



WorldGifted

Newsletter of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children
www.world-gifted.org

NEWS FROM HEADQUARTERS



Working as Executive Administrator of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children has instilled in me a deep appreciation of all that has to happen to make an organization functional and productive. It is but a couple of short months ago that I began my work here, and already I have become intricately familiar

with the diverse facets of this position. I am truly enjoying the opportunity to make the headquarters more effective and efficient, and, thereby, helping the Council to fulfill its mandate and its mission in the day-to-day operations.

In this technological world, when one makes a career change of this nature, the first challenge is to become technologically connected through a myriad of user names and passwords in order to access the equipment and accounts of every kind. Then, amidst poring over recent and archived files to glean critical information and physically rearranging the office, I was already anticipating the first newsletter deadline.

As the setting up was taking place, I began the planning—short-term and long-term. I promptly began updating the World Council profile in business cards, letterhead, revising and redesigning the brochure, producing a pop-up banner for greater World Council prominence at various events, printing Vancouver Conference promotional material, and producing signage to mark the headquarters in our office building.

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The wonderful 17th Biennial Conference in Warwick is still in our memory. It was a very successful conference. For the first time, the



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Den-Mo Tsai

World Conference had participants coming from over 69 countries in the world. Congratulations to the members of the organizing committee and thanks for their hard work. And many thanks to all who participated in the conference and made its success possible.

After the conference, the World Council experienced a few changes. Lisa McLean, the former Executive Administrator, left her post and took another position at the University of Winnipeg. She worked very hard during the past two years. We certainly appreciate her contributions. The new Executive Administrator is Cathrine Froese Klassen. She has a strong background in gifted education and is very enthusiastic about serving the World Council. We certainly welcome her as she joins the executive team.

Second, our editor of *Gifted and Talented International*, Dr. Maria McCann, resigned due to health reasons. Maria has been deeply committed to the World Council as evidenced in her many years on the World Council, serving actively as Executive Committee Secretary and Vice-President and also as journal editor. We really appreciate her great contributions to our organization and will surely miss her very much. Her resignation certainly is a great loss for the World Council. Because of her resignation, we are now searching for a new editor of the journal. I urge you to submit a proposal to bid for the editorship, which is a critical and an invaluable function in the World Council organization. (See the notice on page 10.)

Den-Mo Tsai

UPDATE FROM HEADQUARTERS

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Working successfully requires striking a balance between the day-to-day operations and pursuing a vision. In doing the latter, I have initiated several large projects, in particular the installation of new computer software to manage memberships and the development of a new website. The software system will allow members to update their files directly and, thereby, save significant time for us in the office. The website will be utilizing a content-management system. The interface between it and the software will make the website highly functional and efficient. Further information will be emailed to members directly as soon as everything is in place.

Naturally, keeping the newsletter on target is another priority. In this edition, you will meet the new executive committee and learn more about them; you will read about heartening developments in gifted education from around the world. You can celebrate the World Council as you reflect, with me and my assistant, Annette Greene, on the history of the World Council, as it is sandwiched between the 30th year of incorporation and the 30th year of the ratification of our constitution. For many of you, Allan Appel's and Beverly Horn's reminiscing over the very successful Warwick Conference may evoke fond memories.

As I ponder the magnitude of our mission and the administrative work that underpins it, I ask myself what I can bring to this office and the organization's mandate. My many years in the teaching profession have proven a rich field for the work I am now doing. While my major teaching areas have been English and German, I have also taught Mathematics, Biology, and Canadian History. In my administrative roles of English Department Head, of Advanced Placement Coordinator, and of divisional Coordinator for Gifted and Talented Programming and Critical Thinking, I did much

ground-breaking work, including the implementation of Renzulli Schoolwide Enrichment Model and *Philosophy for Children* in the latter role. I founded and co-founded a variety of province-wide, student-oriented activities and competitions, in my instructional fields and in Gifted Education, including *Odyssey of the Mind*. I worked actively in professional organizations and held various positions in them. From the outset and all of the ensuing years, I have been involved in curriculum development committees and teams at the provincial level and have

conducted many inservices. In the meantime, I continued my studies while I was teaching, earning a Bachelor of Education degree, a Master of Arts Degree, and a School Administrator's Certificate. For the past five years, I have also taught courses in the Faculty of Education at the University of Winnipeg, and this past summer, I taught a graduate-level course in gifted education at the University of Manitoba.

As I look ahead, I see many challenges. It is clear that the World Council is in need of revitalization. Rapid technological developments over the past few decades have created significant implications for the operations of the organization today. With instant communication available at our fingertips, it is possible to deal with many of the management and constitutional issues over the course of the next few

months and next year, rather than waiting for the biennial meetings where such matters have traditionally been resolved.

It is my primary goal and passionate desire to make the World Council more efficient and more effective as we pursue the greater cause of advocating for our gifted and talented children for the greater good of humankind.

Cathrine Froese Klassen
Executive Administrator



A RETROSPECTIVE GLANCE AT THE WCGTC

The Initiative

The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children originated over 31 years ago upon the inspiration of a prominent British educator of the gifted, Henry Collis. As Director of the National Association of Gifted Children, already having set up branches all over England, in Hamburg, and in Belfast, it was his vision to unite the educators of the gifted around the world, who were already convening at national levels. This vision evolved into a non-profit organization of educators in the field of gifted education that spans the globe today.

The First Conference

The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children was founded in London, England in 1975 at the First International Conference for Gifted and Talented Children, chaired by Henry Collis. It was held in the Royal College of Surgeons in Lincoln's Inn. Besides receiving support from Her Majesty's government through the Department of Education and Science and from John Burrows, Chief Inspector of Schools, he was also supported by Dr. Harold C. Lyon, Director of the Office of Gifted and Talented from the United States of America, who, at the closing session of the conference, proposed that the participants join in a world-wide initiative to form an organization to advocate for the gifted children of the world. In response to this proposal, 150 educators in the field became members of the founding organization. The first conference was attended by over 500 people from over 50 countries.

The First Executive

At the London conference, the first executive was elected. The first President was Dan Bitan, the Director of Gifted Education in Israel, and Henry Collis was the first Vice-President. The remaining elected officers were from the United States, namely, Alexis DuPont DeBie as Executive Vice-President, Dorothy Sisk as Secretary, and Elizabeth Neuman and Marjorie Craig as Co-Treasurers.

The Incorporation

The World Council was officially incorporated and registered in the state of Delaware as a non-profit organization on March 30, 1976. The officers at the time were representatives from three nations: from Israel, President Dan Bitan; from the United Kingdom, Vice-President Henry Collis; and from the United States of America, Executive Vice-President Alexis DuPont DeBie, joint Secretaries Dorothy Sisk and Elizabeth Neuman, and Treasurer Bob Swain.

The Second Conference

Bob Swain, from California, had proposed that San Francisco be considered as the site for the Second World Conference, and it was held there in 1977. Representation in the new seven-member executive expanded to seven nations: President Iraj Broomand of Iran, Vice-President Dorothy Sisk of the United States of America, Marie Schmidt of Venezuela, Levcho Zdravchev of Bulgaria, Warren Lett of Australia, Henry Collis of the United Kingdom, and Dan Bitan of Israel.

In 1978, with the Iranian conflict disrupting the ability of President Iraj Broomand to continue to serve as President of the World Council, Vice-President Dorothy Sisk assumed the presidency, according to the World Council constitution, until Henry Collis was elected President at the Jerusalem conference in 1979. He held the post until 1981.

A Developing Organization: The Constitution, The Journal, The Secretariat, The Newsletter

As a requirement of incorporation, a constitution for the World Council was drafted by a subcommittee consisting of Dorothy Sisk, representing the board, and two other founding members, Alexis DuPont DeBie and Elizabeth Neuman.

A major undertaking was discussed at the San Francisco meeting: the creation of a journal. Levcho Zdravchev agreed to edit and publish a journal for the WCGTC, which was entitled *GATE: Gifted and Talented Education*. He published three issues of *GATE*, absorbing the cost of the journal through his Bulgarian office.

