



BVPAGE *PAGES*

www.bvpage.org

From the President

Rhona Alter

As my children keep reminding me, school is almost over for the year. It has certainly been a busy spring semester, but now it's almost time to start all the activities highlighted in our Summer Enrichment Activities program, held in the first week of March. The program was structured in an open house format this year, allowing parents and children the freedom to stop at as many of the over 20 presenters as they wanted. I think both parents and presenters liked the change. A list of the participating organizations is available on our website, www.bvpage.org, under the Programs tab. In April, we were privileged to have Dr. Susan Daniels present "Keys to Understanding Your Gifted Child," a program on the social and emotional needs of gifted children.

Our new relationship with the administration continues to be productive. In response to their own studies and surveys, findings of which were corroborated by the BVPAGE survey results we presented to them in December, the administration has implemented a new Math Plus series in the middle school for higher achieving math students (open to all students). They also are looking into creating more challenge and variety in the Communications Arts reading list. In the future they hope to provide more depth in the social studies and science curricula.

As another outgrowth of these studies and surveys, the administration is conducting a self-assessment of the gifted program. They currently are in the process of developing a procedure to measure both what is right with the program, and where it could be improved. A committee of

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BVPAGE members was asked to attend their first meeting to help develop this procedure, and we expect to continue to be involved in the process and implementation of this self-assessment.

I have enjoyed this past year as BVPAGE president. I have been extremely lucky to be working with a Board of highly motivated, competent, delightful people that made my job very easy. I hope you will take advantage of the knowledge, abilities, and experiences of your Board by attending our meetings and getting more involved in our activities. Our Board meetings are generally held monthly during the school year in the Marooner Room at District Office. Our web site, www.bvpage.org, has a lot of information about our organization, as well as links to other helpful organizations.

We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming programs and at our meetings!

Rhona

DCT's Corner (District Coordinating Teacher)

Dr. Sheri Stewart

What a productive school year! Here are just a few of our accomplishments...

One hundred ninety-six Blue Valley seventh graders took the ACT or SAT college entrance exams as part of the Duke University Talent Identification Program. Of those, 116 qualified for state recognition at the University of Kansas and nineteen qualified for the grand recognition at Duke University. Some scores were as high as a 760 on the SAT math.

One hundred seventy-five elementary students participated in the Fourth Annual Robotics Share Fair at District Office this spring. Gifted elementary students are learning how to build and program Lego Mindstorms robots.

All elementary and middle school gifted programs received the results of a California State University research study to norm a survey dealing with the social-emotional needs of gifted students. This included a four-day visit and presentations by the principal researcher in our district.

All gifted education teachers participated in phase one of a three-year curriculum writing project to write "group curriculum" for the gifted education program. This year's emphasis was on Process Skills/21st Century Skills. Next year the emphasis will be on the social-emotional skill development.

BVPAGE (Blue Valley Parent Advocates for Gifted Education) continues to be a great resource for educating Blue Valley parents about gifted

children. They offered four parent programs this year. In addition, they carried out survey research and presented it to district administration.

Gifted students participated in numerous state and national competitions. Hundreds represented Blue Valley School District at the state and national level in math, writing, science, geography and inventions with some attaining regional, state and national recognition.

Gifted education teachers continue to obtain local and state grants to enhance the resources and experiences of their gifted students including a \$5000 BVEF grant to help fund a broadcast studio.

A baseline of technology resources was established this year and all schools will receive computers and other technology which will bring all gifted classrooms up to the baseline.

Planning of a self assessment of the gifted education program and services began this spring. The actual self assessment will be carried out in the fall of 2008.

The Gifted Education Program now serves more than 1,500 students, nearly 8 percent of all K-12 students in the district. Thirty eight full-time certified staff and a dozen paraprofessionals carry out services to gifted students.

Feel free to call (239-4333) or email (ssstewart@bluevalleyk12.org).

"An idea can turn to dust or magic, depending on the talent that rubs against it."

More on Overexcitabilities

We heard about Overexcitabilities from Dr. Susan Daniels at the BVPAGE program back in April. We thought we would share with you more information on the topic of Overexcitabilities.

