



WorldGifted

Newsletter of The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children

www.world-gifted.org

SelfDesign® - A New Way of Thinking about Learning



The first six learners in the Wondertree program, on a Vancouver beach, with Brent Cameron (1984© Maureen Cameron)

In our culture, the word “giftedness” implies a very special innate quality, realized by only a few. It suggests a metamorphosis or transformation from a special kind of nothingness to a powerful and elegant kind of everythingness, not excellence in everything but in a special area of focus in an individual’s life. As a radical and innovative educator, I have chosen to look at this issue somewhat differently, believing that everyone has unique gifts to unfold. Because of the innovative nature of my work in human learning over the past forty years or more, I have had the opportunity to have breakthroughs in understanding and the possibility of extended observations into human learning.

The origins of SelfDesign®

On a beautiful sunny September morning in 1982, my daughter walked out of kindergarten. It was recess, and she was swinging joyfully on a swing. When the bell rang, she realized that she did not want to go back

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A Message from the President

Taisir Subhi Yamin

The globalization of markets is characteristic of growing internationalization. International experience, combined with tolerance and openness for other cultures, is considered to be key for the future. Education enables people to make use of the opportunities of open borders and worldwide communication. Learning around the globe should be open to all people. The WCGTC is contributing by means of international cooperation.

The WCGTC will deal with significant issues on gifted education, as well as with gifted programming and initiatives aimed at promoting this field of knowledge. The manifold scholars and representatives of international institutions have a great opportunity to exchange views and knowledge and to discuss possibilities of cooperation. Many challenges await us, but also many opportunities. The first German Federal Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, once said, “We all live under one sky, but we do not share the same horizon.”

This international organization offers an excellent chance—through dynamic exchange and the establishment of international networks—to extend its horizon mutually. This not only creates progress for the people, but also peace and freedom for the world.

Investment in giftedness and talent development plays a major role in creativity and innovation. The question is then, “What makes certain countries more innovative and creative than others?”

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Executive Administrator's Message



The new year brings with it new beginnings. In a business with a December year end, that means calculating and meeting deadlines. During the past few months, all the annual corporate duties have been attended to and another newsletter has been produced. While there are cyclical activities that create a certain rhythm in the office setting, whether annual or biennial cycles, there are also many unusual and unexpected occurrences, requests, and contacts that provide interest and inspiration, and the job never declines to the level of routine.

It is gratifying to see that The World Council is in a better state than it has ever been, in terms of its stability, hosting arrangements, financial condition, and productivity, and is poised to concentrate on its mission. The Executive Assistant has been a great help in providing expert support in the day-to-day operations.

Being situated on a university campus provides me with the opportunity to attend instructional and motivational sessions, such as the recent inservice on the Renzulli Learning System. I attended another session on Junior Undiscovered Math Prodigies (JUMP), a math tutoring approach aimed largely at disadvantaged children—those with learning challenges and from lower-income homes.

Conference planning for 2011 in Incheon, Korea is underway. My visit for site assessment and planning meetings with the Korean organizers in December was highly productive. The impressive, newly resituated University of Incheon is a state-of-the-art facility, boasting fully equipped, spacious theatres, classrooms, and dining halls. It is hard to realize that the next conference is less than a year-and-a-half away.

We are pleased to be expanding the delegate and affiliate frontiers with new members from Trinidad and Tobago and Ukraine, respectively, and we welcome them heartily as we strive ever to meet the educational needs of gifted and talented children.

At the end of February, a combined issue of *Gifted and Talented International* – Volume 23. No. 2 and Volume 24. No. 1 – was posted on our website. Each article has been posted individually for ease of use, reading, and downloading. Volume 24. No. 2 was posted in the second week of March. We trust that

you will find the articles appealing and insightful. Indexing the journal with ERIC and the H. W. Wilson Company is in process.

In this newsletter, you will find, in addition to the usual features and announcements, a feature article on a Canadian schooling option called *SelfDesign*. This individualized, student-and-parent driven approach to schooling and curriculum breeds much hope and optimism for forging new directions for the gifted and talented. You can also read about the International Young Physicists' Tournament, its history and its continuing success. While the 2009 Conference has receded beyond the horizon, a progressive thinker and school trustee, who attended the Vancouver Conference, presents his conviction that if reform in gifted education is to be supported fundamentally, then especially the policy-makers—school trustees and administrators—must be informed about the advances in gifted education. The World Council can partner in this and play a role by working at the grassroots level to make it happen. Take the time to meet the representative from our newest delegate country, and if you are a post-graduate student, link up with fellow colleagues through the "Post-graduate Connection."

