

"The legislature finds that, for highly capable students, access to accelerated learning and enhanced instruction IS access to a BASIC education."

# HI CAP NEWS



Climb every mountain!

## THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP: POTENTIAL UNFULFILLED

**Students from poverty and of color are not the only ones whose potential is slipping through the cracks.**

As educators and parents, we naturally want ALL children to grow and blossom into their full potential. It is offensive to us when we see a young child's future being stymied by poverty, prejudice, or lack of opportunity. We hope to set up our educational systems to overcome such barriers.

But sometimes barriers are accidentally put in the way of highly capable students, too. We group students by age, not by what they are ready to learn next. This "one size fits all" mindset would be like saying that every 16 year old must wear a size 7 shoe. This might be a perfect fit for some, but for some it might be too small (ouch!) or for some it might be too big (causing them to trip and fall).

And sometimes we group students in what we consider the "kindest," most "egalitarian" way: heterogeneously. That is, for group

projects the teacher might assign one advanced, two average, and one struggling learner to a group. The concept is that the advanced learner can help the others learn. However, as I recently overheard, "Unless they are on the payroll, it is not the gifted child's job to teach the others." They deserve time to work on fulfilling their own potential, not others'.

NAGC (The National Association for Gifted Children) has many position papers that distill educational research regarding advanced level learners. One, on grouping, says the following: "Grouping gifted children is one of the foundations of exemplary gifted education practice. The research on the many grouping strategies available to educators of these children is long, consistent, and overwhelmingly positive (Rogers, 2006; Tieso, 2003). Nonetheless, the (CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)



**"Grouping is a vehicle educators can use to allow gifted children access to learning at the level and complexity they need." (Lawless, 1998; Rogers, 2006; Tieso, 2003)**

## “Potential,” Continued from page 1

‘press’ from general educators, both teachers and administrators, has been consistently less supportive. Myths abound that grouping these children damages the self-esteem of struggling learners, creates an ‘elite’ group who may think too highly of themselves, and is actually undemocratic and, at times, racist. *None of these statements have any founding in actual research*, but the arguments continue decade after decade.” (Fiedler, Lange, & Winebrenner, 2002)

In fact, according to NAGC, “Grouping can also help to simplify already overburdened teachers’ lives by allowing them to focus more on the specific talent development needs they encounter...” This allows teachers to facilitate growth in ALL learners so NO ONE falls through the cracks.

For more information on ability grouping research, please go to <http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=4450>.

### Support group may form

The parents of gifted children face unique issues. Their children face unique issues. It isn’t always easy when your brain is wired differently. There are pros and cons to being an “outlier.” To help navigate these waters, it’s nice to know someone else going through it, too! Please contact Kari DeMarco at 662-9047 or [demarco.k@mail.wsd.wednet.edu](mailto:demarco.k@mail.wsd.wednet.edu), if you would be willing to start a Hi Cap support group.

## K-3 Transition Team meets

A group of 12 teachers, 3 administrators, and 2 parents has been meeting to discuss the nature and needs of highly capable kids. They’ve also been bandying about the research on how to identify and serve primary grade HC students.

Their work is ongoing at the moment, and they would welcome any parent and staff input as they adjust to the new WACs surrounding highly capable education.

If you are interested in reading what the WACs are, go to <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=392-170>.

If you wish to provide input as to how Wenatchee School District should morph its services for advanced learners, please call (662-9047) or email Kari DeMarco, Highly Capable Program Coordinator, at [demarco.k@mail.wsd.wednet.edu](mailto:demarco.k@mail.wsd.wednet.edu).

### Checkout library at District Office

For parents of the gifted, we have many books available. Some topics are book lists for advanced readers, helping the twice-exceptional (gifted plus ADHD or another learning disability), dealing with overly sensitive emotions, etc.

For teachers of the gifted, we have info on curriculum compacting, cluster grouping, differentiation, materials for “the kids who finish early,” etc. Please contact Kari DeMarco for help accessing these materials: 662-9047.



“Genius without education is like silver in the mine.”  
-Benjamin Franklin

### Important HiCap dates

- March 7** = 5th grade Math is Cool, Foothills Middle School, 3:30
- March 17** = Deadline to pay for AP exams
- March 20** = Newsroom Envision Expo, 6:30 pm in WHS New Commons
- March 22** = Celebration of Talent, Spokane, a conference for gifted students, their parents, and their teachers. <http://prodigynw.org/celebration-of-talent-conference/>
- April 11/12** = Studio culminating event, PUD Auditorium
- April 21** = final deadline for WHS seniors to turn in their Academic Challenge materials to the Career Center
- April 18** = 4th grade Math is Cool, Foothills Middle School, 3:30
- May 5-16** = AP testing for WHS students
- May 22** = Visionscape, a celebration of Directed Study work, 6:30 pm in WHS New Commons. Public is welcome.

## WSD Highly Capable Programs Mission:

To find and nurture talent in students by providing and supporting opportunities for them to pursue their interests at an appropriate pace and level of complexity, and regular opportunities to work with students of similar abilities.

### Quotable quote:

*“Failure to help the handicapped child reach his potential is a personal tragedy for him and his family. Failure to help the gifted child reach his potential is a societal tragedy, the extent of which is difficult to measure, but which is surely great. How can we measure the sonata unwritten, the curative drug undiscovered, the absence of political insight? They are the difference between what we are, and where we could be, as a society.” --Dr. James Gallagher*

### Helpful websites to check out:

Ours! <http://home.wsd.wednet.edu/?q=content/highly-capable-hicap-new-name-enrichment>  
[www.hoagiesgifted.org](http://www.hoagiesgifted.org)  
[www.sengifted.org](http://www.sengifted.org)  
[www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org)  
[www.waeta.net](http://www.waeta.net)  
[giftedkids.about.com](http://giftedkids.about.com)