

Virginia Association  
for the Gifted

# Newsletter

Summer 2010

Virginia Association for the Gifted

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## VAG Newsletter Goes Green Starting This Fall

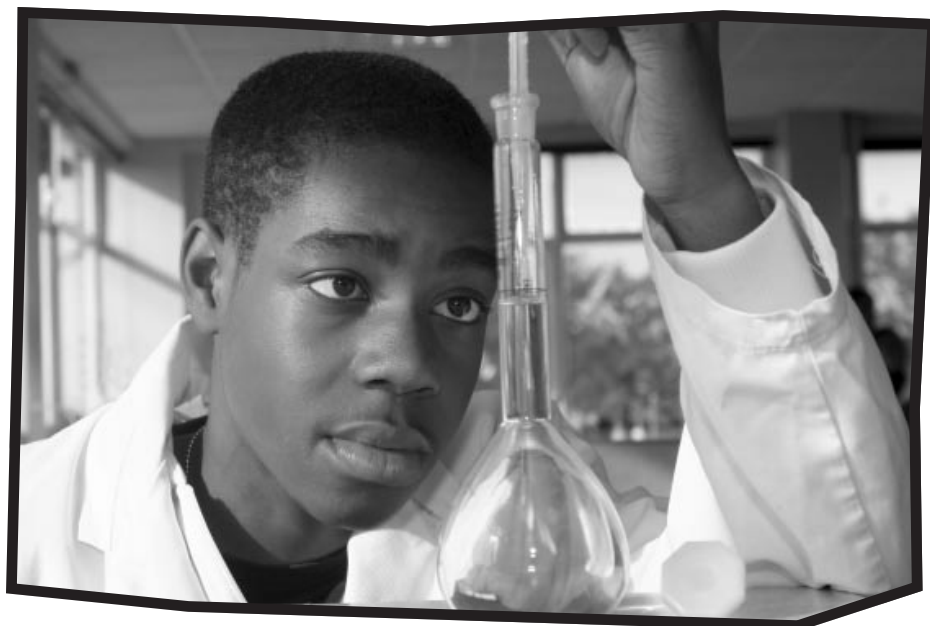
With the Fall 2010 issue of the Newsletter,  
VAG will post the Newsletter online  
but will not print and mail each issue.

Each quarter you will receive an email notice  
that the Newsletter is available for reading or  
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**Reach Each Star, VAG's Fall Seminar on Gifted Education  
Session and Registration Details Inside – Pages 11-15**

The Equity Alliance at Arizona State University is one of 10 regional Equity Assistance Centers in the U.S. that are funded by the U.S. Department of Education to support the work of the Office of Civil Rights and the Department of Justice in enforcing federal civil rights laws. While the efforts of the Office of Civil Rights have improved educational opportunities for formerly excluded and marginalized students, there is still much work to be done to address achievement gaps and to ensure that all students are provided with high-quality education (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higareda, 2005; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Klingner, Méndez Barletta, & Hoover, 2008; Losen & Orfield, 2002).



## Where Are All the Students of Color in Gifted Education?

by Kathleen A. King, Elizabeth B. Kozleski, and Kimberly Lansdowne

*Note: This article first appeared in the May/June 2009 issue of Principal. It is reprinted here with permission from the National Association of Elementary School Principals ([www.naesp.org](http://www.naesp.org)).*

Many principals across the U.S., working with regional assistance centers like the Equity Alliance, are presently engaged in exploring and improving the quality of learning opportunities for students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD). The need for such work has been recognized in the fields of special and gifted education.

While most concerns lie with the disproportionately higher number of CLD students who are placed in special education, there are also concerns about the underrepresentation of CLD students who are identified as gifted. For instance, while black students made up 7.4 percent of the total school enrollment in California in 2007 (California Department of Education, 2008c), they accounted for 22 percent of all students identified as emotionally disturbed (California Department of Education, 2008b), and only 4.13 percent of those in gifted and talented educational

programming (California Department of Education, 2008a). On the contrary, white students, who made up 28.5 percent of the total student enrollment, accounted for 41.7 percent of gifted and talented enrollment (California Department of Education, 2008c, 2008a).

### *An Unmet Need*

The field of gifted education in the United States, much like special education, is grounded in beliefs that some students demonstrate a need for specialized education that, historically and currently, has not been provided in U.S. public schools. Special and gifted education scholars and practitioners alike recognize that opportunities to learn need to be improved so that all students have equitable educational access and participation. Yet, as principals strive to achieve this goal, they often experience tensions around: the purpose, scope, and location of the education they provide; the preparation of teachers for an increasingly diverse student population; and determining the extent to which the needs for specialized instruction create educational fields separate from general education.

Although specific federal mandates (i.e., the Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act of 2004; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act) provide some guidance for addressing the needs of students with disabilities, there are no similar mandates for gifted education services.

### *Recruitment and Retention*

Ford, Grantham, and Whiting (2008) note that black, Hispanic, and Native American students have always been under-represented in gifted education, and that this under-representation has increased over time for black students in particular (Ford, 1998). Principals can confront this issue by:

- Addressing lower expectations of CLD students through professional learning and teacher preparation that is grounded in multicultural and culturally responsive pedagogy and practice. The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems has many tools principals can use.
- Adopting culturally responsive definitions of giftedness, explicitly acknowledging that giftedness occurs across gender and cultural, linguistic, and income groups. Principals should work with district administrators, school psychologists, and classroom teachers to examine the current definitions of giftedness and work to ensure these definitions convey that giftedness is found in students of all backgrounds and life experiences.
- Broadening definitions of giftedness to include those students who under-achieve as well as those who achieve at or above comparison groups. Giftedness should not be reserved only for those students who are achieving high grades or test scores.

