With the coming of the New Year in just a couple weeks, I can’t help but reflect with pleasure at what has been happening since the “real” new year began in September.

I must start out by expressing my gratitude for the overwhelming support you have shown me as I am transitioning into my new role. I am proud to lead the longest standing program for advanced students in our state.

In 1999, I moved from Iowa, having run a program for advanced students for ten years, to Greenwich because of the program’s national reputation as an exemplary program.

The success of this program is largely due to the partnerships between teachers, parents, administrators, Boards of Education and the community. I was pleased with the standing room only crowd at the Byram Library this fall. I look forward to many more constructive discourses about how to provide the best possible educational experience for all of the students in Greenwich.

The program has undergone a few years of flux as it has undergone changes in leadership. Since coming on board one of my priorities has been to continue the review process by examining how Greenwich is using the current National Standards in Gifted and Talented education and identifying what challenges we face as we move forward. In planning for the future of the ALP program in Greenwich, it is my goal that the ALP program will continue to set the standard for exemplary gifted programming not only in Connecticut but nationwide. It is only through our partnerships that we can make this happen.

Please feel free to contact me to discuss any thoughts, questions and/or concerns you have about the program.

Bonnie O'Regan,
Advanced Learning
Program Facilitator
290 Greenwich Ave
Greenwich, CT 06830
Phone: 203-413-8400 ext. 7422
E-mail: bonnie_o'regan@k12.ct.us.com
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<td><a href="mailto:kerry_augustine@greenwich.k12.ct.us">kerry_augustine@greenwich.k12.ct.us</a>, <a href="mailto:Lindsey_Keller@greenwich.k12.ct.us">Lindsey_Keller@greenwich.k12.ct.us</a></td>
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<td>Julian Curtiss School</td>
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<td>Dace Ashcraft, Scott Saalborn</td>
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<td>Pam Blackwell, Jacqueline Lowry, Joan Popper</td>
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<td>Central Middle School</td>
<td>203-661-8500</td>
<td>Patricia Brennan, Annette Bochnar, Justine Domuracki, Karen Lamm, Brian Maher, Anthony Mangano, Allison Russoniello</td>
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Dear Parents of ALP students,

In the beginning of this 2011-2012 year, the ALP Committee had over 150 people attend a meeting at Byram Shubert Library where Dr. Roger Lulow, the interim Superintendent, assured us that the ongoing ALP Review would not be taking up the Phase II recommendations as written. We would like to thank all of you who came out to support the ALP program and express your concerns. As PTAC ALP Reps, we have been meeting regularly with Bonnie O'Regan to discuss various issues around the review and around the program in general. As you can see in this newsletter, many exciting things are happening both in and out of the classroom.

We would like to remind all parents that teachers welcome you to notify them of any concerns you may have about the program, the curriculum and how it effects your child or any other issues that are occurring within the classroom. Please remember it is proper PTA protocol to contact your teacher before you contact any administrator. In addition, the ALP rep in your building is available to discuss the ALP program and provide answers to simple questions.

As the Spring arrives, it brings thoughts of "what will happen next year for my child?" The ALP Committee and Mrs. O'Regan are planning to conduct parent meetings on the identification process and the transition to middle school. Please look for these types of meetings to occur in March/April. We know that communication is the key for parents to feel confident about the educational placement of their child.

Lastly, also look for ALP meetings in January with Jen Mitchell, the LA District Administrator, and Joyce Van Tassel Baska, Professor Emeritus of the Gifted Program at the College of William and Mary, in March. These meetings are being held to help ALP parents better understand the teaching strategies that our ALP teachers are using and to answer questions or concerns about what the program is and where it may be headed in the future.

