

RENZULLI CENTER NEWS

Special Category

Random Acts of Kindness

[Author Unknown]

As she stood in front of her 5th grade class on the very first day of school, she told the children an untruth. Like most teachers, she looked at her students and said that she loved them all the same. However, that was impossible, because there in the front row, slumped in his seat, was a little boy named Teddy Stoddard.

Mrs. Thompson had watched Teddy the year before and noticed that he did not play well with the other children, that his clothes were messy and that he constantly needed a bath. In addition, Teddy could be unpleasant.

It got to the point where Mrs. Thompson would actually take delight in marking his papers with a broad red pen, making bold X's and then putting a big "F" at the top of his papers.

At the school where Mrs. Thompson taught, she was required to review each child's past records and she put Teddy's off until last. However, when she reviewed his file, she was in for a surprise.

Teddy's first grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is a bright child with a ready laugh. He does his work neatly and has good manners... he is a joy to be around..."

His second grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is an excellent student, well liked by his classmates, but he is troubled because his mother has a terminal illness and life at home must be a struggle."

His third grade teacher wrote, "His mother's death has been hard on him. He tries to do his best, but his father doesn't show much interest and his home life will soon affect him if some steps aren't taken."

Teddy's fourth grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is withdrawn and doesn't show much interest in school. He doesn't have many friends and he sometimes sleeps in class."

By now, Mrs. Thompson realized the problem and she was ashamed of herself. She felt even worse when her students brought her Christmas presents, wrapped in beautiful ribbons and bright paper, except for Teddy's. His present was clumsily wrapped in the heavy, brown paper that he got from a

grocery bag. Mrs. Thompson took pains to open it in the middle of the other presents. Some of the children started to laugh when she found a rhinestone bracelet with some of the stones missing, and a bottle that was one-quarter full of perfume... But she stifled the children's laughter when she exclaimed how pretty the bracelet was, putting it on, and dabbing some of the perfume on her wrist. Teddy Stoddard stayed after school that day just long enough to say, "Mrs. Thompson, today you smelled just like my Mom used to." After the children left, she cried for at least an hour.

On that very day, she quit teaching reading, writing and arithmetic. Instead, she began to teach children. Mrs. Thompson paid particular attention to Teddy. As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. The more she encouraged him, the faster he responded. By the end of the year, Teddy had become one of the smartest children in the class and, despite her lie that she would love all the children the same, Teddy became one of her "teacher's pets..."

A year later, she found a note under her door, from Teddy, telling* her that she was still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life.

Six years went by before she got another note from Teddy. He then wrote that he had finished high school, third in his class, and she was still the best teacher he ever had in life.

Four years after that, she got another letter, saying that while things had been tough at times, he'd stayed in school, had stuck with it, and would soon graduate from college with the highest of honors. He assured Mrs. Thompson that she was still the best and favorite teacher he had ever had in his whole life.

Then four more years passed and yet another letter came. This time he explained that after he got his bachelor's degree, he decided to go a little further. The letter explained that she was still the best and favorite teacher he ever had. But now his name was a little longer.... The letter was signed, Theodore F. Stoddard, MD.

The story does not end there. You see, there was yet another letter that spring. Teddy said he had met this girl and was going to be married. He explained that his father had died a couple of years ago and he was wondering if Mrs. Thompson might agree to sit at the wedding in the place that was usually reserved for the mother of the groom.

Of course, Mrs. Thompson did. And guess what? She wore that bracelet, the one with several rhinestones missing. Moreover, she made sure she was wearing the perfume that Teddy remembered his mother wearing on their last Christmas together.

They hugged each other, and Dr. Stoddard whispered in Mrs. Thompson's ear, "Thank you Mrs. Thompson for* believing in me. Thank you so much for making me feel important and showing me that I could make a difference."

Mrs. Thompson, with tears in her eyes, whispered back. She said, "Teddy, you have it all wrong. You were the one who taught me that I could make a difference. I didn't know how to teach until I met you."

(For you that don't know, Teddy Stoddard is the Dr. at Iowa Methodist Hospital in Des Moines that has the Stoddard Cancer Wing.)

Warm someone's heart today ... pass this along. I love this story so very much, I cry every time I read it. Just try to make a difference in someone's life today? Tomorrow? Just "do it".

Random acts of kindness, I think they call it?

"Believe in Angels, then return the favor."