At the San Francisco meeting, Dan Bitan had proposed Jerusalem as the site for the 1979 Conference. At the Jerusalem conference, Dorothy Sisk became the editor of the journal, now to be named *Gifted International*. In the 1990's, under the editorship of John Feldhusen, the name was changed to *Gifted and Talented International*. Subsequent editors have been Joyce Van Tassel-Baska and Maria McCann. The current editor is Taisir Subhi Yamin.

A third development, in 1979, at the request of President Collis, was the creation of a permanent Secretariat. It was established at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York. The Executive Administrator, Milton Gold, organized the Executive Committee and A. Harry Passow served as Honorary Director.

A further undertaking was the development of a newsletter. In 1980, *World Gifted* was produced by Dorothy Sisk and published by Milton Gold, assisted by Beverly Goodloe Kaplan. The newsletter has customarily been published by the hosting university, as it is today.

Successive Conferences and Presidents

Conference proposals were submitted for prospective sites. Successive conferences took place upon the initiative of various leaders in the field. Bruce Shore submitted a successful bid for the 1981 Montreal, Canada conference. It was attended by 1200 delegates and 350 presenters. James Gallagher assumed the presidency for a four-year term.

Aurora Roldan's bid for Manila brought the next conference to the Philippines in 1983 and spawned the South East Asian organization.

After several successful events, the organization looked to Europe for a conference and held the sixth biennial conference in Hamburg, Germany in 1985, as proposed by Harold Wagner and William Wiczerkowski. The conference boasted 500 presentations from 47 different countries. A. Harry Passow became the next president.

Calvin Taylor's proposal brought the next conference to Salt Lake City, Utah in 1987. The organization had grown, as evidenced by its 1756 participants and 400 presentations involving 775 presenters.

The next conference, proposed by Ken Imison, was held in Sydney, Australia in 1989. Norah Maier was elected president. Vice-President Franz Monks brought the next conference in 1991 to The Hague. Norah Maier, who had successfully proposed Toronto for the 1993 site, retired as president that year and was succeeded by Wu Tien-Wu from Taiwan, who had been responsible for bringing the first strong delegation from Taiwan to a world conference in Montreal.

Biennial conference sites thereafter were Hong Kong in 1995, Seattle in 1997, Istanbul in 1999, Barcelona in 2001, Adelaide in 2003, New Orleans in 2005, and Warwick in 2007. We now look ahead to our 2009 conference that will take place in Vancouver, Canada.

The four-year presidency terms during these years were held by Barbara Clark, from 1997 to 2001, and by Klaus Urban, from 2001 to 2005. The current president is Den-Mo Tsai, whose term will expire in 2009.

Headquarters

In 1983, for various reasons, the Secretariat was transferred from New York to Tampa, at the University of South Florida, with Dorothy Sisk as Executive Secretary. Five years later, it was moved to Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas, with Dorothy Sisk still as Executive Administrator. In 1993, the Secretariat was moved to Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana and administered by the graduate students of John Feldhusen. Partly due to a financial incentive from David Belin, the office was moved to the Belin / Blank Centre for Gifted and Talented Development at the University of Iowa in Iowa City in 1995, with Nicholas Colangelo as the Executive Director for two years. Subsequently, the Headquarters was moved to

Northridge, California, to the business consulting company of Sheila Madsen and Dennis Stevens. As of May, 2005, the Headquarters has been located at The University of Winnipeg. It is supported by the Faculty of Education, with Cathrine Froese Klassen as Executive Administrator.

Continuing Mission

The World Council continues to focus world attention on gifted and talented children in order to ensure the realization of their valuable potential to the benefit of humankind. Established by Iraj Broomand and the executive in 1977, this overriding objective continues to guide the World Council in the 21st century. It is no small accomplishment for the World Council to have continued to meet its objectives all these years. The organization has benefited from the vision and energy of its founders and their successors in office, from its dedicated and hard-working Executive Committees, from its support from elected delegates world-wide, from its generous donors and hosting institutions, and from its members across the globe, now numbering over 500, and growing. With over 800 in attendance at this past summer's biennial conference in Warwick, we look forward to an even larger conference in Vancouver that will be a significant part in the current revitalization of the World Council.

Editor, Cathrine Froese Klassen
Co-editor, Annette Greene



Annette Greene, Executive Assistant

Annette Greene is the Executive Assistant at the World Council Headquarters. She has been working with the World Council since September 26, 2006 and has actively participated in maintaining the membership database; working with schools, educators, administrators, and parents; promoting the value of the World Council, locally and globally; maintaining the subscription database; and taking care of general office duties. In addition to her work with the World Council, Annette is not only a full-time student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Winnipeg, but also a full-time mom to two gifted and talented children, ages 11 and 15, and a foster parent to two Ethiopian girls, ages 17 and 18.

THE WORLD COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



Den-Mo Tsai, President

Dr. Den-Mo Tsai is a professor at National Kaohsiung Normal University, Taiwan. He is the Past-President of the Special Education Association in Taiwan. Den-Mo earned his doctorate at the University of Connecticut, U.S.A., with Professor Joseph S. Renzulli, the Director of National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented. Since 2005, Den-Mo has been president of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children. His term of presidency continues until July, 2009.

Professor Tsai is also the principal of the University's Affiliated Senior High School. The school has Senior High, Junior High, and Elementary Departments with an enrollment of 1500 students. It offers special programs for gifted students, including special classes, curriculum compacting, and grade-skipping.

Den-Mo's special pursuit is in gifted education and parenting. His publications include articles in Chinese and English journals and two popular books in Chinese: *Help Your Child Exceed* and *Help Your Child Reverse from Failure*. As the professor in the Department of Special Education, he teaches graduate courses in gifted education and advises graduate students. Den-Mo has frequently been invited to give lectures to and consult with educators, administrators, and parents of gifted children, in and outside Taiwan.



Deborah Eyre, Vice-President

Deborah Eyre is Professor of Education at the University of Warwick and former Director of the government's National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth in the United Kingdom. She has worked in gifted education for twenty-five years in various leadership roles, namely, as an academic researcher, a local authority adviser, and school teacher. She now plays a pivotal role in shaping national education policy in England. In recent years, she has worked internationally helping colleagues in Europe, the Far East, and the Middle East to develop their educational provision for gifted and talented children.

A widely published researcher and author, she likes to write for both academic and professional audiences and is particularly known for her book for teachers, *Able Children in Ordinary Schools*. Her interests are in the areas of Gifted and Talented education policy, practitioner research, and classroom practice.

Deborah serves on various UK Boards, including the Teacher Development Agency (TDA), The National College for School Leadership (NCSL), and Inspiring Futures Foundation (IF). She is also a Board Member of the Centre for Talented Youth (CTY), Johns' Hopkins University,

Baltimore. Deborah is a Research Fellow at the University of Oxford and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.



Taisir Subhi-Yamin, Secretary

Taisir Subhi-Yamin is a professor of gifted education. He has a B.Sc. in Physics, an M.A. in Special Education, and a Ph.D. in Gifted Education and e-learning from Lancaster University in England. He is the recipient of academic prizes and fellowships from Jordan, England, and the U.S.A., including a Fulbright Award (1996).

Professor Yamin is active in the field of science popularization and has written ten books and many articles and research papers. In addition, he has developed a number of training packages to develop productive thinking skills. He is an active member of an impressive list of academic institutions, including the British Educational Research Association (BERA), the European Council for High Ability (ECHA), Bahrain Association for the Gifted and Talented, Jordanian Association of Physicists (President), the National Committee for Gifted Education, and the Qatari Centre for the Gifted and Talented (founder). He is also the National Chancellor and regional representative of the International Association of Educators for World Peace.

He was a delegate of the WCGTC for about ten years. In 2002, he was elected to the Executive Committee of the WCGTC. Recently, he was named co-editor of *Gifted and Talented International*. Professor Yamin was involved in developing the UAE project for the gifted and talented at Ulm University. In addition, he has established, in cooperation with Professor Todd Lubart, the International Centre for Innovation in Education (ICIE-Paris).



Edna McMillan, Treasurer

Edna is retired from her role as Coordinator of Gifted Programs for a large Canadian school system. She enjoys the flexibility of being able to pick and choose her speaking and consulting engagements. These have provided challenge and stimulation for her in many parts of the world, including two years in Turkey.