"Overexcitability and the gifted." by Sharon Lind From The SENG Newsletter. 2001, 1(1) 3-6.

A small amount of definitive research and a great deal of naturalistic observation have led to the belief that intensity, sensitivity and overexcitability are primary characteristics of the highly gifted. These observations are supported by parents and teachers who notice distinct behavioral and constitutional differences between highly gifted children and their peers. The work of Kazimierz Dabrowski, (1902-1980), provides an excellent framework with which to understand these characteristics. Dabrowski, a Polish psychiatrist and psychologist, developed the Theory of Positive Disintegration as a response to the prevalent psychological theories of his time. He believed that conflict and inner suffering were necessary for advanced development – for movement towards a hierarchy of values based on altruism – for movement from "what is" to "what ought to be." Dabrowski also observed that not all people move towards an advanced level of development but that innate ability/intelligence combined with overexcitability (OE) were predictive of potential for higher-level development. It is important to emphasize that not all gifted or highly gifted individuals have overexcitabilities. However we do find more people with OEs in the gifted population than in the average population.

OVEREXCITABILITIES

Overexcitabilities are inborn intensities indicating a heightened ability to respond to stimuli. Found to a greater degree in creative and gifted individuals, overexcitabilities are expressed in increased sensitivity, awareness, and intensity, and represent a real difference in the fabric of life and quality of experience. Dabrowski identified five areas of intensity—Psychomotor, Sensual, Intellectual, Imaginational, and Emotional. A person may possess one or more of these. "One who manifests several forms of overexcitability, sees reality in a different, stronger and more multisided manner" Dabrowski, 1972, p. 7). Experiencing the world in this unique way carries with it great joys and sometimes great frustrations. The joys and positives of being overexcitable need to be celebrated. Any frustrations or negatives can be positively dealt with and used to help facilitate the child's growth. The five OEs are

described below. Each description is followed by several examples of strategies, which represent a fraction of the possible solutions to issues that may cause concern for overexcitable individuals or those who work and live with them. These should serve as a springboard for brainstorming additional strategies or interventions that will help improve the lives of overexcitable people.

PSYCHOMOTOR OVEREXCITABILITY

Psychomotor OE is a heightened excitability of the neuromuscular system. This Psychomotor intensity includes a "capacity for being active and energetic" (Piechowski, 1991, p. 287), love of movement for its own sake, surplus of energy demonstrated by rapid speech, zealous enthusiasm, intense physical activity, and a need for action (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977; Piechowski, 1979, 1991). When feeling emotionally tense, individuals strong in psychomotor OE may talk compulsively, act impulsively, misbehave and act out, display nervous habits, show intense drive (tending towards "workaholicism"), compulsively organize, or become quite competitive. They derive great joy from their boundless physical and verbal enthusiasm and activity, but others may find them overwhelming. At home and at school, these children seem never to be still. They may talk constantly. Adults and peers want to tell them to sit down and be quiet! The Psychomotor OE child has the potential of being misdiagnosed as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

PSYCHOMOTOR STRATEGIES

- * Allow time for physical or verbal activity, before, during, and after normal daily and school activities—these individuals love to "do" and need to "do." Build activity and movement into their lives.
- * Be sure the physical or verbal activities are acceptable and not distracting to those around them. This may take some work, but it can be a fun project and beneficial to all.
- * Provide time for spontaneity and open-ended, freewheeling activities. These tend to favor the needs of a person high in Psychomotor OE.

SENSUAL OVEREXCITABILITY

Sensual OE is expressed as a heightened experience of sensual pleasure or displeasure emanating from sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977; Piechowski, 1979, 1991). Those with Sensual OE have a far more expansive experience from their sensual input than the average person. They have an increased and early appreciation of aesthetic pleasures such as music, language, and art, and derive endless delight from tastes, smells, textures, sounds, and sights. But because of this increased sensitivity, they may also feel

Overexcitabilities... Continued

When emotionally tense, some individuals high in Sensual OE may overeat, go on buying sprees, or seek the physical sensation of being the center of attraction (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977; Piechowski, 1979, 1991). Others may withdraw from stimulation. Specially overexcitable children may find clothing tags, classroom noise, or smells from the cafeteria so distracting that schoolwork becomes secondary. These children may also become so absorbed in their love of a particular piece of art or music that the outside world ceases to exist.

