

December  
2008



# Gifted News

McBride School

Fort Benning, Georgia

<http://www.am.dodea.edu/Benning/McBride/>

## Important Dates:

December 18—9:00  
2nd and 3rd Grade  
Inventive Genius  
Presentation  
Room 14

December 18—10:00  
4th and 5th Grade  
Inventive Genius  
Presentation  
Room 14

Winter Holidays  
December 20—  
January 5

Next Project:: Students  
Invent—Begins in  
January  
Invention Convention—  
Around Spring Break

Dear Parents,

It's hard to believe that the holidays are right around the corner! I wanted to send a quick update to let you know what your children have been doing in gifted resource classes.

Students have completed their research on the **Inventive Genius Project** and are almost finished with the production phase. As expected, we are a few weeks behind my original schedule. Each year, I vow to do a better job of managing the amount of time we spend on each research project, but it's hard to implement a timeline when students are so engaged in their research.

We will be excited to present our research findings on famous inventors to you on **Thursday, December 18th**. Second and third grade students will present at 9:00 and fourth and fifth grade students will present at 10:00.

As I described to you earlier in the year, we are not just working on research projects, but also on a number of Web 2.0 projects. A couple of the projects are going on simultaneously. Students are learning to program using **SCRATCH**, and soon, I will introduce another 3D programming environment called **ALICE**. Both of these object-oriented programs are research-based and are designed to teach your children introductory programming concepts. These are the same software programs that are used in some high school computer programming classes.

A pilot group of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students has been learning to program using the LEGO® MINDSTORMS™ Robotics. Traditionally used in middle and high schools, LEGO® MINDSTORMS™ is a line of LEGO sets combining programmable bricks with electric motors, sensors, and LEGO technic pieces (such as gears, axles, and beams). The plan for now is to introduce robotics to all 5<sup>th</sup> grade gifted students before Christmas. Presently, we only have one kit, which means just one robot, but we hope to add to that as funding becomes available.

Students in grades 2-4 will be introduced to this same type of hands-on learning through PicoCrickets, which is similar to the LEGO® MINDSTORMS™ robotics kits, but is more age appropriate for students in these grades. MINDSTORMS is designed especially for making robots, while the PicoCrickets Kit is designed for making artistic creations with lights, sound, music, and motion. The programming language is not as advanced and the objects the students build are not limited to robots. There is a possibility that by the end of the year, 4<sup>th</sup> grade students may be ready to work with the LEGO® MINDSTORMS™. Because the mathematics needed to program the robots is not introduced in elementary school, and because this is our first year working with robotics, I am not sure if the students will be ready, but we will give it a try!

Thanks again for your encouragement and support. Feel free to e-mail or stop by anytime. I look forward to seeing all of you on December 18th when your children share their research on the Inventive Genius Project.

### PARENTS:

If you haven't done so already, PLEASE send me (via e-mail) your E-MAIL ADDRESSES! This is the easiest and most efficient way for us to stay in touch.  
Send them to: [mcbride.benning@am.dodea.edu](mailto:mcbride.benning@am.dodea.edu)

### Great Sites for Parents and Students

<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/>  
<http://www.brainquest.com/>  
<http://coolmath4kids.com/>