



Anderson School Newsletter

A publication of the Anderson School for the Gifted & Talented
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A MESSAGE FROM MRS. ANDERSON

These last few months have been among the most rewarding and exciting I have faced since the school was conceptualized nearly ten years ago. I have received many calls and messages regarding the school and our plans for next year. You have expressed your strong support for the Anderson School and wished us continued success. I thank you all for your support and enthusiasm and assure you that Dr. Anderson and I are personally committed to keeping this school as a safe haven for gifted and talented children.

The programs put into place to inspire children to learn have been met with tremendous success. The innovative higher level thinking skills, games and activities have instilled a keen understanding of the importance of contemplation and concentration in the everyday lives of our children. Such intellectual endeavors help to restore an awareness of the vibrancy of life so often missing.

As our planning for next year unfolds, we remain committed to a measured and slow expansion of the school to enable us to maintain a special emphasis upon high quality education specifically designed to enhance opportunities for gifted and talented children.

Thank you for your continued support and encouragement.

LeVonna Anderson

COMMUNITY THEATER - AN ADVENTURE FOR ALL

The Wizard of Oz proved to be an adventure as well as an extended theater unit for all of our students. Every one took part in this Fort Worth Theater production at the Scott Theater. Three students auditioned and received acting roles. Two worked as ushers and assisted anywhere else they were needed. Regardless of whether they were on stage or behind (or in front of) the scenes, everyone had an important role to play. We learned that it takes a concerted team effort from everyone involved in order to put together a successful theatrical production. Adhering to the philosophy that the world around us is our classroom, the play became more than words on a page. Our school is committed to involving every student in community theater productions.

HOW DOES THIS SCHOOL DIFFER FROM OTHERS ?

This is a question often asked by prospective students and their parents. There are significant differences. The most notable lie within the philosophical realm of how gifted children are perceived as learners and how they are taught.

Learning Cycles

Academically talented children normally learn in *one or two exposures to new knowledge* (learning cycles) and quickly become bored with redundancy. This boredom often results in a significant loss of focus and motivation. We uphold the expectation that students will

learn in one or two learning cycles. Any other standard would be considered remedial.

Pacing

Precocious children can assimilate knowledge at a prodigious rate and are therefore provided with *fast paced curriculums*. The reduction of redundancy and rapid acceleration through the curriculums are accomplished through frequent pre and post testing. Our students test out of what they know and spend their time studying knowledge they have not mastered.

Curriculum Compacting

In addition, *the curriculums are compacted* (insignificant and repetitive information is eliminated). Special components such as "Cultural Literacy" are integrated to provide a synthesis of the knowledge that is genuinely vital to success in life.

Grades

Traditional grades, which have proven harmful to the self esteem of many children and communicate little regarding what has been learned, are never given. A *continuous progress assessment profile* is provided in lieu of grades.

Level of Mastery

A related but significant difference is the *level of mastery* required for the notation of academic progress. Our minimum acceptable level is ninety percent (90%) not the traditional seventy percent. This high level of expectation provides assurance that students will be challenged and that they know the subject matter.

Self Paced Placement

Our students are not placed into one administratively convenient grade level. They are self-paced and place themselves by virtue of their achievements into different levels of difficulty in different subjects. A student may be in ninth grade grammar, seventh grade math and eighth grade science and be ten years of age.

Daily Syllabus

An *individual syllabus* of required activities and study is prepared for each student on a daily basis. It focuses each student to the specific learning expectations we have for him/her.

Homework

Homework is not required unless, in rare instances, a student does not finish the syllabus in class. This encourages students to finish class assignments and provides time at home for family activities, after school sports and other extracurricular events, hobbies and personal projects.

Outside Reading

One hour of uninterrupted time is required for the completion of outside reading. During this time, parents are expected to read to or with their children on a daily basis and students may pursue sustained silent reading.

Class Size

Classes are limited to no more than 12 students. In practical terms, it is not possible to attend to the individual needs of highly able children in a larger group setting. A highly personalized and individualized curriculum dictates small classes, dynamic interpersonal relations, and close associations with all students.

Honor System

The *honor system* is employed at the Anderson School. Students often proctor their own examinations and record their own achievements.

Lifetime Skills

Lifelong entertainment skills are taught in lieu of sports that enable children to become only spectators in their adult lives. These skills include shuffleboard,

badminton, archery, tetherball, horseshoes, volleyball and golf.

Music

Instruction in *playing a musical instrument* is required and is restricted to an instrument that can reasonably be expected to be played during the adult life time of the student. String instruments such as the violin, guitar and mandolin, along with piano, keyboard and the organ are encouraged.

Thinking Skills

Higher level thinking skills are systematically integrated within the curriculums and even during breaks. Formal programs include Philosophy for Children, C.O.R.T. and Junior Great Books. Other activities include: the daily study of analogies, red herrings, daily analysis of current events using the newspaper in education program, tangrams and enjoying *cognitive games* such as chess, magic and other approved computer and board games that make thinking fun.

Animal Friends

Loving and caring for *our animal friends* is a daily pastime for students. Our petting zoo is home to Peaches (a Nigerian dwarf goat) along with several silkie and langshan chickens. Inside we keep Iggy the Iguana, along with numerous fish, hamsters, cockatiels, guinea pigs, finches, button quail, two lovely (need we say more) ducks and one lonely gerbil (sadly, his mate has passed on). These friends are our companions as we travel down the byways of academia.

Autonomous Learning

Our School utilizes the *Autonomous Learner Model* created by Dr. George Betts. It has been adapted and provides a framework within which the school structures curriculum components. The goal of the model is to facilitate the growth of students as independent, self-directed learners. This is done within the cognitive, emotional and social domains. Children need an opportunity to pursue their own interests and passions to whatever depth they desire and they are encouraged to do

so. As the unique and varied needs of gifted and talented children are met, they develop into autonomous learners with the ability to be responsible for their own learning.

Motivation

The difference, which make the most difference, is motivation. The attitude of a child must be turned positive prior to the onset of any meaningful learning. Most of what we do at the Anderson School is directly focused upon *motivating our students*. We realize that little learning will be meaningful or lasting if it is not a direct result of the excitement, anticipation and joy that comes from looking forward to new adventures. Learning can become a very natural by-product of the joy we find in living. But the joy must be a naturally occurring event in the daily lives we live.

Weekly Study Trips

Tangible degrees of motivation are provided with *weekly study (field) trips*, weather permitting. These enable us to provide meaningful enrichment that expands our classrooms into their real world as we investigate our vast community resources.

Daily Incentives

Numerous additional incentives are provided throughout each day which inculcate short term motivational bias (you would be amazed what children can accomplish for a fruit rollup).

Celebrations

Special events and holidays are truly a cause to be celebrated and elaborated upon. And our curriculums takes advantage of naturally occurring events (such as the landing of the space shuttle) and the special talents of every person willing to share their special gifts with us (be it chessmaster, gardener, historical re-enactor or storyteller).

Early College Entrance

Our goal is to rapidly prepare each student to successfully take college entrance examinations and prepare them for early admission to a college or university of choice.