SENSUAL STRATEGIES

- * Whenever possible, create an environment which limits offensive stimuli and provides comfort.
- * Provide appropriate opportunities for being in the limelight by giving unexpected attention, or facilitating creative and dramatic productions that have an audience. These individuals literally feel the recognition that comes from being in the limelight.
- * Provide time to dwell in the delight of the sensual and to create a soothing environment.

INTELLECTUAL OVEREXCITABILITY

Intellectual OE is demonstrated by a marked need to seek understanding and truth, to gain knowledge, and to analyze and synthesize (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977; Piechowski, 1979, 1991). Those high in Intellectual OE have incredibly active minds. They are intensely curious, often avid readers, and usually keen observers. They are able to concentrate, engage in prolonged intellectual effort, and are tenacious in problem solving when they choose. Other characteristics may include relishing elaborate planning and having remarkably detailed visual recall. People with Intellectual OE frequently love theory, thinking about thinking, and moral thinking. This focus on moral thinking often translates into strong concerns about moral and ethical issues—fairness on the playground, lack of respect for children, or being concerned about "adult" issues such as the homeless, AIDS, or war. Intellectually overexcitable people are also quite independent of thought and sometimes appear critical of and impatient with others who cannot sustain their intellectual pace. Or they may become so excited about an idea that they interrupt at inappropriate times.

INTELLECTUAL STRATEGIES

- * Show how to find the answers to questions. This respects and encourages a person's passion to analyze, synthesize, and seek understanding.
- * Provide or suggest ways for those interested in moral and ethical issues to act upon their concerns—such as

collecting blankets for the homeless or writing to soldiers in Kosovo. This enables them to feel that they can help, in even a small way, to solve community or worldwide problems.

- * If individuals seem critical or too outspoken to others, help them to see how their intent may be perceived as cruel or disrespectful. For example saying "that is a stupid idea" may not be well received, even if the idea is truly stupid.

IMAGINATIONAL OVEREXCITABILITY

Imaginational OE reflects a heightened play of the imagination with rich association of images and impressions, frequent use of image and metaphor, facility for invention and fantasy, detailed visualization, and elaborate dreams (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977; Piechowski, 1979, 1991). Often children high in imaginational OE mix truth with fiction, or create their own private worlds with imaginary companions and dramatizations to escape boredom. They find it difficult to stay tuned into a classroom where creativity and imagination are secondary to learning rigid academic curriculum. They may write stories or draw instead of doing seatwork or participating in class discussions, or they may have difficulty completing tasks when some incredible idea sends them off on an imaginative tangent.

IMAGINATIONAL STRATEGIES

- * Imaginational people may confuse reality and fiction because their memories and new ideas become blended in their mind. Help individuals to differentiate between their imagination and the real world by having them place a stop sign in their mental videotape, or write down or draw the factual account before they embellish it.
- * Help people use their imagination to function in the real world and promote learning and productivity. For example, instead of the conventional school organized notebook, have children create their own organizational system.

EMOTIONAL OVEREXCITABILITY

Emotional OE is often the first to be noticed by parents. It is reflected in heightened, intense feelings, extremes of complex emotions, identification with others' feelings, and strong affective expression (Piechowski, 1991). Other manifestations include physical responses like stomach aches and blushing or concern with death and depression (Piechowski, 1979). Emotionally overexcitable people have a remarkable capacity for deep relationships; they show strong emotional attachments to people, places, and things (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). They have

Overexcitabilities... Continued

compassion, empathy, and sensitivity in relationships. Those with strong Emotional OE are acutely aware of their own feelings, of how they are growing and changing, and often carry on inner dialogs and practice self-judgment (Piechowski, 1979, 1991). Children high in Emotional OE' are often accused of "overreacting." Their compassion and concern for others, their focus on relationships, and the intensity of their feelings may interfere with everyday tasks like homework or doing the dishes.

EMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

* Accept all feelings, regardless of intensity. For people who are not highly emotional, this seems particularly odd. They feel that those high in Emotional OE are just being melodramatic. But if we accept their emotional intensity and help them work through any problems that might result, we will facilitate healthy growth.

* Teach individuals to anticipate physical and emotional responses and prepare for them. Emotionally intense people often don't know when they are becoming so overwrought that they may lose control or may have physical responses to their emotions. Help them to identify the physical warning signs of their emotional stress such as headache, sweaty palms, and stomach ache. By knowing the warning signs and acting on them early, individuals will be better able to cope with emotional situations and not lose control.

GENERAL STRATEGIES

It is often quite difficult and demanding to work and live with overexcitable individuals. Those who are not so, find the behaviors unexplainable, frequently incomprehensible, and often bizarre. Overexcitable people living with other overexcitable people often have more compassion and understanding for each other, but may feel conflicts when their OEs are not to the same degree. Finding strategies for helping children and adults deal with and take advantage of these innate and enduring characteristics may seem difficult. However, resources may be gathered from varied places: Literature regarding counseling, learning styles, special education, and classroom management; parenting books; even popular business texts. Perhaps the best place to begin is with the following general strategies, applicable regardless of which OEs are present.

DISCUSS THE CONCEPT OF OVEREXCITABILITY

Share the descriptions of OEs with the family, class, or counseling group. Ask individuals if they see themselves with some of the characteristics. Point out that this article and many others like it indicates that being overexcitable

is OK and it is understood and accepted.

FOCUS ON THE POSITIVES

Jointly discuss the positives of each overexcitability when you first introduce the concept, and continue to point out these merits. Benefits include being energetic, enthusiastic, sensual, aesthetic, curious, loyal, tenacious, moral, metacognitive, integrative, creative, metaphorical, dramatic, poetic, compassionate, empathetic, and self-aware.

CHERISH AND CELEBRATE DIVERSITY

One outcome of the pursuit of educational and societal equity has been a diminishing of the celebration of diversity and individual differences. Highly gifted individuals, because of their uniqueness, can fall prey to the public and personal belief that they are not OK. It is vital when discussing OEs that individuals realize that overexcitability is just one more description of who they are, as is being tall, or Asian, or left-handed. Since OEs are inborn traits, they cannot be unlearned! It is therefore exceedingly important that we accept our overexcitable selves, children, and friends. This acceptance provides validation and helps to free people from feelings of "weirdness" and isolation.

Another way to show acceptance is to provide opportunities for people to pursue their passions. This shows respect for their abilities and intensities and allows time for them to "wallow" in what they love, to be validated for who they are. Removing passions as consequences for inappropriate behavior has a negative effect by giving the message that your passions, the essence of who you are, are not valuable or worthy of respect.

USE AND TEACH CLEAR VERBAL AND NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

All people deserve respect and need to be listened to and responded to with grace. Overexcitable people need this understanding and patience to a greater degree because they are experiencing the world with greater intensity and need to be able to share their intensity and feelings of differentness to thrive. It is vital to learn good communication skills and to teach them to children. Good communication skills are useful on multiple levels, from improving the chances of getting what you want, to nurturing and facilitating growth in others. Regardless of one's motivation for learning these skills, the outcomes will include less stress, greater self-acceptance, greater understanding from and about others, and less daily friction at home, school, work, or in the grocery store.

Overexcitabilities... Continued

When learning communication skills be sure to include both verbal listening, responding, questioning, telephoning, problem solving (Faber and Mazlish, 1980), and nonverbal rhythm and use of time, interpersonal distance and touch, gestures and postures, facial expressions, tone of voice, and style of dress (Nowicki, 1992). Verbal and nonverbal strategies improve interpersonal communication and provide the skills individuals need to fit in when they wish to, to change the system if necessary, and to treat others with caring and respect.