In this issue, I am also announcing a new addition to our website—our newly created archive of *World Gifted*, with the newsletters dating back to the first issue that was produced in 1980. This project would not have been successful without Prof. Dr. Klaus Urban's donation of historic issues of newsletters last October. I am deeply grateful for his contribution in assisting us in preserving the history of The World Council.

Every job is susceptible to monotony, tedium, and sameness, and if one is not careful, one's vision and mission can become tainted or obscured. Above my desk, I have a sign that reads, "Is there not a cause?" This question is a constant reminder that all efforts are worthless and challenges not worth overcoming if we cannot see beyond them and pursue the cause—the reason why we, as The World Council, exist.

Cathrine Froese Klassen
Executive Administrator and Editor

World Gifted Archive Online

Technology can work wonders. When The World Council first began to publish its newsletter, *World Gifted*, in 1980, under the editorship of Dr. Dorothy Sisk, the primary means of preserving the edition was to safeguard the hard copy. With technological advances, we can now not only provide you with electronic copies of the issues that are being produced throughout the year, but we also have the capability—given that we have original copies in hand—to convert the original, hard-copy files into electronic files, and this is what we have done. As early as January 2008, I began scavenging old copies of the newsletter and announced my archiving intentions in that volume of the newsletter. Now, the newsletter portion of the project is complete.

This past fall, as Morna Christian and I were beginning to sift through the accumulated leftover editions, I received a wonderful surprise in the mail. Prof. Dr. Klaus Urban had packaged up some of the early editions, along with early copies of our journal, *Gifted International*, and sent them to Headquarters. This package of valuable materials made it possible for us to proceed with the archiving project. My deepest appreciation goes to him, not only for his generous contribu-



World Gifted

NEWSLETTER OF THE WORLD COUNCIL FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN

VOL. 1, No. 1

APRIL 1980

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

To members of the World Council and other participants at the San Francisco and Jerusalem Conferences:

I am particularly happy to be the first to address you in our opening newsletter. Since the World Council was formed at the end of the London Conference in 1975, we have met some unexpected problems beyond our control which have slowed up our efforts and impaired any attempts at communication.

Now there is every opportunity for us to move forward, given the means. Due to the generosity of Teachers College, Columbia University, we have been able to establish a small secretariat which will coordinate and disseminate. We are most fortunate in having the expert guidance of Dr. Harry Passow, our Honorary Director, and the enthusiasm of Dr. Milton Gold as Executive Secretary (also perforce honorary at the moment). Their wealth of knowledge and experience make them an ideal pair to be at the heart of the World Council and to help it to beat a little faster.

We have several exciting international plans in mind which will begin to realise the Council's objectives (see membership form), such as discovering more underprivileged gifted children, bringing together gifted young people from very different countries and backgrounds, and perhaps investigating widely as to why in government schools there seem to be far fewer gifted girls than boys.

But, and this please is crucial and needs to be taken very seriously, we cannot progress further without money. A number of us have been strenuously engaged in fund raising, but so far with only meagre results. It is the old story of success breeding success and money bringing money; so we just must get off the mark. We ask you to do your utmost to get more members of the World Council, to encourage donations and to let us know at once when you have tracked down a likely foundation or come across a millionaire who is just waiting to give something back for all that his gifts have brought to him in life. The

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IT'S MONTREAL IN 1981

Report on the Fourth World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children
--Montreal, August 21-25, 1981

Conference plans are moving briskly. The introductory brochure will be mailed around the end of March, and the call for proposals with a complete registration package in September.

The theme, *Many Views of the Gifted for the Advantage of All Children*, will be strongly emphasized, and the program committee hopes to divide the conference content about equally between sessions it initiates and those proposed by participants. The complete convention facilities of the Queen Elizabeth Hotel include 20 meeting rooms, so there will be no shortage of opportunity to participate.

