

“Deborah Holt: Workshops Choices with Sixth Grade Gifted Students”

My overarching theme in all my class projects with my students is that they will have the motivation and skills to be self-directed, lifelong learners. One of the Mississippi Department of Education gifted program evaluation standards is to implement flexible grouping. So, in keeping with this standard as well as keeping in mind the developmental level of middle school students in wanting more choices, I allow my students to have a greater voice in their gifted curriculum. Each semester, students are allowed to choose between four different “workshops” much like we, as adults, do when we go to conferences. Affording students the opportunity to completely immerse themselves in an area of giftedness or area of intense interest is considered a *Best Practice* in gifted education. Below are listed the units of study with a brief description of each:

*“Roller Coaster”- Students became true scientists as they worked to solve a scientific mystery. After working to solve the mystery, students became better prepared to conduct and understand scientific investigations. Finding contextual clues, forming hypotheses, performing experiments, and making conclusions were all part of the fun of figuring out the park's puzzling problems. Multiple unit extension ideas were offered that utilized communication, problem-solving, and drama skills. At the conclusion of this study, students created and presented their roller coasters to the 6th grade science class with detailed explanation of several physics of motion concepts and terms. Gifted process skills used were: critical thinking, creative problem solving, creativity, interdisciplinary connections to science benchmarks, group dynamics, leadership, and communication. Students utilized rubrics in building their roller coasters, as well as keeping a Science Journal each week to document scientific findings. (DOK Levels 2,3,4)





Grade 6 gifted students conducting experiments, working on planning their roller coaster, building the roller coaster from paper towel tubes, and presenting the roller coaster and explaining physics terms to grade 6 science students.

*"Code Blue"- Students participated in a medical unit in which they simulated a medical clinic. Students signed up to be a specialist such as: gastroenterologist, neurologist, pulmonologist, cardiologist, orthopedic surgeon, or infectious disease specialist. Students researched their appropriate body system and then prepared a presentation to teach the medical clinic members. Students must then pass Board Exams and a physiology test. After all students within each medical clinic pass Boards, they then have simulated medical emergencies in which they must respond. During Grand Rounds, we invited Nurse Karen Dykes, R.N., and Nurse Melody Brooks, R.N. to visit as guest speakers and to evaluate group medical presentations. This workshop utilized gifted process skills such as: communication, group dynamics, leadership, critical thinking, creative problem solving, self-directed learning, research, and interdisciplinary connections to National Science Standards Content Standard C: Life Science Structure and Function in Living Systems and Content Standard F: Science in Personal and Social Perspectives Personal Health; NCTE Standards for the English Language Arts:

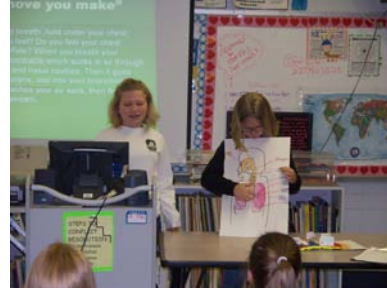
Standard 4: Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

Standard 5: Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

Standard 8: Students use a variety of technological and informational resources to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

Standard 12: Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes.

(DOK Levels 2,3,4)



Grade 6 gifted students presenting their medical specialty area to the medical clinic (top pictures) and medical clinic presentations with simulated patient with Nurses Melody Brooks, R.N. and Karen Dykes, R.N. (bottom pictures).

*Thursday's Team "Newspaper"- Students created a newsletter for the Long Beach Association of Gifted Children. These students learned how to create a newspaper and used those skills to create a newsletter for the families of gifted students throughout our district. Mentorship for this project was offered by Leigh Anne Biggs, Long Beach School District Public Relations. Leigh Anne has a degree in journalism and shared her personal academic journey with students, as well as demonstrating how to put a newsletter together. Students who chose this workshop are gifted writers, so many may potentially desire a future career path much like Leigh Anne's career. Students utilized gifted process skills of communication, goal setting and task commitment, organization skills, self-directed learning, group dynamics, leadership, social awareness, and interdisciplinary connections to language arts benchmarks. Students greatly utilized rubrics and checklists throughout this project to aid in the creation of the newsletter (DOK Levels 2,3,4)





The Gifted Bearcat Times staff interviewing gifted students and teachers throughout the Long Beach School District. These students were part of the “Newspaper” workshop.