### *Web Resources*

- The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems provides many resources for principals, such as professional learning modules and rubrics for assessing culturally responsive practices in districts and schools. [www.nccrest.org](http://www.nccrest.org)
- Access the Javits Gifted Characteristics Checklist for Underrepresented Students. <https://www.azed.gov/asd/gifted/downloads/Project%20BrightHorizon-GiftedCharacteristicsChecklist.pdf>
- The Web site of the Equity Alliance at ASU is a clearinghouse for students, families, and educators of all roles who are concerned with attaining equitable educational systems. [www.equityallianceasu.org](http://www.equityallianceasu.org)

# *New strategies are opening gifted programs to culturally and linguistically diverse students.*

- Building systemic evaluation of under-representation of CLD students into evaluation of all gifted education programs and services. Principals should continuously assess, on a year-to-year basis, the racial, ethnic, gender, and linguistic demographics of students accessing gifted instructional programming, as compared with the demographics of all students.

### *One District's Mission*

In our work at the Equity Alliance, in conjunction with the National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems and the National Institute for Urban School Improvement, we have examined the efforts of local school districts that are addressing the problem of under-representation of CLD students identified as gifted and talented. One such district is Scottsdale, Arizona.

In 2004, the Scottsdale Unified School District discovered large discrepancies between the racial and ethnic demographics of the overall student population and the demographics of the student population in gifted education programs at its Title 1 schools. While white students represented only 38 percent of the overall population, they made up 72 percent of those in the gifted education program. Conversely,

Latino students represented 50 percent of the overall population, yet made up only 14 percent of the gifted student population. Under the direction of Kimberly Lansdowne, director of gifted student services, the district began a three-year action research project to determine ways to identify CLD students who qualified for gifted learning programs (Lansdowne, 2008).

As a first step, the district systematically distributed teachers who were qualified in both gifted education and teaching English-language learners to its five Title 1 schools. In all of its schools, the district developed and implemented curriculum that was culturally responsive, paying special attention to Latino students.

Next, the district looked more closely at the methods used to identify and recruit students for the gifted education program and compared those methods against criteria for culturally responsive assessment, including ways that students demonstrated their knowledge, learning, and talents. The district began using the Javits Gifted Characteristics Checklist for Underrepresented Students as part of its process of assessing multiple criteria in order to create a "thick picture" (Castellano, 2003) of students' skills and abilities. This checklist moves beyond collecting evidence of individual academic achievement in school settings by focusing also on students' abilities to work collaboratively in groups, to question and challenge routine procedures, and to relate well to peers and adults in informal settings and with informal language.

Consequently, more students from CLD backgrounds were selected for gifted and talented development opportunities and were provided with supplemental learning experiences, including field trips to museums and science/nature centers. Families became involved by participating in open houses, family game nights, and Parent University, which addressed topics

*(continued on page 4)*

# Students of Color

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related to characteristics of gifted learners and how to address students' strengths and needs.

A survey of May 2008 data showed a 357 percent increase of gifted students identified, and of this impressive increase Latino students accounted for the largest percentage of gain. Currently, the ethnic population of Scottsdale's gifted programs more closely mirrors the ethnic population of the district's Title 1 schools. For example, white students account for 40 percent of

the overall Title 1 school population, and make up 41 percent of the gifted student population. Latino students represent 47 percent of the school population and make up 41 percent of the gifted student population.

## *A Focus on Giftedness*

A focus on giftedness and finding student strengths is a powerful strategy for discovering and encouraging the development of the multicultural assets that students bring with them to school. As teachers gain more confidence in using the self-directed strategies often employed

in gifted education programs, principals will find teachers transferring those strategies and approaches to everyday practice in their classrooms. It will be important to examine how an emphasis on gifted instruction changes referrals to special education as well as to gifted education.

The representation of CLD students in gifted education is just one area of focus within a much larger mission of creating equitable access and participation in instruction and pedagogy that is matched to students' strengths and needs. Principals should contact their regional Equity Assistance Center for strategies that can provide equity for CLD students in their gifted programs.

## About the Authors

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## Editor's Note

As you can see from your front page, the VAG Newsletter is going green! Starting with our next issue, our content will be available only online. Although this will be a new format for us, the money and paper we save will help both our budget and the environment.

Our lead article comes to us from *Principal* magazine – Where are all the students of color in gifted education? This article provides current research and a fresh perspective on this critical issue in gifted education. Our second article focuses on tips and strategies to motivate adolescent gifted learners just in time for those of our readers who are preparing to head back to the classroom or have children who are ready to head back to school.

This issue also provides you with all the information you need about this year's VAG Seminar, *Reach Each Star*. The seminar schedule has quite a bit to offer, so be sure to take a look. Also in this issue, we introduce our new VAG Officers.

As a reminder, we are always looking for newsletter content. I am always excited to meet a parent who's interested in writing a piece for the Parental Pundit column or teacher with an interesting class project to share. We are also looking for gifted students to offer their point-of-view to our audience. So, if you know of any gifted students who might be interested in writing about life from their perspective, please contact me. Remember, we need your contributions to guide our content.



Stephanie K. Ferguson

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# Letter from the Executive Director

The VAG Board of Directors has made an important decision to “go green” with the VAG newsletter. This is the last mailed newsletter you will receive. The newsletter will continue to be published four times a year and will be posted on the VAG website: [www.vagifted.org](http://www.vagifted.org). You may view back issues and this issue online. If you have not received seminar information by email, it means we don't have a working email address for you. Please update your email address by sending your name and email address to: [vagifted@comcast.net](mailto:vagifted@comcast.net). We will notify you when the newsletter is available for viewing as well as sending you other important announcements. Stay in the loop by making sure we have your current email address.



We are excited about bringing you a great VAG Seminar, *Reach Each Star*. We are looking forward to hearing from Dr. Donna Ford, Professor of Education and Human Development at Vanderbilt University and all the other seminar presenters. Make sure you register early and come to the Newport News Marriott City Center, October 17-18, 2010. Read about the seminar in this newsletter. You may register for the seminar and pay your membership on-line with a credit card. You may also make your hotel reservation on-line. Go to: [www.vagifted.org](http://www.vagifted.org) and click on the conference button for all the information about the seminar.

