



Gifted education opportunities
for children, parents and teachers

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2010

Greetings

Hopefully everyone is happily back to school now and settling into the arrangements for the new year. The summer holidays seemed to pass very quickly this year, but perhaps it was just that these were the last summer school holidays that are relevant in our house - our youngest daughter has just started her final year of school.

The start of this year has brought some changes to Thinking Ahead. I have now moved into an office near my home which means better separation of my work from our home life. I am still in the process of setting up the office but so far it is working well. It does mean though that I am not available all day every day. Work days this year are (generally) Tuesday, Thursday and Fridays. You can still contact me using the same phone number, or via email and I will get back to you as quickly as I can.

Holiday workshops

The holiday workshops in January were busy this year with many of the workshops full to capacity. It was great to see so many smiling faces and to see children 'clicking' with other like minds. And also to see parents find a safe place to share their journeys. A few ideas came out of the parent seminar and I will be looking at how to put some of them in action during the year. The next workshops will be scheduled for the July holidays and more information will be added to the website as it becomes available. If you are on the email list, we will let you know when the program is ready (probably early June).

Consultations

I am once again available this year to work with families and with schools helping them to work out what might best meet their child's needs. This year consultations will be scheduled (usually) on Thursdays. You can contact Derrin by phone (on Tues, Thurs or Fridays) or by email for more information to schedule an appointment. There have been a number of inquiries from Albany and the surrounding areas recently and I am looking into travelling down to Albany again to see families there. If you are in the Great Southern area and interested in a consultation, please get in touch with Derrin to let her know.

Blog (and summer reading)

I have been busy reading over the summer, but haven't added much to the blog in recent weeks. I do however have a number of things partly completed, so you should find more added before long. You can see the latest at <http://derrin-thebrightside.blogspot.com/> (or follow the link from the Thinking Ahead website). Some of the blogs I read spark new ideas and thoughts, my reading over the summer included a couple of books on creative thinking and motivation, some on the purpose of schools and learning and I have a few stacked up I am still getting to (Living with Intensity, Proust and the Reading Brain, The Happiness Project, one on advocacy for gifted kids and a few others).

Things worth knowing about

There are a number of events or opportunities coming up this year that may be of interest. Some are organised by Thinking Ahead, some are organised by other people or groups.

EXPLORE testing

The EXPLORE Talent Search testing (for students in Year 4, 5 or 6) is very likely to be offered again this year, probably once again in early June. A new co-ordinator for the talent search program at the Centre for Talent Development in Chicago (and now poor weather and snow storm warnings) has delayed finalising plans for this year but hopefully more information will be available soon. The EXPLORE pages on the website will be updated as soon as more information is available and I am hopeful that we will be able to offer the testing in more locations this year, depending on demand.

Future Problem Solving – a Thinking Ahead team

Another new opportunity this year is available for students in Year 5, 6 or 7 who are interested in being part of a Future Problem Solving team. Thinking Ahead is planning to register a team (or more than one depending on interest) this year for gifted students who don't have the opportunity in their school. The training sessions will run weekly during term time on a Wednesday afternoon from 4 until 5.15 until early August, with the possibility of further sessions if the team is successful in being selected to compete at the National Competition in Melbourne in October. There are a few more details to sort out but expressions of interest are welcome now and I will forward you more information as it becomes available. Cost is likely to be in the vicinity of \$20 per week depending on the number of students who participate (payable by the term). Future Problem Solving is a great program for gifted students, encouraging both divergent and convergent thinking applying a 6 step process to a futuristic scenario which allows for plenty of research and investigation in preparation. If you would like to find out more about Future Problem Solving Australia from their website at <http://fpsp.org.au/> (you might also like to read about my visit to the International FPS competition in 2008 at www.thinkingahead.com.au/gifted_usa_2008.htm)

Focus Groups – children's perspectives on extrinsic motivators

Amongst my summer reading, I read a new book which looks at what motivates us (if you were interested to check it out, it is called Drive by Dan Pink). I have since been off thinking and reading in various directions and I am keen to gain a different perspective on some of what I read. To this end I am planning to run a series of focus groups in March and April with gifted students in middle and upper primary school to find out how they see rewards and their effect on learning and motivation. I will make more information available in a few weeks as planning progresses, but would be pleased to hear from anyone who might be interested in taking part.

Dr Deb Ruf

Dr Deborah Ruf from the USA is currently in Perth and there are workshops in Bunbury and Perth early next week, as well as a session for teachers at Perth Modern School on Feb 22nd. You will find a link to a flier and more information on the home page of the Thinking Ahead website. (these sessions are organised by Jo Muir, please contact her at the address on the flier with any queries)

Bright Lights Theatre Sports

Over the last 3 years or so, I have been working with a small group of other people on plans for a not for profit organisation for gifted families that would offer a wider range of services for children and families, but also provide information to allied health services, teachers and the general community. Last November the Keystone Centre for the Gifted Ltd came into being. Work continues on planning and services but the first Saturday Programs are being offered this term. The Bright Lights Theatre Skills Workshops will run on Saturday afternoons from 13 Feb (this weekend) until 27 March at Moerlina School in Mt Claremont with sessions for 2 different age groups. Cost is \$120 for the 7 week program which will be run by local actor and director Sarah Fay (some of you will have met Sarah at the Thinking Ahead workshops where she ran a program in January). For more information contact Deb on 0409 085 463 or email her at keystonegifted@gmail.com

Family Camp in April – Harry P and the Professors – Hogwarts in the Perth Hills

Helen Dudeney who some of you will remember from presentations she has given in WA in the past is organising a camp for gifted families in April of this year. Helen has organised camps and residential programs for the NSW Gifted Association and for GERRIC for many years but now

works privately. For the past few years she has come regularly to WA as a lecturer in the Post Grad Certificate in Gifted and Talented Education at Murdoch University.