We urge members of the World Council and participants at the previous world conferences to begin planning their contributions to the program. If you have any questions, please write to the conference organizers at any time. The program committee will be especially interested in presentations which include demonstrations, examples of children's work (actual, photographed or otherwise recorded) and informed discussion among participants, in addition to familiar paper presentations. These alternatives will be explained in detail in the call for proposals.

If you are starting to make your travel plans now, please plan to arrive in Montreal no later than Thursday, August 20, 1981, and to leave no earlier than Wednesday, August 26.

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MEMBERSHIP IN THE WORLD COUNCIL

Membership in the World Council is now available at a reduced price for the remainder of the biennium preceding the Fourth International Conference which will be held in Montreal, August 21-25, 1981. Membership, which includes the Newsletter (*World Gifted*) and the Journal (*GATE*), may be secured for \$15 US for the period ending June 30, 1981, by writing to Milton Gold at the Secretariat office, Box 218, Teachers College, New York, NY 10027.

Year	Issue	Volume & No.	Year	Issue	Volume & No.
1980	April	Vol. 1, No. 1	1988	September	Vol. 9, No. 2
	September	Vol. 1, No. 2			
1981	March	Vol. 2, No. 1			
	June	Vol. 2, No. 2			
	November	Vol. 2, No. 3			
1982	March	Vol. 3, No. 1			
	October	Vol. 3, No. 2			
1983	March	Vol. 4, No. 1			
	May	Vol. 4, No. 2			
	October	Vol. 4, No. 3			
1984	April	Vol. 5, No. 1			
	June	Vol. 5, No. 2			
1985	January	Vol. 6, No. 1			
	August	Vol. 6, No. 2			
	December	Vol. 6, No. 3			
1986	April	Vol. 7, No. 1			
1987	March	Vol. 8, No. 1			
	August	Vol. 8, No. 2			
1988	September	Vol. 9, No. 2			
1990	April	Vol. 11, No. 1			
	September	Vol. 11, No. 2			
1993	January	Vol. 13, No. 1			
	July	Vol. 13, No. 2			
1994	January	Vol. 14, No. 1			
	Spring	Vol. 14, No. 2			
	Fall	Vol. 14, No. 3			
1995	Fall	Vol. 15, No. 1			

* Issue not designated

Volume 1, Number 1, 1980

tion to our hard-copy files, but for affording us the opportunity to preserve our history and being able to share it with our membership.

In the interim, we have culled the files and catalogued the archived editions. With the assistance of Sarah Dietrich (a fourth-year University of Winnipeg student), the print shop, and our IT Manager, we have been able to finish the project. Apart from the earlier copies where margins were too narrow or images cut across a centerfold, the print shop cut the spines, whereupon Sarah proceeded to scan all of the pages and prepared the directory. Dr. Stephen Klassen then created a new webpage and posted all of the files.

The archive holds 56 issues from a 25-year period—1980 to 2009. For five of those years, we do not have any issues, and we cannot determine whether or not any issues were published. The missing issues are for the years 1989, 1991, 1992, 1996, and 1997. To the left is a complete listing of the newsletters that we have preserved and published online at <https://world-gifted.org>.

Cathrine Froese Klassen

Fourth-year U of W student, Sarah Dietrich, scanning the archived newsletters



Message from the President *continued*

The answer is high-quality gifted programs that are investing in human capital and innovation, in addition to developing new pedagogic creeds to meet the demands of the 21st century.

In addition to my concerns about gifted education and creativity, I am deeply concerned over the non-violent approach through education in its broadest sense. It is time to promote projects and activities needed to light up the pathway to promote international understanding and world peace through education, protect the environment against all forms of pollution, safeguard the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, promote nuclear disarmament and demilitarization, and plan ventures in international cooperation that emphasize technology, as it can benefit the entire human race.

What does The World Council need at

the moment? There is a need for cooperation, coordination, contribution, and effective planning to develop networks of scholars and committed people who are willing to help this organization achieve its aims and objectives. I am well aware that, whatever challenges and opportunities the times may bring, continuing to offer high quality services and products will be our reason for existing.

Dear delegates and members, you are kindly requested to cooperate and coordinate in order to recruit new members and to extend our network. I am convinced that it is important to build a platform for communication among all people concerned with and interested in gifted education. We hope to build on qualities and assets unique to this international organization and maintain strong commitments to the mission

of the WCGTC. There are a number of goals to which we should dedicate ourselves to make the WCGTC a leader and a driving force in the world-wide efforts, plans, projects, initiatives, and programming aimed at promoting and developing gifted education in different parts of the world. With your help and support, we will continue to have an impact on this field of knowledge and service.