The PTAC ALP Committee
Kati Bennett
Alexis Voulgaris
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In cooperation with the Connecticut Association for the Gifted Professional Development Program, Greenwich hosted Dr. Monita Levitt for a full day of professional learning on November 11. In her talks entitled “The Problematic Concept of Giftedness: Myth Busters” and “High Abilities Children at Risk: Nurturing their Social and Emotional development can High Abilities Children really be at risk?” Teachers learned strategies for nurturing and motivating the social and emotional development of this unique group of learners that can be applied to all children in the classroom.

Monita Leavitt has been an educator for more than 30 years, including 16 years as a gifted education teacher. In 2002, she was granted a sabbatical to begin doctoral studies in England. After several summers working with teachers in Lithuania, she became interested in helping teachers there to stop the ‘brain drain’ of bright students moving to countries with better education systems. She trained teachers in strategies to better address the needs of gifted pupils.

Upon her return to America, Monita noticed a ‘brain drain’ in public schools in Connecticut as well. She stopped teaching to start a new career as a consultant, and now works training teachers in how to differentiate instruction to benefit all children, while providing challenges and motivation to bright children at the same time.

Monita received her Ph.D. from Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, England, her B.A. at Moravian College, Pennsylvania, and her M.S. at Central Connecticut State University, England. She has been published in educational journals and magazines, and has also presented at the National Gifted Conferences, including the 2001 World Gifted Conference in Barcelona.

All teachers who participated in the CAG workshops received CAG membership and teacher resource group benefits.

Upcoming Professional Learning:
Rick Kohn: January, 2012
Ginny Lockwood: January/February, 2012
Joyce Van Tassel-Baska: March 2012

The Connecticut Association for the Gifted is able to support students, families, and educators across Connecticut through the generous contributions of our members. Your annual membership dues help us provide services to gifted, talented, and high potential children from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds across the state and to advocate for their needs everywhere from their local communities to the state capitol. Please consider helping CAG yourself by becoming a member or renewing your membership today. Go to www.ctgifted.org for more information.
What’s New in Young Adult Literature: 2011 Edition

By

Dr. Bob Seney
Professor Emeritus/Gifted Studies, Mississippi University for Women
Mancos, Colorado
bseney@muw.edu

Avi
City of Orphans (e) 2011
Bacigalupi, Paolo
Ship Breaker (ms) 2010
2011 Printz Award and National Book Award Finalist
Card, Orson Scott
Pathfinder (ms/hs) 2010
Christopher, Lucy
Stolen (hs) 2010
Printz Honor
Collins, Pat Lowry
Daughter of Winter (ms) 2010
Collins, Suzanne
Gregor, The Overlander (e/ms) (SR,TR) 2003
Whoops!
Draper, Susan
Out of My Mind (e/ms) 2010
Erskine, Kathryn
Mockingbird (ms) 2010
2010 National Book Award Winner
Fisher, Catherine
Incarceron (ms) 2010
Flanagan, John
Ranger’s Apprentice: Book 10 – The Emperor of Nihon-Ja (ms/hs) 2011
Ranger’s Apprentice: Book 11 – The Lost Stories (ms/hs) 2011
Green, John & David Levithan
will grayson, will grayson (hs#*) 2010
Very Heavy! 2011 Stonewall Honor Book
Hobbs, Will
Take Me to The River (ms/e) 2011
Holm, Jennifer
Turtle in Paradise (e) 2010
Newbery Honor
Jacques, Brian
A Tale of Redwall: The Rogue Crew (e) 2011
Katcher, Brian
Almost Perfect (hs#*) 2010
2011 Stonewall Medal Book
[Inauguration of Award in Children’s and YA Lit.]
Klise, James
Love Drugged* (hs) 2010
2011 Stonewall Honor
Kennedy, Kim
Misty Gordon and the Mystery of the Ghost Pirates (e) 2010
Lupica, Mike
Hero (ms) 2010
McKinley Robin
Dragonhaven (hs/ms) Whoops! 2007
McKinley, Robin
Pegasus (ms/hs) 2010
McNeal, Laura
Dark Water (hs/hs) 2010
National Book Award Finalist 2010

Underlined Books are My Ten Best Reads for this Year.

