

MSAD #53 Gifted & Talented Program

Spring Newsletter 2010

Skills Blocks and G/T

Over the past two years, district teachers have been developing extra reading and math classes for all students that target specific skills. Students are grouped in skills blocks by readiness level using test scores.

The initial purpose of these groups was to better support our struggling students, but skills block has become an important part of our G/T programming, as well. Teachers are able to accelerate instruction for our advanced students in these groups. We currently have math skills blocks in grades 4-8 and reading skills blocks in grades 2, 5 and 6.

Scheduling and staffing skills blocks is a significant challenge. We plan to expand to all other grades next year. The 7th and 8th grade teachers are considering expanding the math skills block to four days a week; this will enable us to offer a complete Algebra I course. I hope to have more news on this soon.

Grades 3 & 4 Chorus

Guests at the recent PTO Supper and Auction were entertained by our talented Vickery chorus! These students have been skipping recess to attend chorus enrichment this winter. Guests were amazed at how terrific they sound!

Art Enrichment

Mrs. Littlefield has offered a once/week drawing club to interested 3rd and 4th graders at Vickery this year. Students have learned the technique of using a grid to draw images to scale.

The art enrichment class at Warsaw Middle School, or the Artist's Initiative, as they have named themselves, meet weekly on Mondays for one period. Students work on group and individual



projects with an emphasis on creative problem solving, exploring media, and critique. Group members provide input towards project selection and direction. Currently painting techniques, enlargement and color are the focus as students complete work on an enlarged "I and the Village" by Marc Chagall.

Theater Arts Enrichment

Mrs. Susi is offering an enrichment class during the last quarter for interested 7th and 8th grade students at Warsaw. The focus will be on stage make-up and props for the school's upcoming production of *Snow White*.

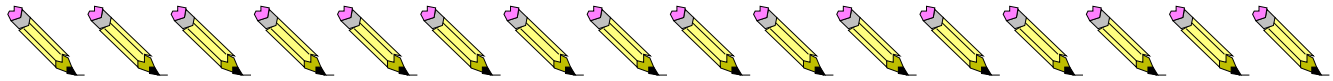


25 Books Challenge

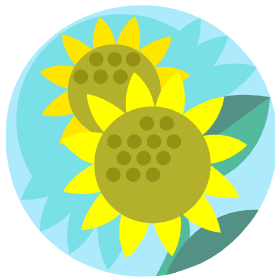
For several years, the district literacy plan has included a challenge to all students in grades 3-8 to read at least 25 books independently. This challenge is a perfect way to support the interests of our gifted readers. Students are encouraged to read a variety of books and to keep a log of their reading. Teachers ask students to respond to their reading in a variety of ways, such as through book talk/presentations to the class, conferencing with the teacher, writing a book review, creating a story map, and so on. As a parent, talking to your child about what s/he is reading is one of the best ways to support his/her growth as a reader and thinker. Ask your son or daughter about the 25 books challenge.

ALEKS for Math

In addition to the math skills groups, we were able to use some grant funds this year to



purchase subscriptions for G/T math students to the online math program, ALEKS. This program uses artificial intelligence to identify strengths and gaps for individual students and to tailor math content to those needs. Using their individual username and password, students log in to ALEKS, select a math topic to work on, and practice math problems at their level. ALEKS is available on the Web from any Internet connected computer, so students can use it at home. I strongly recommend encouraging your child to use ALEKS at home for 20-30 minutes a day, especially when s/he doesn't have other math homework. Ask your child to show you how it works. For more information, visit www.aleks.com/k12 .



Summer Learning

Summer is a great time for gifted children to try out new experiences or to explore their interests in more depth. According to author Cindy Ware, "The majority of summer experiences are designed to provide a pressure-free, noncompetitive environment in which young people can explore their areas of particular interest in depth. They have an opportunity to work with adult role models who are enthusiastic about their field and give individual support to each participant. Gifted students find it validating to be among peers who share their own excitement and

skill level. They form bonds based on common interests with youth from around the country and the world. Many programs, especially outdoor adventures, help young people develop teamwork skills. For children whose abilities exceed those of their age mates, ungraded programs based on interest and skill rather than age provide a supportive and stimulating environment.

Summer is a perfect time to experiment--a time for young people to test out their interest level in a topic. By immersing themselves full time for a month or two in painting, architecture, marine biology, or laboratory research, they gain a realistic introduction to the content, demands, and life style of a career area they may be considering. Such an experience can be helpful in deciding whether they want to pursue a topic as a hobby or a main focus. Summer is also a time to try out an entirely new area that may not be available during the school year" (ERIC EC Digest #E491, 1990).

Maine offers many great summer camp experiences. Check out these resources for finding camps:

Maine Youth Camping Foundation
<http://www.mainecamps.org/CampDirectory.htm>

UMaine Summer Youth Programs
<http://dll.umaine.edu/summer/camps.html>

Maine School of Science and Mathematics
http://www.mssm.org/outreach/summer_camps/

Young Authors' Camps
http://mainewritingproject.org/mwp/?page_id=102

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