We value and honour all of our members and delegates for their dedication in participating in our activities and events, supporting this highly respected international organization, and serving their communities and around the globe. Many thanks for your loyalty, commitment, and efforts.

Our Newest Delegate Country: Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago is a cosmopolitan country, rich in talent and diverse in culture. A large portion of the population finds a place for cultural expression by becoming involved in music. This involvement takes many forms and has led to the creation of art forms which are uniquely Trinbagonian. The steelpan, our national instrument, is at the centre of our national identity and forms an integral part of our social, cultural, and educational experience.

I was privileged to have the opportunity to observe, monitor, and guide the development of a musical prodigy, my younger brother, Atiba Williams, from the initial discovery of his giftedness at the age of eighteen months to the present day. He plays many instruments but is mostly known as a pannist. It had never occurred to me that I would one day become driven to understand and promote the world of the gifted and talented. Over the next twenty years, my motivation was propelled as I was continuously inspired by Atiba.



Nubia Williams, Delegate for Trinidad and Tobago

The experiences were sometimes surreal and, yet, at other times, really frightening and frustrating. I felt responsible for his all-round development and often had to be very creative in finding appropriate ex-

periences for his stimulation and growth. This is what I intend to translate to other persons exhibiting special qualities.

At the moment, there is no formal provision for the specific needs of the gifted and talented in Trinidad and Tobago, and no standardization screening or identification tools are utilized to measure music aptitude or music achievement.

In order to ensure that the gifted and talented in Trinidad and Tobago are given opportunities to function at their fullest potential, it is crucial to sensitize parents, educators, and other stakeholders regarding necessary requirements.

Since I attended the 18th Biennial World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children in Canada, August 2009, I not only feel connected to a group that shares similar experiences and challenges but, also, I am relieved to have found others promoting this cause worldwide. I, too, am committed to "Promoting the Dream."

*Nubia Williams
Delegate for Trinidad and Tobago*

SelfDesign continued

into the school. That night we talked about her insight earlier that morning, and she said, “In school I cannot learn what I want to learn when I want to learn it.” She did not return to school, and a year later in September, when her friends were going into Grade 1, our family began a conversation about learning. After over a week of discussions, we agreed to start our own school, based on the freedom of each child to learn what they want to learn. One fall day in 1983, my daughter and I walked, hand in hand, around Vancouver, putting up posters. We announced that we were starting a small learning center as an educational experiment in which children have the opportunity to learn through curiosity and enthusiasm.

Wondertree

We called the program Wondertree, and by the end of the first year, I had six children with whom I played and learned each day. By the start of the second year, I had formed a non-profit society and began working with 10 children out of our basement. Each year, for eight years, I worked with my daughter and, more or less, the same group of children. Each day, we sat together around a large circular table, and out of our conversations would come plans and activities that were meaningful and exciting. We pooled the tuition money, and the learners learned how to manage the budget of the program. We met interesting people on our adventures, and the children hired them to work with us each week for a few months. We hired musicians, story-tellers, dancers, potters, artists, writers, computer programmers, scientists, anthropologists, and—their favorite—a clown.

The curriculum emerged out of our individual and collective interests. Our decisions were based on consensus, and we used a negotiation strategy to resolve differences. Over the years, I began to witness qualities emerge, unique to each learner, that could be appreciated as an unfolding of natural intelligence or giftedness. In my attempt to understand better what was happening, I began searching for mentors to assist me in comprehensively explaining human development. I was influenced by Buckminster Fuller, whose idea about children’s learning was pivotal to my developing a new logic of learning:

“All children are born geniuses, but are swiftly de-geniused by their elder’s harsh or dull dismissal of the child’s intuitive sense of what could be relevant. Children spontaneously weigh all information from their immediate experience and try to relate it to other experiences of some time before. The incipient geniuses must somehow weather, year after year, the barrage of admonitions to ignore what they spontaneously think, instead of only paying attention to what others think and are trying to teach.”