Codes:
# Language Alert
* Situation Alert
e = elementary school
ms = middle school/junior high
hs = high school
SR Student Recommended
TR Teacher Recommended
Meyers, Walter Dean  *Lockdown (hs/ms)*  2010  **National Book Award Finalist**
Oliver, Lauren  *Delirium (hs/ms)*  2011
Paulsen, Gary  *Lawn Boy Returns (e)*  2010
Patterson, Katherine  *Bread and Roses, Too (e)*  2006  **Whoops!**
Peck, Dale  *Sprout (hs) *#  2009  **2010 Stonewall Honor Book**
Preus, Margi  *Heart of a Samurai (e)*  2010  **Newbery Honor**
Riordan, Rick  *The Lost Hero (ms/e)*  2010
           *The Throne of Fire: Kane Book 2 (ms/e)*  2011
           *The Son of Neptune (ms/e)*  2011
Scott, Michael  *The Warlock – Book 5: The Secrets of the Immortal Nicholas Flamel (hs/ms)*  2011
Sedgwick, Marcus  *Revolver (ms)*  2009  **Printz Honor**
Teller, Janne  *Nothing (ms)*  2010  **Printz Honor**
Vanderpool, Clare  *Moon Over Manifest (e/ms)*  2010  **2011 Newbery Medal**
Walliams, David  *The Boy in the Dress (e/ms)*  2010  **Stonewall Honor**
Williams-Garcia, Rita  *One Crazy Summer (ms/e)*  2010  **National Book Award Finalist and Newbery Honor**
Yancy, Rick  *The Monstrumologist (hs/ms)*  2009  **2010 Printz Honor**

**Special List [Books that almost did not make the list]**

*Burd, Nick*  *The Vast Fields of Ordinary (hs)##*  2009  **Inaugural 2010 Stonewall Medal Book**
*Grisham, John*  *Theodore Boone, Kid Lawyer (e)*  2010
*Houck, Colleen*  *Tiger's Curse (ms/hs)*  2011
*Hurwin, Davida Willis*  *Freaks and Revelations (hs)#*  2010  **Stonewall Honor**

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SR Student Recommended
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IncreTOYble!: NAGC’s 2011 Toys and Games

by Valerie James and her students

There was tremendous variety in the toys and games we were asked to review. Many of the games required logic and strategizing in order to problem-solve while encouraging vocabulary building, storytelling, concentration, memory, visual acuity, construction, and creative play. There were toys and games for single players, as well as groups, teams, and families.

At the beginning of each session, students were told of class expectations, with a key outcome being a written review for any product of their choice. The entire display of toys was shown, and students were asked to choose the product they found to be the most interesting based on packaging. To my surprise, students gravitated not to products just because they were large and brightly colored; rather, they picked products based on their personal interests. This is helpful information for parents and teachers trying to select different toys and games for their children. Our sessions were highlighted by Skype interviews with representatives from Patch Products, Bananagrams, and Fat Brain Toys. We thank them for generously taking time to answer student questions about the game and toy industry.

One student asked what he could do right now to prepare for his future if he wanted to work in the toy industry. He was advised to be creative, to persevere, and work hard, and when you have a good idea to stick with it as you develop your idea from a concept into an actual product. Seeing a need (something is missing) can be the catalyst (spark) that leads to a new product. In fact, many new toys and games are inspired by the creators’ own children.

There were several interesting observations from the three weeks of testing. First is the power of word-of-mouth! Once a child became enamored with a game and began to express delight, others quickly wanted to try. But it worked both ways. If a game wasn’t a success, the word spread. Second, it was important to encourage students to read the directions before jumping into play (even if the manual was a bit long). Sometimes a game wasn’t a hit until the kids struggled through understanding the rules and discovered the intrigue. [Note: When you click through to the NAGC website to read the student reviews, you’ll see that two games on the 2011 list weren’t reviewed. Mirror Mansion and Zip-It, not picked at the beginning of the sessions, emerged as frequently played favorites.]

