

Contacts

CANDO Chair

Ann-Marie Hejna
ahejna1201@yahoo.com

Resource Chair

Lauren Mastrud
lsmarder@sbcglobal.net

Resource Co-Chair

Caroline Baty-Barr
caroline@baty-barr.com

Advocacy Chair

Gwen Seeley-Joosse
gseeley2@comcast.net

Program Chair

OPEN

Secretary-Treasurer

Maureen Mrenna
mgmrenna@yahoo.com

District Challenge Coordinator

Liz Selander
elizabeth.selander@bps101.net

General Liaison

Kate Chahmirzadi
kc_etiquette@yahoo.com

Volunteer Opportunities

We are currently seeking liaisons at the Elementary and Middle School level. Liaisons are responsible for keeping track of their respective school's program calendar to facilitate planning for CANDO events, acting as a point person for parent's questions, communicating dates/events with Challenge teacher and PTO communication, requesting meeting space as appropriate, and monthly newsletter distribution. All work can be done on your own time. Please contact ahejna1201@yahoo.com if you are interested.



What is CANDO?

The mission of the **Challenge Advocacy Network Development Organization (CANDO)** is to:

- 1) *become a voice at the district and state level;*
- 2) *identify and arrange additional enrichment opportunities and a safe social environment for our children; and*
- 3) *provide educational programs for parents.*

Greetings...

Ann Hejna

On behalf of the entire CANDO board, I want to extend a big "thank you" to all of you who attended the school board meetings. Your presence and voice in May/June was absolutely crucial to making an impact. Please be sure to read, "CANDO Makes a Difference", in this newsletter, to learn more about how we have already made a difference this year for our children.

Our voices have also been heard at the State Level as well. If you were one of the parents who wrote to the appropriate legislators last year, congratulations and thanks! A \$5 million line item for Gifted Education was added to the Fiscal Year 2008 budget bill passed 3 weeks ago by both houses of the Illinois General Assembly. Many people have worked very hard to get this funding back into the budget, see the article later in this newsletter for more details.

Because of the lack of funding, gifted education has been limited to individual school district budgets throughout Illinois. Even with \$5mm from the State, there are a lot of children to support in programs throughout the state, and who

knows whether we'll be eligible to receive a portion of the funds? Our District's Challenge program identifies children of greater ability, but has limited resources to support their needs. As such, CANDO was formed by a group of Batavia parents who were seeking additional support and resources for their gifted children. We hope to continue the mission of helping each other with common needs and goals, identifying summer enrichment opportunities through the Resource Fair, distributing a monthly newsletter to share information and resources, organizing social opportunities for Challenge students, providing educational evening programs for parents, and identifying advocacy opportunities at District and State levels. Having said that, our primary focus and effort this year is the opportunity our community has to make an impact on the future of the CHALLENGE program in the Batavia School District. The District is currently evaluating feedback from teachers and parents about the program, and it's no secret that the results are going to show that we are desperately seeking an expansion of the program for our gifted children. This is a window of
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Upcoming Events

Fri., Sept. 7th - 9:30 a.m. ~ **Coffee at Panera** - Join us for coffee

Tue., Sept. 25th - 7:00 p.m. ~ Rotolo Middle School, General Meeting & Program

CANDO Makes a Difference

Robin Crawford

For the past several years, the elementary Challenge program has comprised 4 days a week of replacement math for 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders and roughly one hour a week enrichment for 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders in the Interdisciplinary program.

Late last May, several parents heard a rumor that the district would be doing away with the Interdisciplinary program in the 2007-08 school year. We confirmed this rumor with district officials. Then we rolled up our sleeves, contacted more than 100 parents, called the papers, and worked to resolve the situation.

At the June 12 School Board meeting, nearly 50 concerned parents and students attended. More than a dozen, including kids, pleaded with the Board to keep and expand the Interdisciplinary program. BATV recorded that meeting, and reporters from four local newspapers put the story on the front pages. According to the newspapers, the Superintendent denied that any cuts had been made and the School Board promised to put it on the agenda for an upcoming meeting.

Several of us attended the next meeting on June 26. At that meeting, Dr. Jan

Wright, the Director of Curriculum, addressed the Board and described plans to expand the math programming to 5 days a week and to keep Interdisciplinary for 2007-08, but not open it to new 3rd graders. She also discussed the survey we all filled out last spring and was instructed by the Board to make that research, including comparing Batavia's gifted services with those of neighboring communities, a priority.

All in all, this shows that the School Board is willing to listen and motivated to make gifted education in Batavia a priority. Our task as an organization is now to help support this forward progress by making ourselves available for what ever help the schools and teachers need. We need to continue to educate our teachers, principals, district officials, and ourselves; to volunteer to lead supplementary educational activities; to raise money to pay for expert speakers; and to stay abreast of legislative developments at the state level.

We parents understand that our children have special needs. And it's looking like the rest of District 101 is beginning to understand that, too.

Gifted Education Funding Restored to State Education Budget

Gwen Seeley-Joosse

A \$5 million line item for gifted education was included in the FY 08 budget bill passed by both houses of the Illinois General Assembly this past August. The item was then left untouched when the Governor issued his veto message, and is now law.

This is the first time since 2002 that Gifted Education has been included in the State Board of Education's final budget.

While \$5 million is far from the \$19 million once budgeted for gifted education in Illinois, it is progress. The Illinois Association for Gifted Children (IAGC) credits House Republican Leader Tom Cross (Oswego) who insisted during budget negotiations that the budget include gifted education funding. Other champions of the line item included Senators Kimberly Lightford (D-Westchester) and Susan Garrett (D-Lake Forest).

What does this mean for gifted education in the Batavia School district? It means that the district can attempt to supplement the funds (approximately \$300,000 annually) it currently budgets for gifted programming by responding to the Request for Proposal (RFP) the State Board of Education will issue once the funds are appropriated. According to Article 14 A of the Illinois School Code, to be considered for funding, an eligible entity "shall submit for approval by the State Superintendent a plan for its program that incorporates all the elements as specified in the RFP."

Thank you to all of the CANDO members who took the time to contact our area state legislators earlier this year to voice your support for gifted education funding in Illinois.

Greetings... continued

opportunity that we cannot lose—more than any other year, we're asking that you consider making CANDO a priority by becoming involved (or continuing your involvement) in CANDO this year. Your enthusiasm, energy, and CANDO attitude will make a difference for your own child(ren) and future CHALLENGE program students in Batavia.

We have an exciting year planned and I look forward to meeting you at our evening program planned for September 25th at Rotolo Middle School; please don't hesitate to contact me with feedback and ideas by contacting me directly at ahejna1201@yahoo.com. Kind regards, *Ann Hejna, CANDO Chair*