



Gifted education opportunities
for children, parents and teachers

SEPTEMBER 2010 NEWSLETTER

Term 3 is now nearly over, the year just racing by. My youngest daughter is about to finish school and the mock TEE and the final exams are fast approaching.

This has been a really busy term for me and at times I have struggled to keep up with the pace of things that need to be done. I have learned a lot not only from reading and conferences but also from the parents and the children I have worked with this year. Every one adds another dimension to a piece of knowledge.

While there are no holiday programs in the October break, there is some Good News and some Bad News about next term.....

The Bad News

The work load this year has meant a lot more typing than is really good for me and recently I have been paying the price. It hasn't been helped by an over zealous weekend of pruning a month or so ago but as the problem will not resolve itself without some changes, I am going to have to spend less time doing some things this coming term, typing is one of them, consultations is another.

As a result there will be very limited consultation slots next term. I have been talking to a couple people about the possibility of having another person also doing consultations, more on that hopefully in the future. My apologies in advance to those I won't be able to help this term.

In another piece of 'bad' news, the **CONNECT** program which looked like being great ran into a series of delays with confirming venue and major presenters and in the end there was just not enough time to have it thoroughly organised and advertised in time to attract enough students for it to go ahead. So please stay tuned for new dates, perhaps in January (or April next year) as it will be rescheduled not shelved.

The Good News

Apart from the personal plus of being able to spend time on rehabilitation next term, there will also be a refreshed Thinking Ahead website. The move to a new operating system on my computer following the problems I had in July has resulted in some software incompatibilities. There is something additionally frustrating about having to learn new programs not just new versions of programs as a result. But on the upside, I will be updating my skills and tidying up the Thinking Ahead website during next term.

I will also be spending some time working on a writing project that I haven't had much time for this year. Hopefully I will be able to report lots of progress by the end of the year.

And planning for the Summer Holiday workshop program will begin at the start of next term. If you know someone who might be interested in presenting, please direct them to the website or to email me. Dates will be posted up on the website as soon as they are finalised.

Future Problem Solving Program

This year for the first time Thinking Ahead offered the Future Problem Solving Program. We had 19 enthusiastic students from across Perth learn the FPS process and complete several competitive booklets. The students ranging from Year 5 – Year 9 all made great progress and their various strengths became evident as the year progressed. Based on their performance on the qualifying problem, approximately the top 10% of teams Australia wide are invited to attend the National Competition in October (in Melbourne this year) and although none of our first-year teams qualified this year, they all deserve to be congratulated on their efforts. It is no small task to complete the 6 step booklet within the 2 hour time limit. Their higher order thinking skills are also put to the test as the details of the scenario are not known until the time limit starts so any research into the topic (in this case it was 'orphans') has to be applied to the particular slant they find outlined in the scenario.

We are planning to offer Future Problem Solving again in 2011 for students in Year 5 upwards who don't have the opportunity to be involved in their schools. More information should be available right at the start of the school year so check the website or watch for details in a newsletter about that time.

Philosophy

The topic comes up regularly, often from parents with children asking 'deep' questions. There is the possibility of a philosophy 'club' running next term and if it is going to go ahead I should have more information on that soon. Keep an eye on the website for information.

Resources

The new edition of the **WA Resource Book** (now to be called Gifted Children: Resources for Parents and Teachers) is finally not far off. It looks like almost all the glitches in graphics (which were the main hold up in the end) have been sorted out, so I am keeping fingers crossed it will be heading off to the printer shortly. I have a list of people who have pre-ordered copies, if you would like to add your name to the list, please email me to let me know. As soon as the work is complete I will be able to finalise the cost and will let everyone know.

I still have stock of Upside Down Brilliance on hand at \$50 each, and also a single copy of Mindset available at \$22. Check the website for more information on each of these or go directly to the Order Form at http://www.thinkingahead.com.au/order_resources.htm

Blog

I have some interesting bits and pieces to be sharing on the blog in the next few months. recent posts have considered whether programs in schools are for our gifted, or for our talented students, shared links to information about the way children can manage their learning and create self organising learning environments (without teacher intervention) along with a few quotes. You can follow the blog at <http://derrin-thebrightside.blogspot.com/>

Websites

Although the copy for the Resource Book was finalised in June, I have continued to collect information (for the next edition probably). Here are a few sites that haven't made it into the book that you might be interested in.