At present, she is working with the organizing team for the next World Conference to be held in Vancouver, Canada. Her broad range of experience, especially her role as coordinator when the Tenth World Congress on Gifted and Talented Education was held in Toronto in 1993, and her expertise are invaluable to the World Council.

**Sandra Kaplan, Member**

Dr. Sandra N. Kaplan is a Clinical Associate Professor at the Division of Learning and Instruction, University of Southern California. She teaches the methods courses for the Multiple Subjects Teaching Credential. She

is a consultant for several state departments and school districts nationwide as the Assistant Director, National State Leadership Training Institute on the Gifted and Talented, a federally-funded project. She consults on topics such as education for gifted students, differentiated curriculum in depth and complexity, and thematic interdisciplinarity. Sandra has been a teacher and coordinator of the gifted in an urban Southern California School District.

As an author of articles, chapters, and books related to differentiated curriculum for the gifted, Sandra has conceptualized models to develop and implement curriculum that is appropriately responsive to the needs, interests, and abilities of gifted students. Her work as a Principal Investigator for three Javits funded federal grants has involved designing and researching curriculum in the area of social studies and "Thinking Like A Disciplinarian," and determining the effects of differentiated instruction, using models of teaching.

Sandra has been a state and national leader in the field of gifted education, assuming the role of President of the California Association for the Gifted (CAG) and the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). Some of her honors include the Distinguished Service Award and the Ruth A. Martinson Award.

**Leslie Graves, Member and MHAC (Mother of Highly-able Child)**

Leslie, who is new to the Executive Committee, has been involved in the world of gifted education for the past fourteen years. At present, she is working with the

Irish Association for Gifted Children as Vice-Chairperson, newsletter editor, events organiser, and as a support for parents and other interested parties. She, like other parents on the committee, fulfils many roles.

In her spare time, Leslie occasionally mentors graduates, and post-graduate students who may have an interest in doing research in the area of gifted education, sharing her large collection of resources, books, and other materials, as well as life experience. She also works as an occasional consultant with schools and other educational government bodies, such as the National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NCCA) and out-lying Education Centres. In addition, she has been known to lecture in university courses.

Recently, she has been running a creative-writing enrichment programme within a primary school for the purpose of investigating how it could be used to promote integration of gifted pupils in mainstream, multi-ability

classrooms, talent self-awareness and discovery, and the subsequent growth or self-awareness of metacognition, this being done with the view of a long-running attempt to gain a Master's of Education degree in Gifted Education.

Leslie says that, first and foremost, though, she is a parent who loves her two bright and beautiful children. She enjoys music, kayaking, horseback riding, swimming, computing (gaming, she has been told) and, generally, spending an awful lot of time in her 'banger' (her beat-up excuse for a car, as her kids call it)—a parent trying to make sense of our world and trying to keep the damage control to a minimum as her children face the uncertainties, insensitivities, and misunderstandings that this fantastic (or not) life may throw at them. Joining her are her husband, a large, golden Labrador retriever, two cats, a goldfish, and a pony, all in Dublin, Ireland.

Leslie welcomes any enquiries related to the possibility of any other frazzled parents or individuals who are out there, to get in touch and let her know if there is any way WCGTC could be of assistance in their neck of the world.

**Ngarmmars Kasemset, Member**

Ngarmmars Kasemset, also known as Anne, has been involved with gifted and talented development programs for many years as a student, a parent, and a founder of a national program in Thailand. She believes that Gifted and Talented development provisions should help children grow up to be happy individuals, committed to working for the common good. At present, Ngarmmars is the Director of Thailand—the Gifted and Talented Foundation (TGT). She is new to the Executive Committee.

**Cathrine Froese Klassen
Executive Administrator
(ex-officio member)**

Cathrine assumed the position of Executive Administrator this September. Please, refer to her report on pages 1 and 2 of this newsletter.

COMING SOON

The WCGTC is in the testing phase of a new on-line membership system that will automate most of the aspects of membership recordkeeping. Each member will not only be able to make all financial transactions on-line, but will be able to update address and other membership information directly on the website. Members can anticipate receiving an e-mail with a username and password for their personal and secure login to the members' website.

DELEGATE DISCOURSE



Australia

Preparations are currently underway in Victoria for the annual VAGTC conference, "Head and Heart", to be held at the Docklands in Melbourne from November 14th to 16th. The Queensland Association for Gifted and Talented is also busily preparing for its annual conference "From Ability to Achievement: From Potential to Performance" in Toowong, Brisbane on March 15th and 16th, 2008.

Within the Victorian Department of Education and Training, there are now 34 secondary schools providing a Select Entry Accelerated Learning (SEAL) Program for the learning needs of gifted and students with high academic abilities who will complete Years 7 to 10 in three years. Within the Victorian independent school sector, a number of excellent programs have taken place in 2007 for gifted students. For the eighth year in succession, Melbourne Girls Grammar School, in collaboration with other leading schools, has been part of the University of Melbourne Mentor Program for high-achieving Year 10 students. Meanwhile, Presbyterian Ladies College, Melbourne, has mounted an extensive Middle School Mentoring program in conjunction with Deakin, Monash, and Swinburne Universities. In April, Wesley College, Melbourne, hosted a Science, Ethics, and Religion Conference attended by 600 gifted and high-achieving senior secondary students. The Booroondara Secondary Gifted Network Member Schools have hosted a wide range of workshops for gifted and talented students. The da Vinci Decathlon and Academic Challenge for Year 7 students is an academic, interschool gala day, where schools enter a team of eight students who participate in a range of disciplines. The National Final took place from October 2nd to 4th.

At the Faculty of Education, Monash University, Victoria, an expansion of elective studies in gifted education will be offered at the undergraduate level. At the postgraduate level, a Postgraduate

Certificate, a Postgraduate Diploma, and Master of Education specializing in gifted education will be available for interested teachers, as on campus and off campus learning.

This year's achievements include the re-establishment of Perth Modern School as the state's only fully selective secondary school, the growth of selective programs available in academic, arts, and language areas, the continuing development of Primary Extension and Challenge programs for gifted primary students, and the provision of professional development opportunities for teachers.

In 2007, we are fortunate as we appear to be on an upward swing!

Leonie Kronborg, Margaret Plunkett, and Susan Knopfmacher



Austria

Many new initiatives in the field of gifted and talented education have been undertaken in Austria. New teacher training colleges offer modules for gifted education developed by the Austrian Research and Support Centre for the Gifted and Talented (özb). This centre also took over the management of the "International Panel of Experts for Gifted Education" (iPEGE) whose aim is to develop international standards of gifted education in teacher training and to establish an international Master Studies Programme. As for pupils, the project "ELCAD International" (e-learning and computer aided design) and international summer academies were launched. Also, the project "Pupils Attending University" offers highly-gifted pupils the opportunity to enrol and take courses at universities and colleges while still attending school.

*Linda Huber and Dr. Waltraud Rosner
Austrian Research and Support Centre
for the Gifted and Talented*



Bahrain

The Children and Youngsters Club is considered one of the distinguished activities that has recently been developed by the Ministry of Social Development in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The Club aims to promote creativity of children in different fields, to organize scientific camps that develop their love for exploration and knowledge, and to participate in local and international meetings. The club organized a very successful program last summer entitled "Creative Youngsters" that was launched in co-operation with a specialized German Technical Corporation. Youngsters were enrolled in a variety of programs, ranging from digital video and photography to jewelry-making and electronics.

Dr. Jihan I. A. Alumran



Brazil

In 2005, the Ministry of Education implemented the High Abilities / Giftedness Center of Activities in 27 Brazilian states. The purpose of the centers is to provide educational conditions for meeting the needs of gifted students, in-service training for teachers in order to prepare them to work with the gifted, support for the family, and educational resources and technological equipment. The Centers have established partnerships with universities and non-governmental agencies, such as the Brazilian Council for the Gifted. Up to this moment, 3,345 teachers from 22 states have been trained, and 2,004 students from 16 states have attended the activities in the centers. There are 185 teachers, 46 psychologists, and 41 coordinators who work at the centers. Conferences on giftedness have been held in Brazil. In October 2007, the Association for High Abilities / Giftedness in Sao Paulo sponsored a conference for teachers, psychologists, parents, physicians, and principals. Also, the number of publications in the area of giftedness

has increased in Brazil. The books *Developing High Abilities and Talents: A Guide for Parents and Teachers*, organized by Denise Fleith and Eunice Alencar, and *Creative Talent*, by Angela Virgolim, have just been published.