*Friday's Team “World War II”- Students who signed up for this unit of study had the opportunity to study World War II events such as the Holocaust, D-Day, and the dropping of the atom bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Students in this workshop created a “World War II Journey in Time” journal in which they wrote the journal in first person after using primary and secondary sources in research. Students chose a World War II person of their choice in which to depict in their journal. The journal afforded students the first opportunity of writing a research paper in which they researched information from many sources, synthesized information to write information in their own words without plagiarism, and provided a bibliography. Students also visited history classes in character to present their World War II journal person. Students utilized research, writing, and oral speaking rubrics to help with the success of this project. Gifted process skills used were: communication, critical thinking skills, leadership, research, social awareness, and interdisciplinary connections to National Social Studies standards, as well as state benchmarks (DOK Levels 2,3,4).



Grade 6 gifted student portrays Sonia Frankel, Holocaust survivor



Student portraying Dwight D. Eisenhower



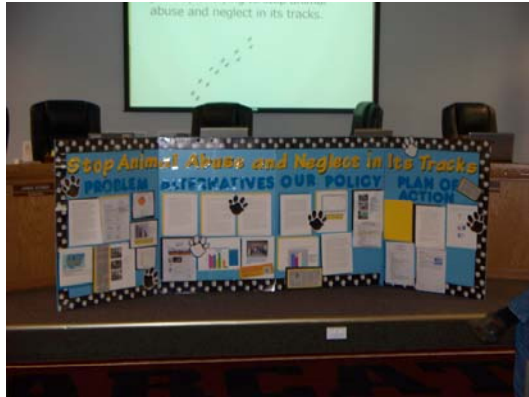
Student portrayed Erwin Rommel



World War II workshop students presented various personalities from the World War II era to grade 6 social studies classes.

*Project Citizen: A program of the Center for Civic Education, encourages students to identify and solve school and community problems while learning how to monitor and influence public policy. Students identified animal rescue as a possible workshop choice second semester. The project evolved into a Project Citizen in which students wanted to initiate policy change regarding animals. My students' project, "Stop Animal Abuse and Neglect in Its Tracks" utilized the gifted process skill of creative problem solving in the highest level. Project Citizen is also a recognized Depth of Knowledge Level 4 activity, and utilizes National Social Studies standards. My greatest joy in this project was seeing the high level of motivation and enthusiasm my students had for the opportunity of "having a voice." My students realized that they could truly make a difference. Having my students identify the problem, examine three alternatives or solutions to the problem, create a policy, and develop a plan of action was the essence of creative problem solving. My students had opportunities to prepare research, create surveys, graph survey results, and presented these results to the Long Beach City Council and Long Beach School Board in April, 2010. Presenting to an authentic audience where these students could truly make a difference is what the gifted program is all about! Gifted process skills used in this workshop were: communication, thinking skills (critical thinking and creative problem solving), group dynamics, social awareness, leadership, and interdisciplinary connections to social studies benchmarks.





Long Beach Middle School Excel students in the Animal Rescue Project Citizen workshop group working on research, tallying surveys, examining alternatives to the problem, interviewing Officer Cindy Hodges, covering panels, and presenting to the Long Beach School Board. These are all “behind the scenes” photos of the process. See additional photos under the Project Citizen heading under “Projects.”

*”Food Network Stars” In this workshop, students utilize morphological analysis to create a new Food Network star. Morphological analysis, developed by scientist Fritz Zwicky, involves attribute listing in a matrix, and making as many combinations as possible. Students researched current Food Network stars, or past chefs (e.g. Julia Child) and listed the characteristics of several. After analyzing several combinations, students invented a “new star.” By having a fun way to utilize this process, students learned a valuable tool which could help them in future creative thinking endeavors. According to Dr. Sally Reis at the MAGC Conference in September, 2009, educators from China (15 year old students rank 1st in student performance worldwide in math, 2nd in science, 7th in reading) visited The Neag Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development at the University of Connecticut. They wanted to know what we as gifted educators in the United States do for our students with creativity. They stated that even though their students outperform U.S. students in math, reading, and science, their students lack creativity. Creative thinking skills are the ones which will help find the cure for cancer, find the solution to the oil spill crisis, and even find new inventions to make our everyday lives more convenient. In addition to using gifted process skills of creativity, students also used skills such as: communication, leadership, research, self-directed learning, and interdisciplinary connections to language arts benchmarks.



*Powerpuff Chefs
create some delicious fried dessert*



*Double Bubbles made some wonderful
dessert pizza*



*Chef Aderhin and Chef Antonio cook
up some spicy chicken wings*



*Students make chicken and dumplings
after performing a skit*