It was refreshing to watch students having fun playing games, being creative, and problem solving. I enjoyed seeing the ‘wheels turning’ as children tried to decide on the strategy they thought would bring them success in multi-player games. There was much reflection about prior moves after the game was over, with explanations of “I should have done...” or, “I was hoping you weren’t going to move your piece over here because...”

One of my class goals was for students to get to know other children with similar interests. This was immediately and easily achieved. Students commented that they enjoyed making friends with others by playing the toys and games. Some students even had their parents exchange contact information so they could keep in touch.
the winners

1 HexBug Nano®, Raceway Habitat Set
Manufacturer: Innovation First International
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: 3+
Website: http://www.hexbug.com/nano
MSRP: $49.99

“The game was awesome. I expected I want more of it!”
This product was a favorite because students were familiar with HexBugs (micro robotic creatures that scuttle along on vibrating legs). The kit consists of snap-together pieces to create all sorts of habitats to race the Hexbugs and is an addition to the series.

2 Folkmanis® Puppet, Twickety
Manufacturer: Folkmanis®
Website: http://www.folkmanis.com
MSRP: $35.99

“Twickety is large and brightly colored with soft fur that makes him an excellent snuggle companion.”
All the puppets were overwhelmingly immediate favorites. Students commented that the puppets were inviting because they looked friendly or whimsical—and they could be interesting friends.

3 Palette: How Colorful is Your Memory?
Manufacturer: Fat Brain Toy Co.
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: 6+
Number of players: 2–4
Website: http://www.toybrain.com
MSRP: $24.99

“When you finish the game you will want to play more. I rate this game excellent because it is fun, but a rewarthing challenge.”
Can you look at a color for 5 seconds, remember the hue, and match it to a color wheel? That’s what players do in this quick-moving game that encourages color discrimination and memory.

4 The Magic Labyrinth
Manufacturer: Playroom Entertainment®
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: 6+
Number of players: 2–4
Website: http://www.playroom.com
MSRP: $29.99

“This is a great game for families.”
This memory game is easier to play than to describe! First build a maze by placing blocking walls within the game box. Then cover the maze with the game board and discover ways to navigate your magnetized piece across the board, picking up as many objects as you can without bumping into the walls hidden beneath.

5 Star-Ball®
Manufacturer: Creative Whack Company
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: 8+
Number of players: 1 or more
Website: http://www.creativewhack.com
MSRP: $35.00

“This game is made for people who are creative and love to build! I really like Star-Ball!”
Star-Ball is the newest addition to the Ball of Whacks series. The challenge is to put the 32 five-legged magnetic star pieces together to form a ball.

6 Tilt
Manufacturer: ThinkFun
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: 8+
Number of players: 1
Website: http://www.thinkfun.com
MSRP: $19.99

“I would recommend this game to kids with test brains.”
This spatial reasoning game has progressively challenging levels that require the player to figure out how to maneuver the correct moving piece into the hole without any of the other pieces falling in or blocking it. It’s great for travel (the pieces come in a pouch), and games can be played in competition (each player with his or her TILT puzzle).
Pirate Versus Pirate
Manufacturer: Out of the Box® Publishing
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: 8+
Number of players: 2–3
Website: http://www.otb-games.com
MSRP: $27.99

“... a fun game with all the characteristics of a pirate cannon. It has treasure, imagination, and travel.”
Pirate players rush to claim the coins and return the treasure to their ship in this sturdy, fast-paced game of strategy and attack.

Pirate Plank
Manufacturer: LEGO®
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: 7+
Website: http://www.club.lego.com
MSRP: $14.99

“This game is both fun and fantastic with very awesome and funny rules.”
Pirate Plank is a game to build, play, and change, again and again. The goal is to be the last pirate on the plank, while sending the other pirates into a shark-infested sea. There are many ways to play, and the manual encourages players to modify and make the game their own.