In order to receive the member's rate, your membership must be a current. If you are unsure about your membership status, please check the label on this newsletter or email me, [vagifted@comcast.net](mailto:vagifted@comcast.net), and I will check it for you. If you are not a current member, you may still get the member rate by sending the membership form along with your dues and registration. Also, please include your e-mail address so we can confirm receipt of your registration.

One of the goals of VAG is to provide more opportunities and resources for parents. In an effort to address this goal, VAG is offering a special registration of only \$25 for parents for the Sunday afternoon presentation by Dr. Donna Ford, Addressing the Issues of Under-representation Among Black, Hispanic, and Low-Income Students. This offer is only available to parents and may not be used with any other seminar registration. Use this opportunity to encourage members of local advisory committees and interested parents to learn more about the needs of gifted learners. Parents may register on-line.

Contact us if you have questions.

Liz Nelson

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## Gifted Students of Color – References (continued from page 4)

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# President's Letter

As the newly elected president of VAG, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to serve a broader audience and to lead such an important organization.



In this climate of budget cuts and fiscal challenges, the role of VAG as an advocate for gifted education becomes more critical than ever. In my own role as coordinator of a very large and diverse district, my focus has been on ensuring high quality curriculum for gifted learners and providing access to students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds. Over the next two years, I would like to work with you to build bridges of communication with a wide range of educational partners in order to be sure that every child who has the capacity to succeed at an advanced level will have the opportunity.

One occasion to do this is the fall seminar, *Reach Each Star* with its focus on underrepresented populations of gifted learners. Please reach out and invite colleagues and partners in special education, those who work with English Language Learners, and general education teachers, to attend and learn together so that we can find and serve students who have historically lacked access to the exciting educational opportunities that gifted education has to offer.

John Dewey once wrote, “What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy” (Dewey, 1907). These words highlight the critical role that gifted education can play in today's schools. As we continue to strengthen the curriculum and instruction that is offered to gifted learners, let's take time to share and collaborate with our educational colleagues and work together to ensure that every child has access to an education that inspires them to pursue and achieve their passions, their interests, and their ultimate life goals.

Carol Horn

# VAG Introduces New Officers for 2010-2012

VAG welcomed six new officers at our April board meeting – Carol Horn, Kelly Hedrick, Kevin Simms, Raye Tupper, Allison Sheppard and Pam Flaherty.

Thanks to Judy Williams, Catherine Brighton and Cynthia Carmine for their many years of service on the board. In addition to new officers, several new

members have joined the Board of Directors.

Thanks to everyone who volunteers time to serve our organization.



**Carol Horn, *President***

Dr. Carol V. Horn is coordinator of Advanced Academic Programs for Fairfax County Public Schools in Northern Virginia. She has worked in gifted education for the past 20 years and is a National Board Certified Teacher. Carol has a Master of Education in Educational Psychology with an Emphasis on Gifted from the University of Virginia and a doctorate in Teacher Preparation and Special Education from The George Washington University. She is the 2002 recipient of the Hollingsworth Award from the National Association for Gifted Children for outstanding research study in the field of gifted education. Dr. Horn has worked extensively to develop and implement the Young Scholars model, a comprehensive approach to finding and nurturing advanced academic potential in young learners from underrepresented populations through ongoing professional development, collaboration, and teacher leadership. She was recently awarded the first Outstanding Leader Award by the Center of Gifted Education at the College of William and Mary.

**Kelly Hedrick, *President-Elect***

Dr. Kelly A. Hedrick is Director of Gifted Education and Academy Programs with Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS). Dr. Hedrick entered the field of gifted education in 1989 as a gifted center-based teacher in Fairfax County Public Schools. In 1992, she earned a master's degree in Educational Psychology, Gifted Education from the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia. Dr. Hedrick joined VBCPS in 1994 as an advanced English and social studies teacher at Salem MS where she was named Teacher of the Year in 1996-1997. She became the gifted resource teacher at Salem MS before joining the Office of Gifted Education in 2000 as a Teacher Specialist. In 2001, Dr. Hedrick was named Coordinator, Gifted Programs where she oversaw specialized programs for the gifted and talented K-12. In 2005, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) honored her with the NAGC Doctoral Student Award for outstanding scholarship in the gifted education field. In 2007, Dr. Hedrick took over as director overseeing K-12 gifted programs and all academy and advanced academic programs in VBCPS.

Dr. Hedrick earned her Ed.D. in Educational Psychology, Gifted Education from the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia graduating in 2008.



**Kevin Simms, *Vice President***

Kevin Simms is currently the gifted coordinator in Salem Virginia. After serving nine years in the U.S. Navy, he entered teaching as a middle school math teacher. He has worked with every level of student designing programs that will challenge and motivate them to perform at their highest potential. Creativity, problem solving, abstract thinking and an appreciation for looking at ideas and concepts from a different perspective have always been at the heart of every lesson or program he has developed. Kevin is a T3 regional presenter for Texas Instruments and travels in the summer to various conferences teaching teachers how to incorporate technology into their curriculum.



## Raye Tupper, *Secretary*



Raye Tupper has been a professional educator for 31 years, serving in five school divisions as elementary teacher, elementary and middle school assistant principal, elementary principal and central office administrator. She is currently beginning her fifth year as Instructional Coordinator for Advanced Programs and Fine Arts for Fauquier County Public Schools. She earned her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Longwood College, and her Education Specialist degree and gifted endorsement from the University of Virginia. Raye is an active member and current Secretary of the Northern Virginia Council for Gifted/Talented Education.