I discovered Neuro-Linguistic Programming and worked with the founder, John Grinder, for several years. This subjective science introduced me to breakthrough techniques for observ-

ing and understanding human behavior at intrinsic levels and gave me strategies to help the learners design their own strategies for personal excellence. Gradually, over the years, I drew from many different disciplines to outline new ways of mapping and modeling an epistemology of human learning.

During these same years, the learners and I started designing software, and we won three national Canadian awards for innovation in education. The children focused on what they loved, and their deepening passions and successes deepened their skills, confidence, and self-esteem. I found it interesting to note that parents and visitors to our program started seeing each one of our enthusiastic, self-responsible learners as gifted and talented. This was especially significant because about half of the learners had come into the program with learning difficulties and challenges.

Virtual High: A new high-school concept

Although the original K to 9 ungraded program continued on for the next twenty years, I shifted my focus to start a high school. In 1993, Michael Maser, my daughter, Ilana, and I did the planning, research, and marketing for the launch of Virtual High. We attracted about 35 young people who felt high school was not meeting their learning needs. We rented an old mansion in the heart of Vancouver, where we began a new level of self-designed learning. It took a while for many of the teens to “deschool” and shift from being outer-directed by authority to being inner-directed as the authors of their own lives. One of the most empowering aspects of our program was the experience of consensus that gave each learner a practical experience of authorship and authenticity. Michael and I initially thought that the program was going to be about entrepreneurship and using technology in innovative ways to engage these youth as enthusiastic life-learners; however, the youth transformed the program so that the focus was on personal development. The ongoing conversations and interest in introspection and self-awareness encouraged each learner to get in touch with their inner resources. The process of SelfDesign® as an epistemological process was realized in the program as the learners



After a 3-day intensive conversation with the learners in Virtual High (1995© Michael Maser)

and consultants focused on meaningful feedback and personal development. It became clear to the learners that school subjects are both an illusion and a distraction from learning about the most important subject—subjectivity. With human experience as the curriculum, the learners began to transform as talented, intelligent, self-responsible and expressive happy young people.

When I examine traditional education using my own childhood as an example, I think that it is absurd that we learn all about math and science and, yet, we learn nothing about ourselves. We learn all about history, countries, and cultures and yet nothing about interpersonal relationships. We learn to digest literature and find out about famous people, yet nothing about how we work or about our feelings and our subjective experiences. The focus is outwards, not inwards.

The youth in Virtual High wanted to be heard; they wanted to create and experience their passion; they wanted to be the authors of their own lives. They longed to go deep inside and find out their purpose in life because they wanted to make a difference in the world. Through our ongoing conversations, they learned to tell their own story and to state their opinions and ideas in powerful and persuasive ways. They learned to acknowledge, respect, and love themselves and the others in the community. For each individual, a unique kind of innate intelligence emerged that was quite apparent to anyone who met them. Like flowers in spring, each learner blossomed according to designs within. The dancer was recognized as one of the best dancers in the province, the graphic artist was soon in demand around the world, and a group of learners so positively influenced Vancouver City Council with their ideas for an ecological village that the Councilors passed bylaws to build a sustainable community in the heart of the city. Virtual High was a four-year experiment, from 1993 until 1997, as a intentional learning community.

In 1996, our organization invited Chilean biologist and systems thinker, Humberto Maturana, to Vancouver to participate in an educational conference. I learned about his idea of “autopoiesis” and realized that it was a comprehensive insight into our creative emerging as learning organisms. I coined the term SelfDesign® as a translation from Latin to introduce the idea of learning as individual, creative experience in co-inspirational relationships.

SelfDesign® Learning Community

Our program, now officially called SelfDesign®, has become a profound and successful model over its first 27 years and has far exceeded my humble early expectations. As an educational organization, we had evolved to working with families rather than just children as we realized that children’s psyches and emotional attributes are intimately interwoven with the members of their families. A child’s wellbeing is intrinsically woven into the wellbeing of his or her family. Our desire became to create community in everything we did, community that intentionally inspires love and mutual respect for each member, and we were convinced that we could do this in many different forms.

In 2002, the Ministry of Education in British Columbia allowed our organization to start a pilot project offering our unique program as a province-wide, internet-based school. We began with 100 learners and 12 certified teachers, and we proceeded to create an online learning community of SelfDesigners and Learning Consultants.