Mirror Mansion
Manufacturer: Simply Fun
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: 6+
Number of Players: 2–4
Website: http://www.simplyfun.com
MSRP: $38.00

This game is based on the geometry of angles and the science of reflection. Using mirrors, the players explore Mirror Mansion looking for hidden treasures.

Lab Mice Puzzles
Manufacturer: MindWare®
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: 8+
Number of Players: 1
Website: http://www.mindware.com
MSRP: $16.95

“Even grown adults would like this! It’s hard but it’s fun, too!”
This set of fun, attractive logic puzzles comes on dry-erase cards that can be used again and again. When two decks are used, the puzzles are fun to solve competitively.

for the preschool kids

Although the games and toys for preschool aged children were available in the increTOYble! session, they were also played for a week by a separate group of little ones ranging in age from 19 months to 5 years. Once again, the building toys were popular. The first two toy winners in this category encouraged children to make up stories as they went along.

Build-A-Robot
Manufacturer: Plan Toys
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: 3+
Number of players: 1 and more
Website: www.plan-toysusa.com
MSRP: $35
Children can build this simple, sturdy, wooden robot and choose from four different shaped heads showing different emotions. The facial expressions encourage storytelling about feelings.

My First Zoo
Manufacturer: LEGO®
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: 2–5
Website: http://www.club.lego.com
MSRP: $24.99
This set was another hit with preschool aged children. The pieces helped develop fine motor skills, while children played with one another to build and create their very own zoo. Pieces worked well to extend other Duplo sets.

Jeepers Peepers™
Manufacturer: Super Duper® Publications
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: Grades K–5
Number of players: 2+
Website: http://www.superduperinc.com
MSRP: $39.95
This game is a fresh look at the 20 Question/What Am I? game. The first player puts on a pair of goofy glasses that hold a card only others can see and tries to guess what’s on the card by asking the other players a series of “yes” or “no” questions. It’s a fun way to learn how to ask good questions and sharpen problem-solving skills. The 5-year-olds in the group really got a big kick out of playing this game together.
honorable mentions

a. The Dog’s Meow
Manufacturer: Playroom Entertainment®
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: 6+
Number of Players: 2–5
Website: http://www.playroomentertainment.com
MSRP: $10.00

“This game is challenging and fun because you have to use your memory and answer using opposites.”
Here’s a card game that requires players to adjust to a backwards world where you have to think fast, remember opposites, and answer quickly to win.

b. Dado Planks
Manufacturer: Fat Brain Toy Co.®
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: 3+
Number of Players: 1 or more
Website: http://www.fatbraintoys.com
MSRP: $44.99

“At first I thought Dado Planks would be a rip-off but it ended up as the best toy ever!”
These brightly colored, notched planks can be used to create different structures and objects again and again.

c. ZIP-IT
Manufacturer: BananaGrams
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: 7+
Number of Players: 2
Website: http://www.bananagrams.com
MSRP: $14.95

Zip-It is like a fast-paced Scrabble game mixed with a crossword puzzle all efficiently put together in a travel pouch so you can play without pencil, paper, or gameboard. It’s a perfect way to fill waiting time!

d. Pathwords™
Manufacturer: ThinkFun
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: 12+
Number of Players: 1
Website: http://www.thinkfun.com
MSRP: $19.99

“Ever like word searches? Then here’s one-player puzzle that can blow your mind!”

Although this word search/logic/puzzle/Tetris-like game is listed for a single player, the puzzles are fun to solve with cooperative teams.

e. Double Duel™
Manufacturer: Learning Resources
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: 7+
Number of Players: 2–4
Website: http://www.learningresources.com
MSRP: $27.99

“If you are good with words, this is the game for you! I would totally buy this game with my own money!”