Denise Fleith



England

The National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY), based at Warwick University, completed its five-year government contract and has ceased to exist. Responsibility for the national programme is being taken forward by the CfBT Education Trust. An early initiative has been asking schools to include all gifted students, from ages four to nineteen years, on a national register. This will enable better tracking of these students as they pass through the school system and will help identify those students who may need additional help and support. A further recent initiative is to have a trained 'leading' teacher for gifted and talented education in every secondary school and available to each cluster of primary schools.

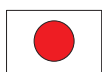
Kate Niederer, Gifted Education Consultant



Ireland

The NCCA (National Council for Curriculum Assessment, Republic of Ireland), along with the CCEA (Council for Curriculum for Examinations and Assessment, Northern Ireland), has produced the document, *Guidelines for Teachers of Exceptionally Able Children*. The guidelines for gifted are already available online and are to be released and published in the very near future. You can see them at www.ncca.ie. This is an exciting collaboration of expertise between the curriculum design teams of both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Members will be notified about when the hard copy version will be available.

Leslie Graves, WCGTC Executive Member



Japan

One of the recent plans by the Ministry of Education is the development of collaborative programs for high schools and universities to offer enrichment programs to high-school students, which are now implemented at many universities. They accept students for courses after school and give open lectures and summer seminars. At present, the activities they provide are only for enrichment, and students do not use them as credits for high school or university. However, each university actually has the discretion to provide credits for these programs and, hence, it provides a possible form of acceleration in the future.

Nobutaka Matsumura



Jordan

As Department Head (4 - 6) at the National Orthodox School in Amman, I supervised and directed the "projects day" at our school last May, 2007. We have been implementing project-based learning for three years to promote thinking and research skills. This year the projects were Powerpoint presentations that dealt with languages and science. The first, in Arabic, was about all types of violence; the second was in science about the temperature at which water boils and the factors that affect it; the third, in English, was a press release. For the latter, the students summarized news from the Jordanian newspapers from January 2007 to May 2007 on politics, economy, sports, and local news. They also commented on the news and gave their points of view.

Janette Wakileh



Peru

On September 6th and 7th, the International Seminar on Creativity & Giftedness: A Challenge for Children at Risk was held at the Psychology Department of the Catholic University in Peru where topics related to the development of creativity and

giftedness from the school to the university settings were presented. Invited speakers, Dr. Eunice Soriano de Alencar and Dr. Juan Alonso, shared with the audience a number of proposals for the promotion of creativity and giftedness in Brazil and Spain. Dr. Uldarico Malaspina and Dr. Sheyla Blumen presented innovative proposals and research results developed in Peru in the field of Mathematics and Educational Psychology. Moreover, Luis Ernesto Gutiérrez and Mónica Iza shared experiences in teacher training and university studies.

The main goal of this seminar was to sensitize all the stakeholders to the impact of the development of creativity and talent in children and youths who belong to public schools, hospitals, orphanages, and other institutions who do not give consideration to special programs for the development of their creativity and talent. Working groups in research and applied topics related to intelligence, creativity, and giftedness were organized to support the 7th Biennial Conference of the FICOMUNDYT to be held in Lima-Peru from August 12th to 14th, 2008.

The impact of this academic meeting surpassed our expectations. Governmental institutions involved in the improvement of the quality of education in science and technology offered support to next year's conference and to the execution of intervention programs related to the development of intellectual giftedness in order to improve the quality of education in Peru at the different levels.

The Catholic University of Peru (PUCP), venue of the next FICOMUNDYT 7th Biennial Conference, has already developed school-university programs for the intellectually gifted. It will incorporate the developed criteria in its admission process, as well as in the offering of fellowships for undergraduate students.

Our Biennial Conference and programs promote quality and excellence in a multicultural and transitional country

through educational competitiveness, improvement in the development of creativity, and innovation with ethics and social responsibility.

Dr. Sheyla Blumen, President of FICOMUNDYT

Juan A. Alonso, Ex-President of FICOMUNDYT



Saudi Arabia

King Abdul Aziz & his Companions Foundation for the Gifted is a national foundation chaired by Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, who assigns large, direct, and continued interest in the organization and its activities. King Abdullah, in the words “Let each of us carry his responsibility and play his role for empowering this Foundation, which is not exclusive to anyone, but a partnership between all of us citizens without exception,” expressed the nature of the foundation and its objective to encourage the gifted and to develop their talents. The Foundation is hosting the 1st Saudi Innovation Exhibition from March 9th to 13th, 2008. The organization of this exhibition, for innovators and inventors, seeks to carry out one of its key objectives by identifying, recognizing, encouraging, and helping develop innovations and inventions, independently or in partnership with other organizations.

Khalid Al Jabali



Singapore

Nurturing talents has always been at the heart of Singapore's education. In the light of new challenges and increasing globalization, the educational landscape in Singapore has taken a more integrative approach in educating its young to their full potential.

In 2004, the Integrated Programme (IP) was introduced to allow students who are clearly university-bound to skip a national examination, the GCE 'O' Level Examination, at the end of Secondary 4. In place of the centrally-run Gifted Education Programme, IP schools design their own school-based gifted education

programmes to cater to high-ability students in their schools. Direct School Admission (DSA) to secondary school was also introduced, allowing Primary 6 students to apply for the secondary school of their choice before the Primary School Leaving Examination, another national examination. Schools can now use DSA as a talent search strategy to identify other talents, in addition to intellectual ability.

Broadened conceptions of giftedness and talents have also led to the establishment of Specialized Schools to cater to students with talents in specific domains. These schools include the National University of Singapore High School of Mathematics and Science, Singapore Sports School, and the soon-to-be opened School of the Arts.

At the primary level, learning experiences are customized to cater to students with talents in diverse areas, for example, subject-based banding across classes of the same grade level. More attention is being given to nurturing the top 5% in subject-specific areas of pupils' talents and interests. Principals and teachers are encouraged to initiate enriched learning experiences in specific areas such as Mathematics and English Language.

The Gifted Education Branch has taken on a more active role in providing consultancy services to promote quality education for all, through customized school-based curriculum and good practices. Together with National Institute of Education, the GE has put in place a variety of teacher development programmes to build teachers' competency to support school-based programmes in providing enriched learning experiences for high-ability students, offering Certification in Teaching Pupils with High Ability (CeTPHA), with a practicum catering to the needs of the schools. To date, both organizations have put more than 300 teachers through their programmes. The NIE has been offering a Master of Education degree with specialization in Gifted Education since January 2007.

Efforts to identify and develop diverse talents in Singapore will continue to be aligned with the national educational

agenda of ability-driven education of optimizing scarce human resources for the benefit of the nation and society.

Dr. Bee Geok Tan, Deputy Director of Gifted Education Branch, Ministry of Education

Liang See Tan, National Institute of Education



Spain (Catalonia)

In the last two years, activities on the subject of high intellectual abilities have been carried out in the Catalan Community as never before. Two professional associations—the Official Association of Psychologists of Catalonia and the Association of Pedagogues of Catalonia—have worked together through their respective groups in order to improve the education of gifted and high-ability children for the first time in Spain's history.

On November 10th and 11th, 2006, the First National Days on School and Giftedness were held with a success unthinkable only a few years ago. Some of the best experts in of all Spain took part. The Department of Education of the Generalitat of Catalonia (the Government of Catalonia) determined to maintain regular contact with both professional organizations and also with the Faculties of Psychology and Pedagogy. The purpose of this collaboration is to implement postgraduate courses, master's degrees, and retraining courses for teachers, psychologists, and pedagogues, so that they can learn to carry out school and individual interventions, identification, and so on. At present, these courses are non-existent in the autonomic community of Catalunya.