85 Learning Consultants at the 2009 Summer Collaboratory near Vernon, British Columbia (2009© Josh Wright)

We designed our own software and created an online village experience. We became a learning program that emerges—as we all do—in conversations. Eight years later, we have attracted over 1000 unschooling and home-learning families from around the province who hear about the freedom and respect in our program. When a family joins, we invite our families and Learning Consultants to look over each other’s profiles and mutually choose to work together. This is an agreement that can be renegotiated as the year proceeds if the relationship is not optimum for both parties. Our Learning Consultants see themselves as part of a nurturing organization, and the families with whom we work find choice for themselves and for their children. Because our learners consistently demonstrate equivalent or better learning as compared to public school students and because our organization focuses on professionalism, accountability, and excellent record-keeping for the Ministry, we are seen as a highly successful and innovative program by the government. The Ministry of Education continues to support us by offering fifty percent of the funding received per pupil by public schools (as they do for other independent schools), as well as by translating their rules focused on instruction to agreements focused on learning. We do not teach, and we do not have grades, tests, or marks. There is no curriculum in the usual sense of the word, and we do not deliver courses over the computer network that children must learn. The learner is central and essential to the start and existence of our learning program. Children are natural learners, and we guide and support them in discovering and pursuing the learning experiences they desire. Our attendance is not the physical presence of a body in a classroom, but, instead, our insights into what children are actually enthusiastically “attending” to as an authentic learning experience.



River and Lia Meyer, in Boulder, Colorado, in a co-inspirational relationship while participating as a family in the SelfDesign® Learning Community (2005 © Brent Cameron)

We begin our year by asking each learner to talk about what he or she loves doing and would be curious about learning this year. Consultants and parents work with learners to design wonderful mind maps unique for each learner. For very young learners, we do not take the learning plan too seriously, not until the children begin to own their plan as a map of their own learning. With a plan in place, we make approximately \$1100 available for each learner as a learning investment to purchase resources and mentor time in support of their learning interests, as represented on their learning plan.

Each day, the parents observe both the planned and emerging learning. Each week, the parents and Learning Consultant engage in an online conversation about the achievements and learning process. Over the years, we gradually involve the learner more and more in this conversation. As our learners mature, they start documenting their own learning experiences through introspection and self-awareness. Learners are on their own self-designed learning path or journey that is supported by both the parents and the consultants and any mentors involved. The process is reviewed seasonally, and the learners become more and more responsible and capable of creating and growing their own learning journey as a lifelong continuum of self-actualization.

An overview

Our program is designed to meet the needs and optimize the interests unique to each child. “Curriculum” as experience emerges differently for each learner because we understand the individuality of every human being. Traditional education, as we know it, is a continuation of a model for teaching that arose out of the Industrial Age to train our children to become productive employees in our modern, industrial society. Our society has evolved past the Industrial Age into the Information Age, and our culture’s dynamics have also evolved and transformed. Schooling today is not preparing children for the future, but for the past—for a work ethic that is now obsolete. We have a choice before us: Do we encourage our children to learn skills from the past with which we are familiar, or do we imagine a

possible future and prepare them to live in the unknown and emerging reality of change for the future?

The resolution to the question of what do we change—the child to fit the system or the system to fit the child—emerges from fundamental philosophical and epistemological roots. Are children blank slates or essentially wild and chaotic beings who need to be socialized and taught values or are children essentially beautiful beings who, if respected, loved, and nurtured, will mature naturally into healthy and well individuals? We have a huge monolithic, social experiment called modern schooling based on the first premise. I believe schooling, essentially, does not trust the integrity of children and, therefore, for example, believes that children will not learn to read unless you teach them. Our society holds that authoritarianism and control of children is necessary to train them away from their immature natures towards participation in an intelligent society. In contrast, I think that there is enough evidence from the sciences involved in human development that we can afford to explore an entirely new experiment. In my opinion, the best science cannot fix a system that is antithetical to the essential attributes of our system. Our experiment, called SelfDesign®, is a prototype for change that is based on an engagement of individuals as loving beings in an ongoing effort to meet the developmental needs of individuals towards self-actualization. Self-actualization is the gradual development of the qualities and inherent intelligence of a human being in balance, harmony, integrity, and congruence. The results of this twenty-five-year experiment are becoming available as a prototype for innovation, leading to a new paradigm for learning beyond schooling. SelfDesign® is not an improvement on schooling; it is human learning as an authentic process and the design to support the learning community.