Throughout her years and in all of her roles, Raye has been focused on meeting students' needs. She has had several good mentors, but her primary inspiration regarding the needs of gifted students came from a former principal and a young student. The principal offered this simple but profound bit of advice: "Good teachers don't teach children what they already know." The youngster, nervously anticipating first grade, said to her, "I hope it isn't too easy. It's not fun when it's too easy."

## Allison Sheppard, *Treasurer*



Allison A. Sheppard is the Coordinator of Gifted Services in Spotsylvania County. She has worked in the field of gifted education for the past 13 years. Allison has a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from George Mason University and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Gifted Education Administration from the College of William and Mary. She is a frequent presenter in gifted education issues such as differentiation, professional development, acceleration, and diversity and under-represented populations. Miss Sheppard serves on several boards and works with the Publications Committee of the National Association for Gifted Children. An avid traveler, she enjoys frequent trips to her "native" France.

## Pam Flaherty, *Past President*

Pam Flaherty is parent to two college kids who launched her on a journey that began in their early years, included a trip to the Gifted Development Center in Denver, and led her exploration through various educational delivery options, which included public education, 504 plans, Individual Education Plans, private school, home school, part-time public, EPGY, CTY, radical acceleration, and boarding schools.

Fortunately, Pam, certified to teach secondary school in Virginia, focused on Gifted Education during her training. Her degrees are in English, Science, and Liberal Studies (Masters) from Hollins University. Unfortunately, the nation suffered a huge reduction in force for teachers just as she began her career, so she pursued computer marketing support and project management with Unisys computers in California. In 1996, she returned with her family to Culpeper, Virginia. Here she serves as past-president of the Virginia Association for the Gifted, Community member for Culpeper County Schools' Local Advisory Committee for Gifted Education, Outreach parent representative for Johns Hopkins' Center for Talented Youth, and various volunteer activities. Her passions include promoting literacy (known locally as the "book lady"), travel, and stretching the dollar further than ever imagined.



### ***VAG Newsletter Dates and Deadlines***

The VAG Newsletter is published online four times each year. Deadlines for items are August 15, November 15, February 15 and May 15. Send articles or photographs to VAG Newsletter Editor, P. O. Box 26212, Richmond, VA 23260-6212 or e-mail [sferguson@mbc.edu](mailto:sferguson@mbc.edu). Black and white or color prints can be used, but will not be returned to you.

# Motivating Adolescent Gifted Learners

by Richard M. Cash, Bloomington (MN)  
Public Schools

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Adolescent gifted learners are some of the most complex students a teacher will encounter in his or her career. Not only are they experiencing adolescent development, which has its own issues, but they are gifted on top of it. Trying to keep adolescent gifted learners motivated, engaged, and productive is a never-ending battle. This article shares some of the reasons adolescent gifted learners underachieve, as well as practical ideas teachers can employ to keep their students on track.

## Why Do Adolescents Underachieve?

Successful students have learned to adapt to the educational setting through the many challenges they encounter. Gifted students often don't encounter sufficient academic challenges for them to build the skills they need to adapt to a rigorous setting. This lack of challenge can be a reason they have too little or too much of what is required to thrive in school. Additionally, there are many reasons students can run into the "can'ts." (See table below.)

## Unlocking Underachievement

This article focuses on the one challenge most prominent in the battle of underachievement: Motivation. Overwhelmingly, the underachieving adolescent gifted learners I've worked with tell me they don't feel the need to achieve. They don't find the work valuable or interesting. To help teachers develop students' intrinsic drive to learn, I propose five principles of curriculum and instruction.

### Principle 1: Make It Relevant

Adolescence is a time for personal growth and development. During the middle school and early high school years, youth are struggling to develop a sense of identity, are growing into their bodies, and are working out mood and emotional reactions. The adolescent brain is also undergoing enormous amounts of change through circuit refinement, pruning, and connection-making. These cognitive changes signal a shift in how adolescent youth approach learning. The connections made during the teen years will most likely hard-wire the brain for the future. For instance, youth exposed to theater, dance, music, and the arts during adolescence will stay attuned to them in later years. Conversely, students who are disengaged academically, socially, or physically during the adolescent years most likely will stay this way for years to come.



It is essential that middle school and high school teachers help students find themselves in the curriculum. For instance, in social studies students can identify a social issue that is important to them. With assistance, they can map out ways they can impact the situation either directly or indirectly. Another way to help students connect with the curriculum is through interest-based surveys or discussions. This will help you as the teacher focus your topic discussions or project work toward what interests students.

Suggestions for making curriculum and instruction relevant:

- Allow students to share themselves or their passions with the class.
- Provide time in your day for students to meet in interest-based small groups to find commonalities and develop bonds.
- Have students start thinking about career pathways—built on their personal interests—then contact experts in those fields and bring them into the classroom to share their schooling careers.

### Principle 2: Make It Meaningful

When students find curriculum and instruction meaningful and relevant they are more likely to engage in the learning. Meaningfulness in curriculum occurs when learners are able to see themselves in the learning or find the information they are learning immediately useful. Lessons that incorporate personal experiences, authentic productions, and self-reflection can bring the curriculum alive for the adolescent gifted learner. For instance, a child may connect with a situation experienced by a character in a novel, or feel open to express his or her feelings during a role playing activity.

## Reasons for Underachievement

### Too Little:

- Motivation
- Challenge
- Interest
- Self-efficacy
- Impulse control
- Perseverance
- Ability to control perseveration
- Balance in life
- Product orientation

### Too Much/Many:

- Self-confidence
- Other activities
- Procrastination
- Self-pity
- Dependency on others
- Distractions
- Ideas

### Can'ts:

- Can't determine the individual tasks from the greater project
- Can't put thought into action
- Can't follow through
- Can't fail
- Can't get organized

Adapted from Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2000

Suggestions for making curriculum and instruction meaningful:

- Use metaphors, similes, and analogies to make unfamiliar topics familiar.
- Use mnemonic devices, acronyms, or acrostics to help learners with lists and orders of items so that they can map or visualize the decision making process.
- Use mind maps to connect seemingly unconnected topics.
- Use elaborative rehearsals such as mock trials, role-playing, and simulations. Integrate personal stories (both the students' and yours) into the content.
- Connect the content to what is current (use the media and/or Internet).