TEACH STRESS MANAGEMENT FROM TODDLERHOOD ON

Everyone deals with stress on a daily basis. But overexcitable individuals have increased stress reactions because of their increased reception of and reaction to external input. There are many programs and books about stress reduction. The key components are to (1) learn to identify your stress symptoms: headache, backache, pencil tapping, pacing, etc. (2) develop strategies for coping with stress: talk about your feelings, do relaxation exercises, change your diet, exercise, meditate, ask for help, develop organizational and time management skills and (3) develop strategies to prevent stress: make time for fun; develop a cadre of people to help, advise, humor you; practice tolerance of your own and others' imperfections.

CREATE A COMFORTING ENVIRONMENT WHENEVER POSSIBLE

Intense people need to know how to make their environment more comfortable in order to create places for retreat or safety. For example: find places to work or think which are not distracting, work in a quiet or calm environment, listen to music, look at a lovely picture, carry a comforting item, move while working, or wear clothing which does not scratch or cling. Learning to finesse one's environment to meet one's needs takes experimentation and cooperation from others, but the outcome will be a greater sense of well being and improved productivity.

HELP TO RAISE AWARENESS OF ONE'S BEHAVIORS AND THEIR IMPACT ON OTHERS

Paradoxically, overexcitable people are often insensitive and unaware of how their behaviors affect others. They may assume that everyone will just understand why they interrupt to share an important idea, or tune out when creating a short story in their head during dinner. It is vital to teach children and adults to be responsible for their behaviors, to become more aware of how their behaviors affect others, and to understand that their needs are not

more important than those of others. The key is to realize that you can show children and adults how they are perceived, you can teach them strategies to fit in, but they must choose to change.

REMEMBER THE JOY

Often when overexcitability is discussed examples and concerns are mostly negative. Remember that being overexcitable also brings with it great joy, astonishment, beauty, compassion, and creativity. Perhaps the most important thing is to acknowledge and relish the uniqueness of an overexcitable child or adult.

References

- Dabrowski, K. (1972). Psychoneurosis is not an illness. London: Gryf. (Out of print)
- Dabrowski, K & Piechowski, M.M. (1977). Theory of levels of emotional development (Vols.1 & 2) Oceanside, NY: Dabor Science. (Out of print)
- Faber, A. & Mazlish, E. (1980). How to talk so kids will listen, and listen so kids will talk. New York: Avon.



Legislative Report

Submitted by Rhona Alter

Education was decidedly not the main focus of the Legislature this year. Although several education-related bills were introduced, very few of them made it through the legislative process.

The law creating the Kansas Academy of Mathematics and Science ("KAMS"), enacted in 2007, was amended to allow non-residents of Kansas to attend, as well as to require pupils to pay tuition and fees. For pupils enrolled in a Kansas school district, the tuition (but not fees generally paid by a high school student) will be paid by the school district, not to exceed the amount of per student base aid. Non-resident pupils will be responsible for all tuition and fees.

Another bill enacted this year extends to 10th graders the ability to enroll concurrently in high school and college. Previously, only 11th and 12th graders were allowed to concurrently enroll, or, gifted students in 9th through 12th grades.

And at least a little good news for school finance: at the end of the regular session, a conference committee of the two Houses approved a bill that increases state aid by \$59 per student for the 2009-10 school year, adding a fourth year to the three-year finance plan adopted in 2006. The bill was passed by the House and Senate May 2, during the veto session of the Legislature.



Student News

Student News

Submitted by Rhona Alter

KCATM Math Contest Winners

Children of BVPAGE Board members made a good showing at the math contest sponsored by the Kansas City Area Teachers of Math held last March. Benjamin Abbas, son of Rhona Alter, and his teammates Rohit Bhagat and Sheel Kundu, took first place in the 5th grade Mathletics event. Rebecca Marvin, daughter of Wendy Marvin, took first place as Top 8th Grader, as well as first place in Number Sense and Algebra, fourth place in Probability and Statistics, and seventh place in Geometry. Rebecca was also a member of the 7th/8th grade Mathletics team that placed second.

Austin and Brandon Bachar, sons of former Board member Min Bachar, took third places as top 6th Grader and top 8th Grader, respectively.

Kansas Association
for the Gifted,
Talented and Creative



SAVE THE DATE!

