delight and he now enjoys the writing process more. Sasha views this poem as an exploration of ideas and assures his sister, Nikki — who wrote home from college upon reading the poem “let me know when he starts wearing black nail polish and eyeliner!” — that he is a positive person!

This poem was inspired by discussions with Sasha's older brother, Richard, about philosophical concepts discussed in a *Senior Humanities* course taught by Hugh Himwich at Albuquerque Academy. When a teacher can inspire a (then) 17-year-old to discuss philosophy at home with his (then) 10-year-old brother, true education has occurred! Thank you, Mr. Himwich!

AAGTS MEMBERSHIP:

What are the benefits?

Current members of AAGTS receive:

- reduced AAGTS conference fees
- e-mail notifications of and access to our quarterly newsletter and other announcements
- post-card notifications of our general meetings which include topics and activities of interest to parents, teachers and children
- notifications of legislative actions that could change gifted services in New Mexico
- support for AAGTS advocacy on behalf of gifted services including the hiring of professionals (lawyers and lobbyists) to assist in our advocacy
- access to a support system of those associated with gifted who can offer information and advice via e-mail or phone
- access to a library of books on gifted services



*Renew or
extend your
membership
before
January 1, 2009
for \$15!*

Consider renewing your membership now!

By doing so before January 1, 2009, you can renew at the present \$15 rate. An increase to \$20 is being proposed from that time to cover the increased costs we are experiencing due to our work on modifications/blocking of HB 241, a bill that would make fundamental changes to gifted services in New Mexico.

To renew simply **print the membership form** (the last page of this newsletter) and mail your check to the address listed. If for any reason you can't download the form, you may request that a form be mailed to you by e-mailing or calling Lani Held (info@aagts.org, 292-9135). We are sorry but our budget does not allow the costs associated with credit card charges.

Remember AAGTS is a volunteer organization and we need the support of ALL in order to ensure that gifted services appropriate to the individual continue to be offered in New Mexico. Thank you for renewing today! (If you have renewed recently, you can extend your membership for an extra year at the \$15 yearly rate.)



Albuquerque Association for Gifted and Talented Students (AAGTS) MEMBERSHIP FORM

New Membership Renewal Address Change

Name _____ Spouse _____

Street _____ City, State, Zip _____

E-mail address _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____ Spouse's Work Phone _____

Are you an educator? Yes No If yes, school _____

Do you have a gifted child? Yes No If yes, their grade level(s) and school(s) _____

Is your child twice exceptional? Yes No

Do you or your child need special assistance to attend workshops or meetings? Yes No

How did you hear about AAGTS? _____

Do you have a special interest that you would like to share at a General Membership meeting for adults?

If yes, please list: _____

AAGTS is a volunteer organization. We need your participation as well as your support. On which committees would you be willing to work?

- Library School Liaison Advocacy Membership
- Newsletter Board Member Mailing Hospitality
- Fall Conference Telephone/E-mail

Renew or join before January 1, 2009 for \$15!

Mail to: AAGTS, PO Box 94328, Albuquerque, NM 87199-4328

Membership fee	
One Year: \$15	
Two Years: \$25	<input type="text"/>
(save \$5)	
Tax-deductible contribution	<input type="text"/>
TOTAL	<input type="text"/>