Besides the groups mentioned, some associations of parents of gifted children of Catalonia will be received in Parliament in the near future to present our common project for these children of high intellectual abilities. It seems that finally the politicians will begin to counterbalance the many decades of injustice in the education of these children. We trust (and pray...) that it will be like this and that we won't get fooled

again!

Leopold Carreras-Truño



Spain

Murray State University, Kentucky, and Huerta del Rey Center of the University of Valladolid have a set up a collaborative program that poses as an important advancement in professional development. Through this collaboration, individuals will be able earn a Spanish Certificate in Gifted Education online. The certificate allows students to use their university credits in every university, to teach gifted students at school, to coordinate programs, and to provide counseling in the field. To obtain this certificate, the student must fulfill a 180-hour course requirement, consisting of modules in the nature of giftedness, the needs of the gifted, creativity, methods for teaching the gifted, and doing a practicum. The program will take effect in the first semester of 2008.

Dr. Yolanda Benito



Switzerland

On August 20th, 2007, Talenta School Zürich for highly-gifted children, ages six to twelve, opened the new “Talenta Take-off” for these children. In 1998, Talenta was founded by Jean-Jacques Bertschi, president, and Xaver Heer, school director. The school is housed in new premises right in the heart of Zürich. World Council President, Den-Mo Tsai, visited the premises just after the 2007 Warwick Conference.

Dr. Jean-Jacques Bertschi



United States

University of Central Florida, in collaboration with University of Marjon-Plymouth, College of St Mark & St John, England, is offering a wonderful study abroad program for next summer, June 28th to July 18th, 2008. Plymouth is the small port from which Drake, Raleigh, Cook, and Darwin set sail on their famous voyages. The Mayflower Steps can also be found, from where the Pilgrim Fathers sailed for America in 1620. The National Marine Aquarium is also located here. Excursions will include The Eden Project, Tintagel, The Villages of Kingsand and Cawsands, St Michael's Mount, and Land's End on the Penrith Peninsula.

This study abroad will offer three courses to students: one at the undergraduate level—Analysis and Application of Ethical, Legal, and Safety Issues in Schools—and two at the graduate level—Multicultural Education and The Nature and Development of Creativity. Independent Study is also possible. The various issues and concepts covered in these courses will be combined with service learning in local schools; additional days will be spent visiting schools to examine issues, such as equity for low-income students, ethnic diversity, and exceptional and alternative students. Assignments will incorporate general visits to museums, sites, galleries, and agencies. Students will complete initial assignments online and then travel to Plymouth to complete additional field assignments. The assignments will be modified to infuse this study abroad experience.

Dr. Gillian Eriksson, Gifted Education and Study Abroad Coordinator, University of Central Florida

Search for New Editor

Gifted and Talented International

With the departure of Dr. Maria McCann as editor of The World Council's peer-reviewed journal, *Gifted and Talented International*, the Executive Committee of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children is inviting applications from its membership for the position of editor of the journal. Interested individuals should submit a vita and letter describing their interest and qualifications as they relate to each of the criteria listed below.

- Significant scholarly activity in gifted education as reflected in grants, publications, and presentations at conferences
- Established reputation in the field of gifted and talented education, preferably at the national and international level
- Active participation in The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children over a period of five years or more (e.g., regular attendance and presentations at conferences)
- Experience in editing material for publication
- Ability to work with a team of editors in formulating and implementing journal policy
- Ability to write clearly, concisely, and correctly using the APA format
- Appropriate institutional support

Please, send a vita, a proposed budget, a letter of qualifications, and references to

WCGTC, Editor Search
World Council Headquarters
The University of Winnipeg
515 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 2E9
Canada

**Deadline for Applications:
February 29, 2008**

WORLD COUNCIL FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN CONFERENCE: A SUMMARY OF MY EXPERIENCES

Since I started teaching at the University of Winnipeg in 2003, I have become involved with the World Council, especially since its headquarters was moved here in 2005. When I had an opportunity



to go to the Biennial Conference in England, I jumped at the chance. A career of trying to help gifted students in the public school system never included going any further than the borders of my school division.

I got in touch with the fine people in Coventry at the University of Warwick after registering, and signed on to various events surrounding the conference in order to see central England. A **Cotswold Villages** tour, a half day in **Stratford-upon-Avon**,

an evening of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, and a "**Coventry Mystery Tour**" really made the country come alive for me, especially since this was my first time traveling to Europe.



I went as a technical assistant to two people from the University of Winnipeg who made presentations. In this capacity, I got a chance to rub shoulders with some very knowledgeable people in the field of gifted education from around the world. I think this is the great strength of having conferences such as this one. The opportunity to meet people doing ground-breaking work in the field of gifted education is unprecedented.

Over 800 people from 69 countries came to Warwick. The opening ceremony on Sunday, August 5th, featured a specially choreographed performance of Coventry's Godiva Sisters—celebrating the life of the famous benefactor, Lady Godiva. Different ethnic, cultural, and religious communities in this area were invited to choose their own heroines and celebrate eleven



people who are known as the "Godiva Sisters". Celtic, African, Muslim, Christian, Serbian, Chinese, and Sikh communities chose their heroes and performed dances. All of this was supported by The Phoenix, a person in a remarkable bird costume on stilts, who represented the rebirth of Coventry after its destruction by bombing in 1940.

On August 6th, we attended the Mayor's reception at the Coventry

Cathedral. There was entertainment (a 15-year-old singer, a gospel singer, and a group) and an opportunity to check out the magnificent building that had been destroyed by bombing in 1940 and left as a skeleton. A new church was built in 1957.

August 7th brought new opportunities to meet people, acquire new perspectives about gifted education, and see more of England.

Keynote presentations, like Dr. Deborah Eyre's (bottom left) and Dr. Gregorenko's (right), set the tone for the day professionally.



There was a display area at the conference site, and many delegates took advantage of some of their free time to look over what many vendors and groups interested in promoting gifted education had to say and show.

I also got to spend a good part of the day in Stratford and wandered about for three or four hours. That evening, many conference participants went to the Courtyard Theatre and saw *Richard II*. It was a theatre built like the old Globe Theatre from Shakespeare's day, and the play was excellent. It lasted three hours, with intermission.

August 8th and 9th passed in an interesting fashion, and, all too soon, the closing exercises were upon us. Gifted children, who were having a conference of their own paralleling ours, presented their findings; promotions for upcoming conferences were heard (including the next biennial World Conference in Vancouver, Canada, in 2009); questions and achievements from the conference were enumerated; and finally, the World Council President, Den-Mo Tsai, declared the Conference adjourned.

*Allan Appel, Instructor,
University of Winnipeg, Canada*



AN EYE-OPENING EXPERIENCE

I sat right in front of Sandra Kaplan and I almost ate breakfast with Donald Treffinger! My husband just looked at me. He had spent the day in Coventry doing laundry while I had spent the day at my first World Conference at Warwick University. Never having been to an international conference, I was overwhelmed with the experience. (He was just as underwhelmed to be putting away the laundry.) Having taught gifted students for the past 27 years, I had been to state conferences, and one national conference, but the World Conference was a radical departure from what I had come to expect at a gifted conference.

The truly international scope of the conference was the most interesting aspect. Many of us in the classroom tend to become insulated from the rest of the gifted community and see our classroom as representative of gifted classrooms everywhere. Even local conferences and most of my textbooks have reinforced that perspective by failing to present information about gifted education in other countries. Attending the World Conference was the first chance I have had to interact with gifted educators outside my own small perspective. Just being able to eat breakfast with fellow teachers from Australia and New Zealand each morning gave me a new perspective on issues. (Donald Treffinger almost sat next to me at breakfast, but it turned out someone else was saving him a seat.) Listening to the educators from around the world, whether in formal sessions or casual conversations while waiting for a presentation to begin, was probably the most personally enriching aspect of the conference for me.