Virtual Enrichment Clusters

Virtual Enrichment Cluster Web Site

Leigh Shaw

Mineola UFSD, NY

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/105EqbxMVSPJtQewvSGsSCvwhdZZypPBy/view>

No summer camps, a springtime stuck in quarantine and a foreboding worry about a lackluster learning experience impacting schools as the current reality...What to do? How can I remind children and educators that learning in any form is colorful, vibrant, and creative? It felt as if the remote learning, even with the best staff and intentions, had the potential to suck the life out of learning. In a dusty part of my brain, packed away with my depth of gifted research and Confratute experiences - Enrichment Clusters was calling out to me. As the cogs turned and fingers hit keys, it became obvious. The reason enrichment clusters were challenging to implement successfully in my previous efforts was usually the lack of teacher expertise, understanding of enrichment among the powers that be and an inability to squeeze it into an already packed school day. However, the unfortunate reality of the pandemic provided what enrichment clusters needed: learners eager to have fun, parents lacking places to find it, extraordinary teachers with extra time on their hands, and me - an administrator with an intense passion for enrichment and ulterior motive - to expose more educators to the world of enrichment and prove it is truly for ALL.

After talking with my assistant superintendent about the idea and budget needed, we got to work. An email was sent out to the PreK-12 district asking for teacher interest. If you could teach anything - what would it be? I created a professional development for those interested to share the vision, including a planning template and exemplar, and accompanying technology in the form of a digital pathway. Teachers were asked to propose a topic. 12 teachers were selected and their awesome clusters are listed below. Each cluster was designed and facilitated for four weeks of two 30 minute live virtual sessions each week. Each was accompanied by a complementary asynchronous online pathway in which students tackled challenges, submitted work and earned online badges. Parents eagerly enrolled their children via Google Forms and we began the journey with a crew of 340 virtual learners, age 4 through 14. Parent and student feedback included a 98% overall satisfaction rate.

In it's subsequent fall and winter iterations, with the support of an enrichment convert, our Director of ENL, an addition to the vision was proposed - What if we do them all in Spanish? Could that help our ELLs? Just this fall we delivered enrichment to 200 multi-language learners exploring topics in virtual clusters - all in Spanish! Our spring menu is coming out soon...stay tuned!

Cluster Offerings and Resources

Summer Cluster Offerings for 340 learners:

Summer K-2: Mission: Save the Animals, Under the Sea, The Science of Ice Cream, The Wizarding World of Mineola

Summer 3-4: The Ancient Art of Storytelling, Design the School of the Future, Tinkering with 3D Design and Summer Printing, The Creative Wellness Lab, The Gaming Guild, The Wizarding World of Mineola

Summer 5-7(8): The Art of Silent Communication, Rise Up! Hamilton and Early America, The History of Engineering and Rockets, The Gaming Guild

Fall/Winter Spanish Cluster Offerings for 200 dual language learners:

Spanish K-2: Superhero School! (Escuela de superhéroe), Jungle Safari (Safari en la selva)

Spanish 3-4: Celebrating Latinx Culture Around the World (Celebración de las culturas latinxs del mundo) , Latinx Dance and Music (Danza y música latinx)

Spanish 5-7: Myths and Legends Around the World (Mitos y leyendas alrededor del mundo), The Mysteries of the Ocean (Los misterios del océano)

[Planning Template Exemplar](#)

[Summer Enrichment Clusters Poster](#)

[Spanish Enrichment Cluster Poster](#)

For more information, contact: Leigh Shaw at Mrs.LeighShaw@gmail.com

Confratute Announcements

2021 Virtual Confratute Recordings Now Available

If you missed Virtual Confratute 2021, you still have a chance to access the entire recorded library of sessions for only \$199. Your two-month access includes recordings of

- o 6 keynote presentations by Joseph Renzulli, Sally Reis, Marcia Gentry, Del Siegle, Sue Baum, Rachel McAnallen, and Sandra Kaplan,
- o 75 hours of recorded strand content across 18 unique strands, and
- o 32 one-hour recordings covering topics ranging from “Using Literature for Conversations, Learning, and Supporting Human Rights” to “Socratic Inquiry: A Pedagogy to Address the Social-Emotional Needs of the Gifted in the Classroom.”

You won't want to miss this opportunity to have access to all the recorded Confratute content! You'll learn teaching techniques that will help you to differentiate, enrich, and meet the needs of all learners by

- o infusing enjoyment, engagement, and enthusiasm for learning into your teaching,
- o implementing research-based enrichment and differentiation strategies, and
- o learning strategies to implement the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM).