This challenging vocabulary game is based on sound-alike words.

f. 5 Second Rule®
Manufacturer: Patch Products
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: 10+
Number of Players: 3 or more
Website: http://www.patchproducts.com
MSRP: $24.99

“People who like to blur out will love this game, because they can do that and not get in trouble”
In five seconds, a player must name three things from the category on the drawn card. If not successful, the next player takes over but he or she cannot repeat the previous answers. It’s fast-paced fun, but not easy!

g. Celtic Challenge
Manufacturer: Find It! Games
Manufacturer’s Recommended Age: 8+
Number of Players: 1–2
Website: http://www.finditgames.com
MSRP: $40.00

“Try to figure out the best way to get all of the discs off the board in six rounds. I love Celtic Challenge!”
This attractive and easy-to-learn game can be played solo or with a partner. It takes a mix of strategy and luck to get as many tiles off the board as possible.

about National Association for Gifted Children

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) is an organization of teachers, educators, other professionals, and parents and community leaders who unite to address the unique needs of children and youth with demonstrated gifts and talents, as well as those children who may be able to develop their talent potential with appropriate educational experiences.

Well-informed parents do make a difference. Membership in NAGC is the best way for you to improve the future for gifted learners, especially your own! Visit www.nagc.org to find out more.

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For a PDF of the Toy List and to read more from the testers, visit http://www.nagc.org/php.aspx. On the NAGC website you’ll also find a Resource Directory with links to numerous toys, games, and programs for your high-ability learner.
In 2nd grade at Hamilton Avenue, we have been working on our study of figurative language. So far this year we have examined similes, metaphors, literal comparisons, analogies, and homonyms.

These pictures are from our Moon Study. We read a variety of poems that used figurative language to describe the moon. Many of the authors described the moon as: a cookie, a coin, or even a clock.

As a way to respond to our reading and show our deep understanding, we drew the scene that we were able to visualize thanks to these great comparisons.

After, we continued our moon study by reading the book *Owl Moon*. Here we examined how characters interact with a moon and examined these such as father/child relationships and silence.

Although we can trace mosaic making back to some 4000 years or more, it was the Ancient Greeks, in the 4th Century BC who raised mosaic making into an elaborate art form. They used precise geometric patterns of animals and often waves which makes sense in such culture like Greece, which resolves around the sea.
Glenville’s fourth grade Language Arts students are currently practicing telling the folktale "The Old Man and His Affectionate Son" using kamishibai. Kamishibai (紙芝居), literally means "paper drama". The story form originated in Japanese Buddhist monasteries in the 12th century, where monks used picture scrolls to tell stories with moral lessons to audiences that typically couldn’t read. Glenville’s students will perform their story for two kindergarten classes. The lesson? The elderly contribute their wisdom and experience to our communities. That wisdom should be recognized and valued.

Several 4th grade groups at Riverside worked collaboratively to create a demonstration of partial quotients and/or traditional long division algorithms. Student projects included stories, a rap and posters. **Hanna T. and Robert D.** are pictured with their poster.

Students worked in groups to create geometric designs using their geometry templates.
At New Lebanon School, the 5th grade Interdisciplinary Science class has been studying simple machines through the use of Lego constructions.

The class started by examining structures and forces of a general nature. Then we moved to an in-depth study of levers as a simple machine.

We watched Brainpop.com videos as an introduction to how these simple machines help us make work easier. We then started building a variety of structures, simple to more complex.
Students were asked to read a dystopian novel and complete one of four project choices: a book trailer, a powerpoint with research of how the points from the book can be found in our history, an original dystopian short story, or a book brochure.

Students worked in groups to create lessons to teach the conventions of commas and interjections, interruptions, adjectives, and clauses, subject-verb-predicate, run-ons, fragments, comma splices, semi colon, colon, and hyphen. They were responsible for having a mini lesson, a visual, and an interactive/differentiated guided activity.

Students wrote their own short story then worked in the computer lab to create a podcast, add related images and publish their digital story.