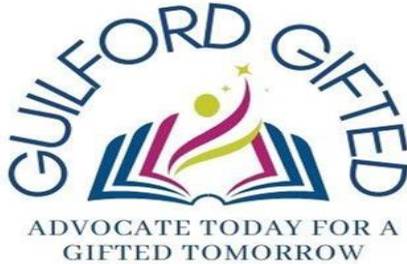


NEWS FROM THE ACADEMICALLY GIFTED DEPARTMENT

The Middle School Edition

Quarter 2

Join Guilford Gifted!



Website: <https://www.guilfordgifted.org/>

Guilford Gifted is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization supporting our community's brightest young minds with strong advocacy for the advancement of gifted education. We provide the tools to engage and empower all those involved with gifted children, thereby building tomorrow's leaders today. **It's FREE to join!**

School Contact:

Pamela Herndon, TAG Chair for JMS
(336) 819-2100 x 1130
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District Contact:

Kelly Woody, AG Coordinator
(336) 370-8322; woodyk@gcsnc.com

News From Our School:

In ELA, our students are all working on Module 2. This includes the following books:

Grade 6: THE BOY WHO HARNASSED THE WIND

Grade 7: PATIENT ZERO

Grade 8: THE OMNIVORE'S DILEMMA

Thank you to all who came out for our Curriculum Night in October and our Showcase/Student-Led Conference Night in November. We love family nights!

From the AG Department:

Scholarships Opportunities and Awards of Interest

The Cooke Young Scholars Program:

The Cooke Young Scholars Program is a selective five-year, pre-college scholarship for exceptionally promising 7th grade students with financial need. It provides comprehensive academic and college advising, as well as financial support for school, Cooke-sponsored summer programs, internships, and other learning enrichment opportunities. **Application opens on February 6th and closes on April 30th.**

Who can apply:

- Current 7th graders (in US) and will be in the US for high school
- Earned all As and Bs in core subjects (since the beginning of 6th grade)
- Demonstrate financial need (families with income up to \$95,000)

Direct questions to scholarships@jkcf.org

NCAGT Awards and Scholarships:

Each year, the NC Association for the Gifted and Talented recognizes outstanding contributions in the field of gifted education. Annual Awards and Scholarships are presented at the NCAGT Conference.

The deadline for all submissions is December 15, 2024. We strongly encourage students to apply!

See below for highlighted opportunities:

Student Scholarship Awards

Student Scholarship Awards are presented to students in grades 6-12 who are identified as gifted according to local guidelines. Scholarship money is awarded to support the recipient(s) with developing an original project which holds promise for advancement of learning or an instructional opportunity not available within a student's local school district. Parents/caregivers of the winner receive a complimentary parent membership in NCAGT for one year.

Additional award opportunities requiring a nomination:

- *Leadership Through Service Award*
- *Susan Keel Lamar Student Scholarship Award*
- *NCAGT Distinguished Student Award*

For more information on NCAGT scholarships and awards visit:

<https://www.ncagt.org/scholarships-grants-awards>

The Courage To Converse

Issue #2, November 2024

Adapted from: Orr, J. (2024). The Courage to Converse [Review of *The Courage to Converse*]. ASCD, 82(3).

How to embrace and prepare for challenging conversations

The Myth of Neutrality

Author Jennifer Orr believes we live in a culture where challenging conversations are necessary. She would see it with coworkers when they made shocking statements, and when current events often initiated heated debates in the workspace. While it is completely understandable for adults to sidestep these completely, in the long term, Orr theorizes that avoiding challenging conversations is likely harmful to not only ourselves, but to our children.

Orr, a veteran teacher, suggests that many educators believe remaining nonpolitical in the classroom is a key strategy for keeping these challenging conversations from happening at all. However, without even trying, teachers and the art of teaching are naturally political. For example, when a teacher chooses not to talk about Veteran's Day, this makes a statement. Another example is when a student asks about a famous person who used an offensive slur. If the student is dismissed rather than engaged in a conversation about this hot topic, then this act makes a statement, too.

When we don't discuss an issue, especially if a student asks about it, we're telling them there is something wrong with that issue or with even mentioning this issue.

The same situation can arise at home when a child asks why a particular family member is featured in the news for murky legal troubles. Does this initiate a dinner discussion on presumed innocence, moral code and the justice system or is the conversation awkwardly changed to a more lighthearted topic without ever revisiting the child's original question again? In other words, *not* doing something sends a message, just as clearly as *doing* something. When we don't discuss an issue, especially if a student asks about it, we're telling them there is something wrong with that issue or with even mentioning this issue.

Orr once studied experiments that psychologists conducted with children using the popular game, Guess Who. Younger children had no qualms asking questions about race to narrow down their choices in the game, but older children mostly in Grade 4 and Grade 5 avoided asking about the race of the figure to deduce an answer. As such, older children unlike their younger counterparts have somehow internalized that the topic of race should be avoided. Yet, if children stop asking questions on such challenging topics, then they are likely to forfeit many opportunities for deeper learning experiences.

Preparing for Difficult Dialogues

It is not surprising to Orr that parents and teachers avoid these conversations simply because sometimes they don't know how to respond in a way that will be helpful, thoughtful and meaningful. So, what are the ways in which we can be prepared to facilitate difficult dialogues with children?

Stay Informed

Keep up with local and national news

- Listen to National Public Radio (NPR) on the daily commute
- Follow reliable news sources on social media
- Talk with young adult children who can keep you informed about pop culture

Children are exposed to a variety of events and ideas. As such, it is important to maintain an awareness of what they are exposed to by their peers or other family members. This will place the adult in a better position to answer those challenging questions that may arise.

Practice Engaging in Challenging Discussions

Talk with another adult and young adults about the news you read and hear

- Agree. Disagree. Agree to Disagree in topical conversations
- Be open to different perspectives
- Pay attention to how others discuss topics both in the ways that you can imitate and in ways that you can avoid

Lead with Curiosity

Ask more questions than statements



- Instead of taking a stand, say, “*I wonder...*” aloud
- Ask, “*What does that make you think?*” or “*What else do you know about that topic?*”
- Make noncommittal sounds and statements such as, “*Hmm*”; “*Yes*”; and “*That’s really interesting.*”

Orr reemphasizes that learning happens on both sides when she remains curious, asks questions, and does not try to impart wisdom. This strategy allows for a judgment-free space to explore a variety of issues. Instead of feeling the pressure to have all of the answers, simply lean into your curiosity to navigate the uncharted waters of a challenging conversation.

Embracing the Challenge

The important thing to remember is that exploring and engaging in these conversations allows us to clarify our thoughts and introduces us to new perspectives. Our curiosity creates a space for us to better explore difficult topics together. Challenging conversations have tremendous power for people who enter into them with open minds.

In conclusion, just as we invest time and energy in planning for the known factors for our children, we can do the same to be ready for the unknown factors in unexpected, challenging conversations. As a result, this preparation can deepen and widen our learning experiences not only for our children, but for ourselves.