Visit <https://confratute.uconn.edu> to register.

For more information, contact: Stephanie Huntington at stephanie.huntington@uconn.edu

Upcoming Events

Register for Our Free Fall Webinar Series

The University of Connecticut's Renzulli Center for Creativity, Gifted Education, and Talent Development is pleased to offer these free fall 2021 webinars for parents and educators. Don't miss this opportunity to interact with recognized gifted education leaders and scholars online.

Thursday, October 14 from 8 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Eastern time (Parent Focus)

Constructive Collaboration with Your Child's Teacher

with Pam Peters - University of Connecticut

Saturday, October 16 from 11 a.m. to 12 noon Eastern time (Educator Focus)

Effective Gifted Program Design and Implementation Practices

with Dr. E. Jean Gubbins - University of Connecticut

Thursday, November 18 from 8 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Eastern time (Parent Focus)

Books and More for Promoting Literacy and Thinking in Kids

with Dr. Susannah Richards - Eastern Connecticut University

Saturday, December 11 from 11 a.m. to 12 noon Eastern time (Educator Focus)

Problem-Based Learning 101: Using Problems as Stories to Differentiate Curriculum

with Dr. Shelagh Gallagher - Engaged Education

Register at <https://gifted.uconn.edu/events>

For more information, contact: Del Siegle at del.siegle@uconn.edu

Ph.D. Program Virtual Open House

Have you been thinking about pursuing your expertise in gifted education further? Have you thought about a new challenge toward new career directions?

Join us on Wednesday, October 27, at 8 pm EDT for a virtual open house! Our faculty and current students will share information and answer questions about the UConn Ph.D. program in Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent Development. Please email Catherine Little at catherine.little@uconn.edu if you are interested in joining the open house, and we will send you login information.

Applications for the PhD program in Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent Development at UConn are due by December 1, 2021. Please visit our PhD program site to learn more:

<https://giftedphd.education.uconn.edu/>.

For more information, contact: Catherine Little at catherine.little@uconn.edu

Research

Enrichment Clusters and Enrichment Triad in SEM

Enrichment Clusters, Enrichment Triad, and How They Work Together in the Schoolwide Enrichment Model

Infusing Type I opportunities into the classroom provides a great chance to introduce new topics, occupations, hobbies, people, places, and events that may not ordinarily be covered in the regular

curriculum. Students can follow up with Type II Enrichment that develops investigative skills that can lead some students to Type III, where students think, feel, and do just like the practicing professional. Enrichment Clusters provide a place, time, and opportunity to encourage and promote interests - and these may then develop into exciting Type IIIs to be explored by individual students or groups of students with division of labor. [*Enrichment Clusters, Enrichment Triad, and How They Work Together in the Schoolwide Enrichment Model*](#) is a resource to help you to understand and create enrichment clusters for students, based on interest, as well as how to infuse Type I opportunities into your own classroom, lessons, and curriculum.

For more information, contact: Nicole Waicunas at nicole.waicunas@uconn.edu

Participate in Acceleration Study at Your School

The National Center for Research on Gifted Education is seeking elementary schools (at least grades 2-5) interested in **expanding their use of subject-specific and whole-grade acceleration** as a way to meet the needs of advanced learners. Academic acceleration is the intervention for advanced learners that has shown the greatest effect on learning and achievement. As part of this research project, your school will receive a) professional learning around what acceleration actually is and how it can be used, b) a universal screening process to determine which students should be considered for acceleration, and c) resources and professional learning to help you implement subject-specific and whole-grade acceleration decisions for qualifying students. For more information visit ncrge.uconn.edu/acceleration

For more information, contact: Del Siegle at del.siegle@uconn.edu

Recommendations for Improving Gifted Education

We are pleased to provide these short (approximately 2 to 3 minutes each) videos based on research conducted by the National Center for Research on Gifted Education

- **Be a Talent Scout Not a Deficit Detective** - *Del Siegle*
- **Differentiation is an Opportunity to Engage Students** - *E. Jean Gubbins*
- **Making Pacing Guides a Fit for All Learners** - *Carolyn Callahan*
- **What Happens in Gifted Programs** - *D. Betsy McCoach*

Visit: <https://ncrge.uconn.edu/recommendations-for-improving-gifted-education/>

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