**KGTC ANNUAL
CONFERENCE**

OCTOBER 5 - 7, 2008

LAWRENCE, KS

The BVPAGE Pages are published quarterly. If you have any news items for this newsletter, you may contact the editor, Angela Case, at:

bvpage@everestkc.net

A Very Special Week!

July 14–20, 2008

National Parenting Gifted Children Week

The third week in July of each year is National Parenting Gifted Children Week, according to SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of Gifted), a national nonprofit organization and the official sponsor of this week. National Parenting Gifted Children Week, now placed in the National Special Events Registry, is intended to celebrate the joys and challenges of raising, guiding, and supporting bright young minds. According to James T. Webb, Ph.D., founder of SENG, each day of this week will focus attention on a particular area of interest to parents of gifted and talented children. This year, the daily topics will be:

- Challenges of Parenting Gifted Children
- Underachievement Issues
- Advocacy for Gifted Children—Teaming with Educators and Legislators
- Identifying and Recognizing Giftedness
- Special issues for Gifted Minorities, Gifted Boys, and Gifted Girls
- Misdiagnosis, Depression, and Suicide in Gifted Youth
- Parenting Supports and Resources

In 1981, SENG was formed to bring attention to the unique emotional needs of gifted children. It continues to provide adults with guidance, information, and resources about raising and educating these children. SENG is an independent, non-profit 501(c)(3) entity with a diverse Board of Directors and many programs.

Contact SENG for information about National Parenting Gifted Children Week:

SENG
PO Box 488
Poughquag, NY 12570
(845) 797-5054
office@sengifted.org
www.sengifted.org



PLEASE SUPPORT BVPAGE WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP DONATION.

BVPAGE Membership Application

Name(s)		
Address		
City		
State	Zip	
Home phone		
Work Phone		
E-mail		
Voice Mail		
Renewal Status		
<input type="checkbox"/> New Member	<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal	
Children:		
Name	School	Grade

Committee(s) I'd be willing to work with:

☐ Parent Programs ☐ Advocacy & Legislation
☐ Membership ☐ Student Events
☐ Resource

I would be interested in:

☐ Being a mentor
☐ Providing a student program
☐ Providing an adult program
☐ Helping in the classroom
☐ Helping with competitions
☐ Serving as a Building Representative/Liaison
☐ Other:

We appreciate all membership donations. Your support allows BVPAGE to continue to provide such things as programming, this Newsletter.

Suggested donation \$15.00.

Karin Miller

5748 W. 146th St.

Overland Park, KS 66223

Thank you. Welcome to BVPAGE!

Membership is from **SEPTEMBER 1st** to **AUG 31st** of



BVPAGE

BVPAGE strives to increase the quantity and enhance the quality of services, disseminate information to and maintain a support group for parents to benefit all gifted and talented students in the Blue Valley School District.

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.bvpage.org

**A MEMBERSHIP
APPLICATION/ RENEWAL
FORM IS AVAILABLE ONLINE**

Summer Activity Ideas



McCalla's Math/English camps: mathcoach4u@hotmail.com

Mathnasium: www.mathnasium.com

Math Monkey: www.mathmonkey.com/leawood

Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center in Hutchinson, KS: www.cosmo.org

Mad Science: www.madsciencekc.org

Science City at Union Station: www.sciencecity.com

Youth Tech: www.youthtechinc.com

Theatre of the Imagination: www.tiarts.com

Theatre for Young America: www.tya.org

Kansas City Young Audiences: www.kcya.org

Kansas City Art Institute: www.kcai.edu; click on "Special Programs & continuing education"

Starlight Theater: www.kcstarlight.com; click on "Education"

Camellot Academy: www.camellotacademy.com

Coterie Theatre: www.coterietheatre.org; click on "Kids"

Heart of America Shakespeare Festival: www.kcshakes.org; click on Camps and Classes"; "Camps"

Spofford SCAMPS: www.spoffordhome.org/scamps.html

Confucius Institute at KU Edwards Campus: www.confucius.ku.edu;

click on "Summer Camps"

Kansas City Area Science Information www.kcscienceinc.org

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