### Principle 3: Make It Rigorous

Rigor involves the advancement of intellectual engagement that requires learners to stretch beyond their comfort zone to reach what Vygotsky termed their "zone of proximal development." A student's zone of proximal development is defined as the difference between what a child can do with help and what he or she can do without help (Morris, nd).

Rigor also involves the use of complex thinking, which is the cognitive process that requires sophisticated forms of and interactions between creative thinking, critical reasoning, and advanced levels of inquiry, problem-solving strategies, and metacognition skills. Bloom's Taxonomy provides an excellent scaffold for building a framework of increasing rigor. Curriculum that is created for gifted learners must extend to the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation).

Suggestions for making curriculum and instruction rigorous:

- Teach critical, creative, and effective thinking strategies throughout your content areas—and encourage students to use them. (See Edward deBono's CoRT Thinking Program: <http://www.edwdebono.com>.)
- Teach the metacognitive skills of self-reflection, summarization, and effective memorization strategies (see mnemonic devices, acronyms, or acrostics above).
- Use brainstorming and SCAMPER techniques to help students create new and original products.
- Help students apply content knowledge to applications across disciplines using authentic products.

- Use more complex/abstract concept development to encourage deeper investigation and understanding. Example: For the concept of "cycles," students can examine the simple/concrete examples of water, air, and the seasons in order to examine what characteristics define the concept. Following this would be a discussion of the complex/abstract examples of the concept found in politics, economics, and philosophy.

#### Concept Development: Cycles

| Simple/Concrete | Complex/Abstract |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Water           | Political        |
| Air             | Economic         |
| Seasons         | Philosophical    |

### Principle 4: Make it Safe for Intellectual Risk Taking

Many gifted adolescent learners were not exposed to learning experiences that required sustained intellectual effort during their elementary years. The lack of true challenge early did not provide them the opportunity to learn how to struggle, make mistakes or persevere at tasks that require complex thinking. Teachers working with adolescent gifted learners must create safe and supportive learning environments that allow learners to take intellectual risks. Students should be exposed to strategies and techniques for dealing with failure, keeping organized, and maintaining persistence.

Suggestions for making curriculum and instruction safe for intellectual risk taking:

- Show learners how making mistakes leads to incredible inventions (share the book: *Mistakes that Worked* by Charlotte Jones and John Obrien).
- Play up problem-solving techniques—give them many types and help them identify when to use them.
- Encourage students to work outside of their preferred learning style.
- Offer learners appropriate strategies for dealing with stress: meditation, exercises, the arts, taking deep breaths, or listening to soothing music.

By offering instances of "failure" and allowing for the re-working of solutions through positive criticism, the teacher can strengthen the overall comfort ability of being incorrect.

### Principle 5: Make Choices

Students are motivated to learn when meaningful choices are offered. Student ownership and responsibility for the learning increases, and creative production is strengthened. Choices can be accomplished in a variety of ways:

- Allow for students to choose different ways to demonstrate what they know.
- Allow students to develop and investigate topics of interest.
- Allow students to use a variety of materials and resources to complete projects and assignments.
- Provide for various seating arrangements or grouping arrangements in the classroom.
- Allow students to create their own evaluation rubrics and types of assessments.

#### Choice Menus

An excellent way for teachers to provide for choices in the classroom is to create choice menus, which are a formatting strategy for differentiating curriculum and instruction. Choice menus should allow students to:

- Use their preferred learning style,
- Incorporate their personal interests into their learning, and/or
- Study a topic in depth.

The first step in constructing choice menus is to decide what the "essential learning" is in the unit or project students are to complete. Essential learnings are the big ideas, concepts, the topic/unit of study important to future learning.

Second, decide how the menu will be arranged. Teachers can arrange the menu so that it focuses on learning profiles/styles, interests, or students' need to go into greater depth. Choice menus for gifted students can be created to either replace or supplement the regular curriculum. Remember that choice menus are not intended to be *more* work, but to be more engaging work.

Third, build your choice menu by integrating Bloom's Taxonomy and Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory (or other learning styles you prefer). Ensure the learning experiences scaffold to higher, more complex activities that move to authenticity. For an excellent template for

*(continued on page 10)*

# Motivating Adolescent Gifted Learners

(continued from page 9)

constructing choice menus, see the Matrix Plan or Integration Matrix in Diane Heacox's book *Differentiating Instruction in the Regular Classroom* (2002, pp. 80-83).

Finally, keeping gifted students motivated to learn can be accomplished through engaging, interesting and rigorous challenges.

Key to getting and keeping gifted adolescent students motivated is by building the drive to achieve from extrinsic to intrinsic. Teachers can begin with external rewards (such as prizes, passes, and so forth), but they must move toward developing the learner's internal drive to succeed. As Sternberg and Grigorenko state in *Teaching for Successful Intelligence*, "Internally motivated individuals are able

to maintain their motivation over the rising and falling of external rewards" (2000, p. 85). Developing internal forces comes from the learner's passions and engagement with content. Hooking the gifted adolescent through their interests will build the skills necessary to do well in future challenging courses.

## Resources

- Erwin, J. C. (2004). *The classroom of choice: Giving students what they need and getting what you want*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Feinstein, S. (2004). *Secrets of the teenage brain: Research-based strategies for reaching & teaching today's adolescents*. San Diego, CA: The Brain Store.
- Heacox, D. (2002). *Differentiating instruction in the regular classroom: How to reach and teach learners, grades 3-12*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.
- Jensen, E. (2005). *Teaching with the brain in mind (2nd ed.)*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Morris, C. (nd). *Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development*. Retrieved December 12, 2006, from <http://www.igs.net/~cmorris/zpd.html>.
- Reis, S.M., Burns, D.E. & Renzulli, J.S. (1992). *Curriculum compacting: The complete guide to modifying the regular curriculum for high ability students*. Mansfield, CT: Creative Learning Press.