The camp will be held at Camp Woody, in the hills at Stoneville from April 16-18. Cost is \$150 for children and \$80 for adults and there will be a series of workshops for the children during the weekend. (Helen is looking for a few more presenters so if you are interested in running a workshop let me know and I will put you in touch with Helen). More details arrived today and a flier and link will be added to the Thinking Ahead website later today. To read more or register go to <http://harrypcamp2010wa.eventbrite.com/> (which also includes a link to Helen at the Australian Gifted Support Centre) To find out more about the camp site at Camp Woody, their website is www.campwoody.net.au/.

Websites

I have a long list of sites that I discover following links and reading a selection of lists and blogs. Some are added to the Thinking Ahead website under the Links tab in the Parent section of the site, some only appear in the newsletters. A selection of the recent ones which may be of interest include

- **World Maths Day 2010** is March 3. Students play at home and at school against other students around the world in live games of mental arithmetic. Each game lasts for 60 seconds and students can play up to 500 games, earning points for each correct answer. The students who answer the most questions appear in the Hall of Fame. Students cannot select their level but will move up as they progress. For more information and to register and play go to www.worldmathsday.com/2010/Default.aspx? (registrations close March 1st)
- **Unwrapping the Gifted Brain – What Brain Imaging shows us about the gifted brain.** This is an interesting article about what brain scans can tell us about the gifted brain. http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/unwrapping_the_gifted/
- **Neuroscience for Kids** This was the favourite website of an 8 year old girl I taught a few years ago, I just rediscovered it. <http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/neurok.html> March 15 - 21 is **Brain Awareness Week**. Following this line of thought here is a link to an unusual calendar (produced in 2006 at a university in the USA) that shows brain scans of various campus staff. <http://news.illinois.edu/ii/05/1103/bigbrains.html>
- **NAGC WOW Webinars** on Wednesdays for a list of webinars coming up go to www.nagc.org/wow.aspx#WOW_upcoming
- **SENG** also have some webinars coming up. The one on Feb 25th might be of particular interest – The Social and Emotional Benefits of Cluster Grouping. For more info go to http://sengifted.org/webinar_upcoming.shtml
- **Storycentre** a place for stories and other fun stuff for kids! www.storycenter.org
- **Storybird** is a storytelling website allowing users to collaborate with artists and enthusiasts to produce fun, simple tools to make short, visual stories. <http://storybird.com/>
- **Spelling City** www.spellingcity.com
- **Live Mocha** - free online language learning <http://www.livemocha.com/>
- **How to use an apostrophe** <http://theoatmeal.com/comics/apostrophe>
- **Bio Visions** –from Harvard University, visuals for biology <http://multimedia.mcb.harvard.edu/>
- **Learn Genetics** (online) <http://learn.genetics.utah.edu/>
- A Bookclub for gifted kids. A parent in the US has started a bookclub online for gifted kids. (from Bright Kids, part of USA Mensa)<http://ca.groups.yahoo.com/group/giftedbookclub/> for kids 13 yrs and up (or they have to use a parent account to log in if under 13 years)
- **Cultural Diversity** - The cultural diversity website developed by a partnership between the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Institute for Cultural Diversity provides a new way of finding out and engaging with human rights, arts, justice, agencies and research in culturally diverse Australia. <http://www.culturaldiversity.net.au>
- **Trailblazing** - interactive timeline for anyone interested in science <http://trailblazing.royalsociety.org>

- **Book reviews** – reviews of books and films of interest to gifted children, their educators and carers
http://nswagtc.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=9&Itemid=95
- **See Jane Win** celebrating the success of women, also has a newsletter you can subscribe to <http://www.seejanewin.com/>

Resources

Some copies of *Upside Down Brilliance* are still in stock. I have just started the process of updating the WA Resource Book for Parents and Teachers and I am looking into possibly making this available in e-book format as well as hard copy. Details will be added to the website when the update is done. For more information about resources and how to order go to http://www.thinkingahead.com.au/purchase_resources.htm

Conferences

A few conferences which are coming up that may be of interest:

The **Asia Pacific Gifted Conference** is being held in Sydney from July 29th to August 1st. Proposals for presentations can be submitted until Feb 15th. More information can be found on their website at <http://www.gifted2010.com.au/> Registrations are now open for both the conference and for the Youth Summit which will run in conjunction with the conference.

For those looking further afield, **the Wallace International Research Symposium** will be held in May 2010 at the Belin Blank Centre at the University of Iowa (more info here <http://www.education.uiowa.edu/belinblank/Research/WallaceSym/>) and **the European Council for High Ability (ECHA) conference** will be held in Paris July 7 – 9. More info on their website <http://www.echa2010.eu/index.html> .

Or close to home but not specifically gifted, you might be interested in the **Nature of Play**, Kidsafe Playground Conference to be held in Subiaco from April 19 and 20th (www.kidsafewa.com.au/playgroundconference) or the **Positive Schools Conference** to be held in Fremantle May 21st www.positiveschools.com.au/index.html and a preconference day on May 20th.

All the best for a successful term, I am sure it will be Easter before we know it..... If you would like any further information about any of the above, please let me know. I will look forward to hearing from you and to catching up with many of you during the term.

cheers

Derrin Cramer