The similarities between gifted education in my geographical area and gifted education across the globe were notable. The strategies and approaches displayed in the sessions were not new to me; however, the

application of those strategies to meet the needs of particular populations was, indeed, novel. I also found it somehow reassuring that other countries were still grappling with the same areas of concern that I have been studying for several years—underrepresented populations, lack of government funding or support, bias against gifted students and their learning needs, and problems of how to meet all the needs of all the students all the time with limited resources. But even more interesting was the huge difference in perspective in some cultures. The presentation on meeting the needs of the Maori people in New Zealand was quite an eye-opener and had me rethinking the way my culture focuses on individual achievement rather than the needs of the larger group.

The innovative classroom programs presented at the conference were of great interest to me because of their applicability to my own classroom. I have already used the MAMBO interactive website, from Ireland, about the human body, and I have plans for a more in-depth use later in the year. (Google MAMBO, human body, Ireland, or http://www.science.ie/EN/index.cfm/section/news/page/newsPage/news_key/374.)

The Night of the Nobles from Australia, focusing on the contributions of famous people, will be the focus of individual study units in the spring. I also like their idea of presenting the information at an evening event that is open to parents and the community. I have redoubled my efforts to read poetry aloud to my class because of Chris Yapp's presentation. (He said that we need to read poetry aloud to our students so that they learn the proper diction and cadence since much of the computer interaction they will have in the future will be voice activated.)

One surprising element of the conference was the tremendous

variety of topics. There was literally something for everyone—no matter what one's area of interest was. Whether one was interested in creativity, university partnerships, neuroscience, summer programs, special needs populations, teacher education, technology, or action research, one could find several sessions of interest in each area. This is not always the case at local conferences where the most interesting thing to do during a session block may be to look through the vendor displays.

On a personal note, I have to say I also enjoyed the travel opportunities. My husband traveled with me to Warrick, and we went to Stratford-on-Avon Wednesday afternoon. Never having been to England before this trip, we loved the opportunity to explore and see some places we had only read about. The cultural education afforded by the conference has given me more experiences that I can relate to my students. When we talk about Shakespeare now, I can say I have been to his birthplace and, of course, show them my pictures. My husband actually did a lot of traveling while I was at the conference. He and another conference-widower saw castles, iron bridges, motor museums, and more castles (and did the laundry). He would come home at night to tell me about his travels, and I would tell him about my adventures. Such an eye-opening experience is not soon forgotten, and I plan to attend the conference in Vancouver in 2009. (My husband wants to come, too, but says he doesn't want to do the laundry this time.)

Beverly Horn, doctoral student of Dr. Gillian Eriksson, University of Central Florida

WCGTC LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

More ...'. The right column contains a vertical list of navigation links: Home, Who We Are, Our Mission, Our History, Our Headquarters, Our Executive, Our Delegates, Contact Us, Our Journal, Our Conference, Gifted Gallery, and Members' Area. Each link is underlined." data-bbox="42 138 925 599"/>

World Council for Gifted and Talented Children

worldwide advocacy for our gifted children

[Search](#)

Vancouver 2009

Mark your calendar to attend the 18th Biennial World Conference for Gifted and Talented Children, August 3 - 7, 2009, to be held in beautiful Vancouver, Canada. [More ...](#)

Nov. 5, 2007: The new official website for *The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children* is now “on the air”. Further enhancements and additions to the site are being made on an ongoing basis.

- Home
- Who We Are
 - Our Mission
 - Our History
 - Our Headquarters
 - Our Executive
 - Our Delegates
- Contact Us
- Our Journal
- Our Conference
- Gifted Gallery
- Members' Area

On November 5th, the WCGTC launched a new website: **www.world-gifted.org**. This initiative has been made possible by the very generous contribution of our website designer, Dr. Stephen Klassen, without whose expertise and dedication this could not have been achieved.

From the thumbnail image above, you can see the pages being featured. Additional content is being prepared for various pages in the “Who we are” section and will be added shortly.

An exciting feature of the website is the “Gifted Gallery”. This segment features gifted children, first on a rotational basis on the home page and then in an elaborated fashion when you click on “more”. This will lead you to a full-page

biographical sketch, and, if applicable, to the individual’s personal website. Several more of these entries are in the development stage. Contributions to this section are welcomed; however, please, note that featuring these children entails the processing of release forms. Therefore, if you wish to contribute, please, contact the Executive Administrator for details.

As the work on the site continues, we expect to include areas targeting specific audiences, among them teachers, parents, and policymakers.

We desire to keep the information current and appreciate your providing updates of information concerning details such as delegate status, affiliate status, and so on.

18TH WORLD CONFERENCE FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN

Promoting the Dream: Visions for the Future

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, Canada

It's time to mark your calendars and arrange to attend the 2009 World Council Conference in Vancouver, Canada, August 3rd to 7th, 2009 at the Sheaton Vancouver Wall Centre Hotel. Our conference theme, *Promoting the Dream: Visions for the Future*, speaks to a program that will be presented to stimulate participants in their work with and for high-ability children.

Conference Objectives

The conference team is busy preparing a full program of speakers, symposia, workshops, and networking opportunities for all who attend. Our objectives are to

- * share and discuss recent advances in programs, planning, and best practices for high-ability learners;
- * discuss advances in classroom practices and how they apply to personalizing your teaching;
- * review and discuss administrative options emerging throughout the world for gifted and talented learners;
- * discuss and share developments and concerns with parents of gifted and talented learners;
- * support the career development of educators and researchers interested in promoting high ability for tomorrow's world;
- * provide a Youth Summit program to increase the skills and networking opportunities for high-ability youth.

A Conference for Everyone

The 18th Biennial World Conference is the largest international gathering

of teachers, administrators, faculty, researchers, and parents in the world. All those interested in aspects of promoting ability and stimulating future success in learners should attend this conference. From experienced teachers to junior teachers, administrators to faculty researchers, human resource consultants to parent advocates, all are encouraged to attend the Vancouver Conference.

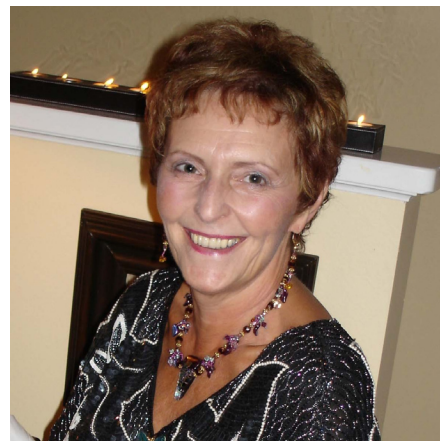
What Vancouver Offers

Vancouver is one of the top places in the world for beauty, uniting the sea, mountains, city, and nearby countryside. Its diverse populations and easy access to the Asian Pacific countries make it a rich site for visitors from all over. Multiple cultures are seen within walking distance of our downtown Sheraton Wall Centre Hotel. Tours and pre- or post-conference trips to nearby places such as Grouse Mountain, Granville Markets, Vancouver Island, or even an Alaskan Cruise can all be easily arranged right from our hotel. Rich and varied dining, shopping, or just taking a walk in Stanley Park will make this a conference city to remember for years to come.

With the Olympics just six months after our conference, Vancouver is gearing up to host the world! Join us for a scientific and personal experience you will never forget.

For more details check our website - www.worldgifted2009.com

Dr. Janice Leroux, Local Conference Committee Chairperson



A former school teacher of gifted students, elementary school principal, and full professor at University of Ottawa, Janice has been active in the field of high-ability education for over thirty years. Her research on gifted females has led to making many presentations and conducting training seminars internationally. Her written work includes two books and publication of over fifty articles in refereed journals. Her conference work includes conferences in Ottawa and Toronto, and she has been active in WCGTC on the Executive Committee as Treasurer and Vice-President. Currently, she makes her home in the Ottawa Valley, Ontario, Canada.

For information regarding sponsorship and exhibition opportunities, please contact Lori Dick.

email: wgtc2009-salesa@meet-ics.com

Tel: (604) 681-2153, ext 46

Summary of Carol Harris's Article: "Identifying Gifted Immigrant Asian-Pacific Students"

In the Volume 26, Number 2 issue of *World Gifted*, we presented the first part of Carol Harris's article, "Identifying Gifted Immigrant Asian-Pacific Students." In it, Harris identifies the barriers and specific issues that gifted immigrant Asian-Pacific students encounter when living and learning in North America and how educators need to address and understand these specific issues in order to implement effective intervention strategies that will assist these students in reaching their highest potential. Harris identifies linguistic barriers, cultural differences, lack of economic resources, attitudinal differences, socio-cultural peer expectations, cross-cultural stress, intergenerational conflict, and school system conflict as the key issues that inhibit learning potential in gifted immigrant Asian-Pacific students.