Page by Page - read classics online free www.pagebypagebooks.com/

Sustainable Food Gardens and the W2F (Waste to Food) concept the website is established by Friends of the Environment, whose tag line is Educating for Sustainability. Sections for Educators and for Kids and links to Environmental Education centres in WA. <http://fote.org.au/post/2009/10/27/Sustainable-Food-Gardens.aspx>

Numbernut – a website that is all about maths. The site includes both basic and advanced material, organised into easy to follow topics and also includes a maths glossary <http://numbernut.com/>

The **K-12 Online Conference** is a free, online, annual professional development conference offering opportunities for educators around the globe to share innovative ways web 2.0 tools and technologies can be used to improve learning. Our conference this year will take place in October, and will include four different strands: Student Voices, Leading the Change, Week in the Classroom, and Kicking It Up a Notch. The conference is organised by volunteers <http://k12onlineconference.org/>

Geek Girl blog – the blog of Australian Rosie Cross is a a digital repository for interesting bits of infotainment. Geek Girl is Australia's longest running online publication. Parents of younger readers might want to check the site out first. <http://geekgirl.com.au/blog/category/science/page/2/>

Articles worth reading.....

Here are a few articles I have come across recently that you may be interested in.

[I Know My Child is Smart, Why Does She Need Testing?](http://www.gifteddevelopment.com/PDF_files/why%20test.pdf) Interesting article by Linda Silverman that outlines the value of finding out more about your child's potential. [www.gifteddevelopment.com/PDF files/why%20test.pdf](http://www.gifteddevelopment.com/PDF_files/why%20test.pdf)

[Why Mixed Ability Classrooms are Bad for Everyone: A Fable.](http://blog.masslive.com/real-learning/2010/09/why-mixed-ability-classrooms-are-bad-for-everyone-a-fable.html) A light-hearted look at a serious topic that does draw on research. Mixed ability groups in classrooms are generally maintained with a belief that it is good for self esteem. The research however shows otherwise..... this blog post is a nice summary of the research and worth reading. [http://blog.masslive.com/real learning/2010/09/why mixed-ability classrooms are bad for everyone a fable.html](http://blog.masslive.com/real-learning/2010/09/why-mixed-ability-classrooms-are-bad-for-everyone-a-fable.html)

A collection of articles from Education week in the USA with a spotlight on giftedness <http://www.edweek.org/ew/marketplace/products/spotlight-gifted.html>

Books worth looking for.....

[The Highly Sensitive Child](#) by Elaine Aron. Suggestions and case studies plus strategies for all stages of life.

[Teaching for Wisdom, Intelligence, Creativity and Success](#) by Robert Sternberg, Linda Jarvin and Elena Grigorenko Students with strong higher-order thinking skills are more likely to be successful, lifelong learners. Based on extensive collaborative research, this book shows how to implement teaching and learning strategies that nurture intelligence, creativity and wisdom.

[Fighting Invisible Tigers: A stress management guide for teens](#) by Early Hipp. A straight forward easy to read book which helps kids learn what to do about the stress they feel. It covers stress management, life management, being assertive, building supportive relationships and more.

[Faster Isn't Smarter](http://www.mathsolutions.com/index.cfm?page=wp18&contentid=994&crd=321&mcrd=107) by Cathy Seeley. Messages about Maths, Teaching and Learning in the 21st Century. (some printable samples are available on the website at <http://www.mathsolutions.com/index.cfm?page=wp18&contentid=994&crd=321&mcrd=107> , scroll down the page past the ordering information.)

That is about all for this term. Keep an eye out for more information on

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- The new edition of the Resource Book which will be ready soon
- The Summer Holiday workshops program (program due to be ready in November sometime)
- The possible Philosophy Club
- Future Problem solving 2011

If you have any questions about anything in this newsletter or would like to know more, please email me and I will get back to you as soon as I can.

Enjoy the holiday break and if you are travelling, take care.

cheers

Derrin Cramer