- Sternberg, R.J. & Grigorenko, E.L. (2000). *Teaching for successful intelligence to increase student learning and achievement*. Arlington Heights, IL: SkyLight Professional Development.
- Tomlinson, C.A. (2001). *How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms (2nd ed.)*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- VanTassel-Baska, J. & Little, C.A. (2003). *Content-based curriculum for high-ability learners*. Waco TX: Prufrock Press.
- Wolfe, P. (2001). *Brain matters: Translating research into classroom practice*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

## About the Author

Richard M. Cash, Ed.D., is the District Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Programs, K-12, for the Bloomington, Minnesota, Public Schools. Dr. Cash is also a private consultant to many school districts around the U.S. His areas of expertise are gifted programming, differentiated instruction, curriculum development, and brain compatible classrooms. He may be reached at [www.nrichconsulting.com](http://www.nrichconsulting.com).

The information contained in this article aligns with the following NAGC Pre-K—Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards: Curriculum Instruction (1.0, 3.0, 4.0, and 5.0) and Program Administration and Management (2.0). For a complete copy of the Standards, visit [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org).



## VAG Membership Application

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# Reach Each Star

Virginia Seminar on Gifted Education • Virginia Association for the Gifted  
Newport News Marriott City Center, Newport News, Virginia  
October 17-18, 2010

## Seminar Schedule

### Sunday, October 17, 2010

Registration 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
General Session 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

- Welcome, Awards Presentation, Business Meeting
- **Keynote: Donna Y. Ford**, Ph.D., Professor of Education and Human Development at Vanderbilt University

#### Addressing the Issues of Underrepresentation among Black, Hispanic, and Low-Income Students

This keynote will present an overview of the issues underlying the underrepresentation of students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds in gifted programs. An overview of recommendations for increasing recruitment and retention will be presented.

### Monday, October 18, 2010

Registration 7:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.  
Continental Breakfast 7:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.  
Sessions 8:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. *Attend pre-registered session*  
Lunch 11:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
Sessions 12:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. *Return to pre-registered session*



## A Special Invitation to Parents

Parents are invited to attend the Sunday, October 17, 4:00 p.m. keynote session presented by **Donna Ford – Addressing the Issues of Underrepresentation among Black, Hispanic, and Low-Income Students.**

Only \$25.00 per person. This offer is only for parents and may not be used with any other seminar registration.

Special Parent Registration Form • Registration is limited • Registration must be postmarked by October 1, 2010

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School Division Your Child Attends \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Sunday Afternoon Only \_\_\_\_\_ \$25.00 per person  
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**Credit cards accepted for online registration.**

Purchase Orders cannot be accepted for this registration. No refunds. No Meals Included.

# Biographies of Presenters

Catherine Brighton



**Catherine Brighton, Ph.D.** is an Associate Professor at the University of Virginia, a Principal Investigator with the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT), and the Director of the University of Virginia Institutes on Academic Diversity. She is the Past-President of the Virginia Association for the Gifted (VAG), and is the outgoing Treasurer for the American Educational Research Association (AERA), Special Interest Group on Research in Giftedness and Talent. She earned her doctorate in Educational Psychology – Gifted Education at the University of Virginia in 2001. Prior, she was a curriculum coordinator/assistant principal, teacher of the gifted, and classroom teacher in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, (Charlotte, NC). She was recognized by the National Association for Gifted Children in 2005 as the Early Leader for the Association. This award is given annually to an individual who has exhibited the highest and most consistent degree of leadership in the field of gifted education since receiving the doctorate.

Tracy L. Cross



**Tracy Cross, Ph.D.** is the Jody and Layton Smith Professor of Psychology and Gifted Education and the Executive Director of the William and Mary Center for Gifted Education. Previously he served as the George and Frances Ball Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Gifted Studies in Teachers College at Ball State University and as the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies, Research, and Assessment. He is the editor of the *Journal for the Education of the Gifted* and president emeritus of CEC TAG. For nine years he served as the Executive Director of the Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics and Humanities, a residential high school for gifted adolescents. He has published four books, well over 100 articles and book chapters and received the distinguished service award from both the National Association for Gifted Children and the Council for Exceptional Children division, The Association for the Gifted.

Donna Y. Ford



**Donna Y. Ford, Ph.D.** is Professor of Education and Human Development at Vanderbilt University. She teaches in the Department of Special Education. Donna has been a Professor of Special Education at the Ohio State University, an Associate Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Virginia, and a researcher with the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented. She also taught at the University of Kentucky.

Donna earned her Doctor of Philosophy degree in Urban Education (educational psychology) (1991), Masters of Education degree (counseling) (1988), and Bachelor of Arts degree in communications and Spanish (1984) from Cleveland State University. She conducts research primarily in gifted education and multicultural/urban education.

Donna is co-founder of the Scholar Identity Institute for Black Males with Dr. Gilman Whiting. She is a two-time board member of the National Association for Gifted Children and has served on numerous editorial boards, such as *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *Exceptional Children*, *Journal of Negro Education*, and *Roeper Review*.

Holly Hertberg-Davis



**Holly Hertberg-Davis, Ph.D.** is an Assistant Professor at the University of Virginia, a Principal Investigator for the National Research Center on The Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT), and Associate Editor of *Gifted Child Quarterly*. She earned her doctorate in Educational Psychology – Gifted Education from the University of Virginia in 2003 and received the Outstanding Doctoral Student Award from the National Association for Gifted Children. Her research interests include advanced curriculum for secondary students, including Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Programs; writing instruction; differentiation; and effective professional development and teacher change. She is a former middle and high school English teacher and several of her curriculum units have been published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).