In making the conclusion to this article, we offer the strategies Harris provided that address these issues and the readings that she recommended.

Strategies that Address these Issues

- Include enrichment until language skills show progress.
- Utilize small-group projects in the native language.
- Include family and community in decisions for placement.
- Conduct interviews in the native language.
- Take parental status variables into account, with attention to occupation and education.
- Accentuate resiliency, optimism, and self-reliance.
- Encourage empowerment through written verbal expression, such as stories, poems, and journals.
- Identify weakness in locus of control.
- Use care in selecting staff, with attention to ethnocentric attitudes and / or misinformation.
- Utilize non-verbal expression and product assessment, such as music, art, and dance.
- Utilize peer referral.
- Involve community outreach services, including audiotape, video, and electronic media in the native language.
- Utilize problem-solving and hands-on experiments.
- Incorporate extra-curricular activities into identification procedures and programs.
- Utilize the developmental models, rather than the crisis-oriented or medical models that assume that students are coming with liabilities.

Recommended Reading

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New WCGTC Promotional Brochure



GIRLS, INTERRUPTED

Focus

Why play dumb? Because 'boys like girls whose hair outweighs their brain'; The overwhelming majority of Canada's intellectually gifted youngsters are boys, DANIELLE BOCHOVE reports, and it's not because they have all the brains. Something is wrong with the system. DANIELLE BOCHOVE

Originally published 4 March 2006
The Globe and Mail

When she was eighteen months old, Ana Graham stunned her parents by reciting "The Night Before Christmas" verbatim: They had read it to her once.

At age two, she was reading and doing basic math. At age three, they tried her in a Montessori school. She was so bored, she started jumping off the chairs, literally. "I was trying to knock myself unconscious," Ana, now nine, says wryly.

Her parents switched her back to public school, but it was no better; in kindergarten, the teacher told them to go private. They did, briefly, but gave up when the principal refused to provide enrichment.

By six, Ana was back outside her local public school, clinging to the lamppost while her mother, Paula Purdon, tried to drag her inside. "The spark that she'd had ever since she was two, by the time she hit Grade 1, was starting to go," Ms. Purdon says. "She didn't want to go to school anymore."

Last year, Ana's parents found a class they thought she would fit in, and then were shocked to learn that she now stood out for quite a different reason. Among the sixteen "gifted" kids, she was one of only five girls.

The imbalance was anything but unusual. For example, according to the most recent statistics, Ontario has roughly 7,500 boys enrolled in its elementary-school programs

for gifted students, compared with just 5,000 girls. The fact that the two genders are roughly equal in population raises an obvious question: What happened to 2,500 girls?

Experts believe that many clever young girls are simply not being identified as such in the early grades, and they believe it's a national problem. If not "caught" early, many become adept at hiding their abilities so they will blend in with the other kids. They essentially disappear, which can result in severe emotional consequences, particularly in adolescence.

"The odds are very high that we have a significant number of girls in the school system unlikely to reach their potential," says Elizabeth Buckingham, head of the Association for Bright Children of Ontario.

What that means for society is difficult to measure. After all, how do you estimate the value of a discovery that was never made?

"Try to imagine the loss to society of all these brilliant girls who are not contributing what they could," says Tammy Barrett, director of Willow Academy, a Toronto private school with a gifted program. "Not to mention the loss to these girls, and how sad they must feel."

Part of the blame rests with the system. School boards across Canada can't agree on how to handle gifted children. Testing methods and standards differ, and there is also some resistance to the very idea of gifted education because, unlike other "special needs," it raises the spectre of elitism.

"The fundamental problem is that so many people say, 'These kids are way up here, and my poor Johnny is barely achieving a minimum, and why do we want to give them something extra?'" Ms. Buckingham says.

But for girls, there seems to be an extra layer of discrimination.

Young children are often tested only

if a teacher suspects a psychological "problem," which typically involves disruptive behaviour. Boys outnumber girls three to one for behavioural issues, and frustrated intellect can be part of the problem.

"What you have is boys who are being referred for learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders, and other kinds of syndromes," says Michael Pyryt, director of the Centre for Gifted Education at the University of Calgary. "When they take the IQ test, they qualify as gifted."

He feels that, although there are problems with testing very young children, some form of national screening is needed to ensure that girls are equally represented.

In fact, it was Ana's daily tantrums outside the school that led to her educational lifeline. The vice-principal witnessed the lamppost drama one morning and, after learning about Ana's abilities from her parents, recommended she be tested. Told this could take months, Ms Purdon paid \$1,000 for a private assessment that found Ana to be "profoundly gifted." (Statistically, she scored in the 99.99th percentile of children her age.)

Armed with the test results, her parents were able to secure the "gifted" label that, in Ontario, gives Ana the legal right to special education. They were stunned, however, by the single option offered: busing their daughter to a school with a Grade 1 gifted class consisting of four boys, all of whom had severe behavioural problems. They turned down the placement.

"For the most part, giftedness does fall under the special-ed umbrella across the various provinces in Canada," Dr. Pyryt notes. The problem is pressuring schools to comply with their obligations.

[In the] US, officials worry more about being sued or having school funding cut if they fail to meet state requirements, he says, while here

“there’s much more acceptance, more belief, that the schools are doing everything possible.”

The system isn’t always to blame.

When Joanne Elmer founded the primary gifted program at Toronto’s Palmerston Public School in 2000, the class included six boys and two girls; the next year, the gap increased to seven and one. The number of girls lagged even though much of the boys’ disruptive behaviour disappeared once their academic needs were met.

“It was the parents who made the decision for the girls not to join the class,” she recalls. “Almost invariably, they said the same thing, which was ‘She’s happy with her social group. Or she has friends.’”

Some educators take it a step further. “The parents of boys—and this sounds astonishing—are more concerned about their education; they’re more ambitious for their kids,” says psychologist Dona Matthews, director of the Center for Gifted Studies and Education at Hunter College in New York.

“Parents of little girls are more worried about their safety, their socialization. So, if being identified as gifted means moving into a special program and moving schools, you’re going to find a lot more boys getting into these programs.”

Even many gifted girls agree. At twelve, Daniela Chang could be a poster child for all-round achievement; she excels in math, French, English, art and music—and was in a gifted program from Grade 4 to 6 after daily lobbying her teacher to be tested.

“When I found out I got in, I just went crazy. Flipped,” she recalls. Although there were almost twice as many boys as girls, she speaks highly of the program. But she doesn’t hesitate when asked what aspect of school is most important: “It’s really your friends. . . . If you don’t have friends, you really don’t have a positive experience.”

Now in Grade 7 at the University of Toronto Schools, Daniela Chang insists that “being happy is what you want

from childhood. You can start to learn in the higher grades.”

Maybe there is some truth in that..

At a time when education resources are so stretched, should educators be worrying about girls who may not be reaching their potential, particularly if they’re not exhibiting any social problems?

The danger is that there may be problems lurking below the surface.

Dr. Matthews, for example, concedes that gifted girls have a reputation for “self-enrichment”, but she believes that this may lead to “a lack of vigilance” on the part of educators that can have “serious consequences.” Her research suggests that bright adolescent girls may be more prone to depression, drug use, and suicide dangers that increase if their academic and emotional needs are not met.

Ms Elmer, who now teaches at Willow Academy, says even the youngest gifted girls can have problems, but few teachers are trained to see what’s wrong. Among the signs, she has identified the following: long periods watching other children but not participating, living inside a vivid internal world, extreme anxiety, heightened sensitivity, a stress on perfectionism and, finally, a dependence on repetition as in reading the same story or doing the same piece of art over and over.

The symptoms may be unobtrusive, but the girls are far from okay. “It creates a dissonance in them,” Ms Elmer explains.