The paradigm of schooling has continued to exist even though a growing number of people realize that the system does not really meet the learning needs of our children; for example, in a recent Gates-funded study of 15,000 drop-outs, 88% of the youth leaving school had good grades but were bored and tired of both authoritarian teachers and classmates’ disruptive behavior. Schooling exists because most parents and all teachers have been schooled; it is all they know and understand. The universality of schooling ensures that instruction is the only way we now understand learning. We all believe that learning is something that happens in response to instruction and schooling. Learning follows teaching. From a systems perspective, schooling is a mechanism for social conditioning and compliance with a materialistic, authoritarian, and consumerist society. Compliance and allegiance to large social systems is deemed essential for a successful, economically viable society, even if it is at the expense of the wellbeing of the individual. Regardless of whether one is a critic or a supporter of education, currently there is no other way to keep children busy so that their parents can both go to work until the children themselves can go to work. Education has not been held accountable for academic success because it is a necessity as a pragmatic, economic placeholder, the real reason it still exists, despite its track record.

In contrast to underlying religious and cultural prejudices that, in my opinion, work against human nature, SelfDesign®, as a new model for learning, holds a fundamental assumption that human beings exist in integrity and that love is our universal, essential, and core quality. Our abilities as parents and educators to love, respect, and nurture our children in a way that honors human design and integrity allow for the infinite wisdom of each individual to unfold. Giftedness is the expression of the deep and unique qualities within each individual that emerge when the relational conditions are close to ideal. Potentially, it is, therefore, possible for everyone to experience the unfolding of his or her giftedness.

As adults, our ability to listen to and create relationships with children that are respectfully honoring of their and our integrity creates a mutually beneficial condition. In SelfDesign®, we call this co-inspiration. When we are each authoring and designing our own lives in touch with our deep desires and enthusiasm, then a kind of relationship emerges that brings forth qualities in each of us that could not be achieved otherwise or alone. This synergistic principle is at the heart of the mentor-learner relationship, whereby each person, in each present moment, is choosing to be engaged in mutual fascination. SelfDesigning is nurturing the love of learning and the realization that living is learning.

Three stories of learners

A few years ago, a father phoned me and asked me to meet with his son. The boy was in Grade 8 and had been in gifted programs from the beginning of school. His father was deeply concerned because his son was bored and depressed and on the verge of suicide. During our first meeting, I encouraged the boy to walk away from school and take a break. I invited him to find his happiness again and come and see me when he was ready. On his next visit, he proclaimed that he wanted to study political science and that he wanted to help the world learn how to get along. He joined our online SelfDesign® program, and I recommended that he take a university political science course. With his father's credit card in hand, we signed him up for an online course. Before the end of what would have been his Grade 9 year, he had finished a couple of university courses. He loved them. By the end of what would have been his Grade 10 year, he had finished five courses or equivalent to first-year university. He took his straight-A transcripts to a local college and was accepted into second year. Two years later, instead of having a Grade 12 diploma, this young man had an equivalent of three years of university. He felt he needed a break and wanted to get some life experience, so he got a job with the U.S. Consulate in Vancouver. He then took his university transcripts and enrolled in fourth-year university at Simon Fraser University, where they ignored the fact that he was a Grade 8 drop-out. He graduated with honors while his high-school peers were just finishing first-year university. Currently, he attends university in England to earn his Master's degree in political science.

Just last week, I met a unique nine-year-old boy who had walked out of kindergarten about three years earlier. His

family and he joined our program because he was a very self-determined and bright, young boy who was delighted to be busy learning what he wanted to learn. Last year, his father was studying microbiology at a Master's level and discovered that his son had been reading the textbooks and understood the material as well as he did. The boy was assessed at a centre for giftedness, where he tested beyond their measurement tools. Feeling somewhat challenged by their son who now wanted to go to university, they contacted me. After our first meeting, I began advocating for him so that he could take a biology course in SelfDesign® High while, simultaneously, taking an online, first-year university microbiology course. He is thrilled with his new possibilities.