Carol V. Horn



**Carol V. Horn, Ph.D.** is coordinator of Advanced Academic Programs for Fairfax County Public Schools in Northern Virginia. She has worked in gifted education for the past 20 years and has a Master of Education in Educational Psychology with an Emphasis on Gifted from the University of Virginia. She earned her doctorate in Teacher Preparation and Special Education from The George Washington University and is the 2002 recipient of the Hollingsworth Award from the National Association for Gifted Children for outstanding research study in the field of gifted education. She was recently presented with the first Outstanding Leader Award by the Center for Gifted Education at the College of William and Mary.

Sara Kajder



**Sara Kajder, Ph.D.** is an assistant professor of English education at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. A recipient of the CEE National Technology Leadership fellowship and a former fellow through the Center for Technology and Teacher Education at the University of Virginia, her research focuses on uses of emergent technologies in developing readers at the middle and secondary levels, as well as methods that are useful in leading teachers to effectively and mindfully integrate technology transparently into their instruction. Prior to her work in teacher education, Kajder taught middle and high school English/Language Arts in Montgomery County, Md., and in Pittsburgh, Pa. An internationally known speaker and consultant, she is the author of multiple articles, chapters and textbooks, including *Bringing the Outside In* (2006) and *The Tech Savvy English Classroom* (2003).

Teresa S. Lee



**Teresa S. Lee, Ed.D.** is an Educational Specialist for the Virginia Department of Education in Special Education Instructional Services with a focus on instructional services for students with Specific Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Disorder. She earned her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia. Prior to her work at the state department, she has served as a teacher of students with learning disabilities, building level administrator in Chesterfield and Amelia County Schools and Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at Virginia State University. She is a certified Strategic Instruction Model Professional Developer through the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning. She has participated in the Virginia Department of Education's development of frequently asked question guidance documents on "RTI and the Eligibility Process," and "Supporting the Identification and Achievement of the Twice Exceptional Learner."

Donna L. Poland



**Donna L. Poland, Ph.D.** is the Specialist for Governor's Schools and Gifted Education for the Virginia Department of Education. Donna completed her Ph.D. in Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership with an emphasis in Gifted Education Administration at William and Mary, with a dissertation study focused on gifted and science instructional practices in science classrooms at Virginia's Governor's Schools. She holds an Ed.S. and a MS from the College of William and Mary and a BS in Wildlife Biology from North Carolina State University. She has served as director of the Governor's School for Science and Technology at New Horizons in Hampton, coordinator of the Center for Excellence in University Teaching at Norfolk State University, and as coordinator of the Pre-Service Teacher Institute for NASA Langley Research Center.

Reach Each Star

## Seminar Sessions – Monday, October 18, 2010 • 8:30 – 11:45 a.m. and 12:45 – 3:00 p.m.

### Catherine Brighton and Holly Hertberg-Davis

#### Differentiating Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms • Grades K-12

Contemporary classrooms are characterized by a full spectrum of students' academic needs—some struggling, others far exceeding grade level expectations, and every possible permutation in between. In the face of this reality, teachers are challenged to figure out ways to meet students' wide-ranging needs. In this interactive session, we will explore the “non-negotiables” of a differentiated classroom by experiencing differentiation as learners might—looking at respectful tasks, the importance of appropriate challenge, and flexible grouping configurations. Additionally, we will explore specific instructional strategies that can be implemented in a differentiated classroom, paying particular attention to those approaches designed to promote critical and creative thinking. Come prepared to participate!

### Tracy L. Cross

#### Morning Session – 25 Years of Research on the Social and Emotional Development of Students with Gifts and Talents • Grades K-12

The lives of our students with gifts and talents are made much more complicated than their nongifted peers. They must grow up within families, communities and schools that hold very differing views of giftedness. They receive mixed messages on a regular basis. Consequently, their development includes both the common issues and stages of their respective referent groups and issues that are unique to them. Social cognition, social learning theory, and the Stigma of Giftedness Paradigm are presented as means to understand the gifted students' lives. This workshop will prepare participants to analyze the lives of students with gifts and talents within the school culture by understanding both the typical developmental patterns and those unique to the students with gifts and talents. Examples will be included to illustrate their patterns of social coping.

#### Afternoon Session – Brands, Tattoos, Body Sculpting, Cutting, and Suicidal Behavior: Youth Culture and Gifted Students • Grades K-12

This session will report the research on contemporary behaviors and their connection with gifted students. The session will include definitions of numerous self-inflicted behaviors and their relationships to mental health issues. Some of the findings are counterintuitive and even surprising. Participants will be given information about the more serious of these and how to prevent the undesired effects.

### Donna Y. Ford

#### Knowledge is Power: Theories, Frameworks and Strategies to Understand Underrepresentation and to Increase Recruitment and Retention • Grades K-12

Underrepresentation among Black, Hispanic, and low-income students is a major problem that most school districts are grappling with. Efforts to decrease or eliminate underrepresentation have been met with little success. This session focuses on key barriers and presents an overview of practices that have been tried and why

they have failed. This discussion is followed by recommendations that hold promise for increasing recruitment and retention, to include an overview of major theories, frameworks, and strategies.

### Sara Kajder

#### Teaching with Emerging Technologies: Re-writing Literacy with High-Ability Learners • Grades K-12

We likely all can agree that what it means to read and write outside of our classrooms has changed significantly – and quickly. We'll begin our work by exploring those changes, the texts they make possible (i.e., podcasts, wikis, digital stories, webinars, pulse pen, remixing as a composing practice, creating knowledge artifacts, etc.), and what it means to learn with new web 2.0 tools. Then, by listening closely to our students (using skype, ichtat and other online tools), we'll critically consider strategies for leveraging the unique capacities of new tools to challenge students to create, critique, analyze, evaluate, and communicate using new literacies which amplify our teaching. Further, we'll think carefully about the work that our students' knowledge can now do. Our focus will not be on where to point and click, but on how to critically select and mindfully utilize key technologies to teach (and learn) in new ways.