She is also concerned about the “dumbing-down” technique bright girls use for social survival. Because they tend to be more socially aware than boys, they can begin to hide their intelligence almost as soon as they set foot in a classroom.

Camille Chan is only six; yet, her mother says it’s already happening.

Bright-eyed and inquisitive from birth, Camille was five when she was assessed as gifted even though mom, Catherine Cook, says she refused to co-operate and left the test unfinished.

At three, Camille had decided to

become a doctor. Her main interest right now is the musculature of the heart, and her favourite Christmas present this year was a stethoscope. And yet, asked if she likes school, she shakes her head vehemently, replying, “I just do music and gym.”

“We think the expectation at school is to be like that of the other kids,” her mother says, noting that Camille has already begun to pretend not to know things and her recent report card contained not one “A”.

Has Ana Graham ever seen anyone playing dumb? “Boys,” she observes coolly, “like girls whose hair outweighs their brain.”

“I’ve never done it,” she adds, “but I know some girls purposely make mistakes so they won’t look smart.”

For those girls who don’t mind being considered bright, the next question is where to put them?

The most obvious option is the full-time gifted class, and certainly Ana’s parents say this is the first year she has shown any signs of liking school. She, herself, concedes that her Grade 5 gifted class, with eight girls and seventeen boys, is “better” than what came before, but it’s still far from perfect. She has no close friends in the class, which is a Grade 5 and 6 split, and she finds the older kids’ work more interesting. “We’ve been doing structures for three years straight,” she remarks. “How much can a person learn about a suspension bridge?”

Her mother says most of the flaws can be traced to the fact there is just one teacher, who is good but overworked. “I’ve often said that, if you had twenty-five or twenty-six autistic kids in one class, you wouldn’t have one teacher.. . . The demands when you have that many eager, inquisitive minds in one classroom are beyond realistic. It’s draining; you can see it in the teacher’s face.”

Dr. Poryt says gifted classes are the best solution, if only because they bring bright kids together. But where there are no such classes, parent must resort to other tactics.

Rosann Lacalamita, for example,

has tried acceleration and “pull-out” programs, as well as in-class enrichment for her gifted girls, now seventeen and thirteen. A public school vice-principal in Waterloo, Ontario, with a background in special education, she is a big fan of acceleration even though many school boards oppose skipping grades for fear it may cause social problems.

This argument enrages many. “To say to somebody that he or she should be age-appropriately placed is ridiculous,” Ms Lacalamita insists. “. . . Can you imagine doing that to an adult? Forcing them to be with people their own age?”

Dr. Pyryt agrees: “The research on acceleration is overwhelmingly positive in terms of academic benefits with very little social consequence. Fear of social-emotional maladjustment has been over-generalized. Basically, acceleration works for 95% of kids.”

Still, it took a 300-page research report, prepared by her mother, and determined lobbying within the school board before Ana Graham was allowed to skip Grade 2. Ms Lacalamita’s daughters took a more gradual approach, accelerating by half-years or in specific subjects, as the need arose.

Pull-out programs, meanwhile, remove gifted children from their regular classroom for brief periods of enriched learning, often one a day a week. While they work well for some, Ms Lacalamita says that her younger daughter worried about the social stigma of being gifted and felt self-conscious about being singled out for enrichment.

As for in-class enrichment, its success depends largely on the abilities—and energy—of the classroom teacher.

Ms Lacalamita advises parents trying to wade through the various options not to lose sight of the fact that “learning has to take place.” This may seem obvious, but one of the more common practices of teachers not trained in how to cope with bright girls is to suggest they hone their

leadership skills by teaching their own classmates.

Meanwhile, parents who feel they’ve exhausted their public school options may opt out. Some choose to home-school, while those who can afford it look to the private system.

Private schools have the ability to reject students with severe behavioural problems, which may create an environment that’s more suitable for girls.

They also can offer smaller classes. Willow Academy, for example, has a student-teacher ratio that’s never more than ten to one.

Ms Barrett founded the academy after years of struggling to find solutions for her own gifted children. She says that the parents she meets have one thing in common: “They’re all desperate. Well over 50% of the people who sit in my office cry. They weep out of profound sadness for their children.”

After just three years, Willow is bursting at the seams. There are plans to expand next year, but until then, the contrast between the cramped quarters and the vastness of the minds within is striking.

In Ms Elmer’s primary class, students display the encyclopedic knowledge common to highly-gifted students: in IQ terms, those testing above 145. She has five-year-olds who can list the Earth’s geological periods in order, name the capitals of every country in the world, and spell “crustacean” and “invertebrate.” They question and debate at a level far beyond their years, and all read fluently.

But private doesn’t mean perfect. Even Willow’s seventeen gifted students include only three girls. Private gifted programs are also scarce because many schools boast that they provide enrichment for all their students—a noble goal, but not one that addresses the needs of a child several grades ahead.

And, of course, there’s the cost. Parents who believe they have been forced out of the public system say there should be vouchers or tax

rebates to pay for an alternative. But ,in Canada, any kind of subsidy is politically untenable because of that great Canadian bogeyman: fear of elitism.

“I try not to use the word ‘gifted’ because, even among some of my closest friends, they feel threatened,” says one woman with a gifted daughter, asking not to be named. “Usually, I will say that she needs to have differentiated learning.”

Dona Matthews, the psychologist, senses “a societal resistance to smart people, and smart girls in particular. They have this gift, and we want to give them more gifts?”

But these are the children whose abilities, if nurtured, will allow them to pay back society, Ms Elmer emphasizes. “Teach them now so that some day when you have some terrible disease, these will be the creative thinkers.”

Ms Buckingham of the Association for Bright Children agrees: “In a world economy, you can’t afford to say mediocrity is okay,” she says. “You have to nurture the inherent talent that’s there.”

Danielle Bochove is a Toronto journalist and host of International Investing on Report on Business Television’s The Trading Desk.



The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children

The World Council is a worldwide, nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for gifted and talented children all over the world.

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Address all applications to
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The Wisconsin Center for Gifted Learners

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World Gifted accepts submissions for consideration for publication. We invite members to forward contributions at any time. Submissions must include the name of the author and title and the country of residence. Contributions to the "Delegate Discourse" should adhere to the 150-word limit and be formatted double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman, and not justified. The submission deadlines for the three 2008 newsletters are **December 17, 2007, April 25, 2008, and September 12, 2008.**



Gifted and Talented International

The next issue of *Gifted and Talented International* (Volume 22, Number 2, 2007) will be available on December 31, 2007 and will be posted to all the members of the WCGTC.

Articles for *Gifted and Talented International* are welcomed and may be submitted at any time.

The deadline for the Volume 23, Number 1, (June 2008) is February, 2008. Please, forward all manuscripts to Prof. Dr. Taisir Subhi Yamin.

WORLD COUNCIL PUBLICATIONS

World Gifted is the newsletter of the World Council. Published three times a year, it contains the latest news and information concerning the organization, its membership, and the international gifted education community. Any article or portion thereof may be reprinted with credit given to the source.

We continue to invite all members to contribute and report on anything that would be of interest other members, such as events or initiatives, news about regional organizations, profiles of individual members, or announcements of upcoming events.

Please, forward submissions to World Council Headquarters, c/o the University of Winnipeg.

Gifted and Talented International, refereed by an editorial review board of leading international gifted educators, is the official journal of the World Council. The purpose of the journal is to share current theory, research, and practice in gifted education with its audience of international educators, scholars, researchers, and parents. It is published twice a year. Prospective authors are requested to submit manuscripts or queries to

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CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

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1st Saudi Innovation Exhibition

Hosted by King Abdul Aziz and his Companions Foundation for the Gifted

June 18 – 21, 2008

Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) World Conference
Moscow, Russia

www.acei.org/wldconf.htm

July 2 – 4, 2008

Excellence in Education Conference

International Centre for Innovation in Education

Paris, France

July 14 – 18, 2008

10th Asia-Pacific Conference on Giftedness

Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

www.apcgifted.org

Augusts 12 – 14, 2008

7th Biennial Congress of FICOMUNDYT

Lima, Peru