### The Twice-Exceptional Learner

#### Morning Session

#### Teresa S. Lee and Donna L. Poland

#### Supporting the Identification and Achievement of Twice-Exceptional Students • Grades K-12

Twice-exceptional learners, students who are both gifted and have a disability, have been described as a group of underserved and under stimulated youth. More often than not, one exceptionality overshadows the other. Both the gifted aptitudes and disability areas should be addressed by instructional personnel in the local school division. The challenge for the local school division is how to find these students and how to address their educational needs? This presentation will examine the state and federal guidelines that impact services for twice exceptional learners. In addition, this presentation will address accommodations and assistive technology that support learning. Complimenting this presentation will be a frequently asked questions handout on twice-exceptional students.

#### Afternoon Session

#### Carol V. Horn

#### Twice-Exceptional from a School Perspective • Grades K-12

Twice exceptional learners have the ability to think, reason, and problem-solve at very high levels but also have special education needs. This session focuses on research-based best practices that support the success of twice-exceptional learners in advanced academic programs. Participants share, discuss, and problem-solve as they explore the issues, challenges, and concerns that must be addressed in order to provide gifted services to this unique group of learners.

## Reach Each Star • Virginia Seminar on Gifted Education

Virginia Association for the Gifted

October 17 and 18, 2010 • Newport News Marriott City Center, Newport News, Virginia

### Seminar Registration Form

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Attending seminar primarily as: Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Student \_\_\_\_\_ Parent \_\_\_\_\_ Administrator \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of School Division \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

### Seminar Fees

Regular registration must be postmarked by **October 1, 2010**. (Includes Sunday Keynote Session, Monday Session, Continental Breakfast and Lunch on Monday, October 18, 2010.) Confirmation of registration will be made only to e-mail addresses. To receive a refund, cancellations must be **in writing** to the VAG office no later than October 6, 2010. All refunds are subject to a \$25 processing fee and will be issued after January 1, 2011.

#### Check one:

\_\_\_\_\_ \$165.00 (VAG active member) Must include membership # for member rate. To Be Verified. Membership # \_\_\_\_\_  
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**VAG Dues:** \_\_\_\_\_ 1 year/\$20 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 years/\$35 \_\_\_\_\_ Member Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ New Member  
(Please mail your membership application – on page 10 – with your conference payment and conference registration form.)  
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\_\_\_\_\_ Personal Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Please make checks payable to: VAG  
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#### Send registration and payment to:

VAG Seminar Registration  
PO Box 26212  
Richmond, VA 23260-6212

#### Full-Day Sessions on Monday, October 18, 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. You may attend one session.

**Mark your top 2 choices (1 = top choice, 2 = next choice).** Session size is limited and sessions will be assigned on a first-come basis.

\_\_\_\_\_ Donna Ford – **Knowledge is Power: Understanding Underrepresentation** – K-12  
\_\_\_\_\_ Tracy Cross – **25 Years of Research; Youth Culture and Gifted Students** – K-12  
\_\_\_\_\_ Sara Kajder – **Teaching with Emerging Technologies** – K-12  
\_\_\_\_\_ Teresa Lee and Donna Poland (morning) – **Supporting the Identification and Achievement of Twice Exceptional** – K-12  
\_\_\_\_\_ Carol Horn (afternoon) – **Twice Exceptional from a School Perspective** – K-12  
\_\_\_\_\_ Catherine Brighton and Holly Hertberg-Davis – **Differentiating Instruction** – K-12

There will be a general session on Sunday from 4:00-6:00 p.m. featuring **Donna Ford** on the topic: **Addressing the Issues of Under-representation Among Black, Hispanic, and Low-Income Students.**

**Please note:** (1) Purchase Orders are accepted in good faith that a check for full payment will be received within 30 days.

(2) Mail in registrations will not be accepted after October 12, 2010. (3) Hotel Reservations must be made directly with the Newport News Marriott City Center.

### Hotel Reservations

(Please note that check-in for the hotel will begin after 4:00 p.m. – You will not be able to check-in prior to the 4:00 p.m. Seminar Session) For hotel reservations at the Newport News City Center Marriott, call **866-329-1758** and ask for the **Virginia Association for the Gifted group block**. Single rooms and double rooms are \$129.00 plus applicable taxes. The cut-off date for hotel reservation is **Friday, October 1, 2010**.

**Parking:** Parking is \$6.00 per night for overnight guests. Valet parking is \$12.00 per night. Day guest parking is \$5.00 for valet parking or complimentary for self-parking.

**Directions:** Marriott® Hotel Newport News at City Center, 740 Town Center Drive, Newport News, VA 23606, Phone: 1-757-873-9299 From I-64 take Exit #258A – J. Clyde Morris Blvd-0.3 mi. Merge right onto Diligence Drive-0.4 mi. Turn right onto Thimble Shoals-0.3 mi. Turn right onto Canon Drive-0.2 mi. Hotel parking on the left.

**If you wish to join VAG and receive the member discount, please send your payment and membership application with your seminar registration.**

## Virginia Association for the Gifted

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The VAG Newsletter is one of the tangible benefits of your membership in the Virginia Association for the Gifted. In the four newsletters published yearly, we include conference information, news about programs and events of interest to gifted students, their parents, and teachers, articles by educators and parents about gifted issues, as well as reprints of material from national journals and organizations. We invite you to submit your suggestions and/or articles you have written and would like to share with VAG members through this newsletter. Parents and teachers are especially encouraged to submit their children's original creative writing pieces.

# Reach Each Star

Virginia Association for the Gifted  
Virginia Seminar on Gifted Education  
Newport News Marriott City Center, Newport News, Virginia  
October 17-18, 2010



Make plans to attend our seminar at the Newport News Marriott City Center located in the heart of City Center and America's maritime history. Details pages 11-15.