As a child, my own daughter was too busy doing exciting things to entertain, seriously, the idea of reading until she was almost ten years old. She was a very bright and delightful person who liked to learn her own way. When she felt ready to become a reader, she asked if she could sit on my knee, stipulating that I could help only if she asked. Within a month, she had figured out how reading works and started in on her first novel. Within the second month, she was reading at a Grade 7 level. She loved reading and took every opportunity to devour book after book. One day, a couple of years later, while I was doing my Master's degree, she was at the university with me and decided to take an English history course. She was 13. As I learned later, because I had not taught her how to read the slow way (the way I read), she had become a speed reader naturally. She explained that the words "The cat ran into the house" instantly became a movie in her mind without her reading the words. The visual, external data became visual, internal images without her being slowed down by sounding out words. Now, at age 32, her love of learning and reading is as intense as ever, and she reads philosophy and science books for fun and lives in a small town as a musician. Everyone who meets her, which includes virtually all of our graduates, is inspired by her passion for life and her natural intelligence that emerges as a SelfDesigning person.



Ilana Cameron, at 23 (2002© Pille Bunnell)

In summary

Is it not interesting that a public school system that insists on teaching all children to read at age six in Grade 1 produces such a significant percentage of students with reading problems? Our program, that lets our learners begin to read when they are motivated from within, has a history of everyone being an excellent reader. Could it be that reading difficulties, along with many other learning disabilities, are more a function of expecting children to do tasks that they are not neurologically mature enough to begin rather than being an inherent disability of the learner? I can imagine if we began teaching six-month infants how to walk, we would have a significant population of adults with walking disabilities. Over the past 27 years, I have rarely, if ever, experienced a child demonstrating learning difficulties when their motivation to learn comes from within, from enthusiasm and curiosity.

In the winter of 2010, I finished my Ph.D. thesis, which is based on interviews researching the lives of 27 of our graduates. Now in their late 20's and early 30's, their stories and lives continue to amaze and inspire others, and they are testaments to the transformational aspect of learning through self-awareness and introspection as SelfDesigning human beings. Among these graduates is a Grade 9 school drop-out. After completing Virtual High, he attended two years of a post-secondary, computer training program and then took a job in Scotland. His company offered to pay his way through a one-year B.Sc. computer program at the local university. As a self-motivated, self-responsible, and self-respecting learner, he caught the eye of his professors. While all his fellow students were waiting around to be taught, our SelfDesign® graduate was enthusiastically learning and researching on his own initiative. His professors offered him the opportunity of entering the Ph.D. program after finishing only one year on his B.Sc. He is now completing his Ph.D. and lecturing to Master's students—with only one year of formal education past Grade 9! This is just one story, but a typical one, of our graduates.

I have learned that human excellence is

a clear statement of possibility. If someone has the talent and strategy to do something amazing, then it signals an opportunity for the rest of us to mimic and model his or her strategies to achieve similar accomplishments. Giftedness opens spaces for humanity, it is a question of how.

*Brent Cameron, Ph.D.,
in cooperation with C. Froese Klassen
www.selfdesign.org and .com*



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29 JULY – 1 AUGUST 2010

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Dean of Education
Wollongong University, Australia

Professor Laurence J. Coleman
Judith Daso Herb Chair in Gifted Studies
University of Toledo, Ohio, USA

Dr Maureen Neihart
Associate Professor
National Institute of Education, Singapore

Michele Paule
Principal Lecturer Education and Communication
Oxford Brookes University, UK

INVITED SPEAKERS

Dr David Yun Dai
Lecturer Educational Psychology and Methodology
State University of New York, Albany, USA

Dr Jane Jarvis
Lecturer Education
Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia

Professor Marion Porath
Department of Educational and Counselling
Psychology and Special Education
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

Professor Karen B. Rogers
School of Education
University of St Thomas, Minnesota, USA

Professor Heidrun Stoeger
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Regensburg University, Germany

Associate Professor Jim Watters
Centre for Learning Innovation
School of Maths, Science & Technology Education
Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia



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Through the Eyes of a School Trustee: Gifted Education and The World Council



Journalist, John C. Curry, a journalism graduate from Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, worked as the editor of the *Stittsville News* for the past 35 years. The community newspaper serves the community of Stittsville, which is part of the city of Ottawa. He has twice been honoured as his community's Citizen of the Year and is known for his knowledge of local history. In 1993, he wrote a book, *Richmond on the Jock*, detailing the history of the village of Richmond, which was founded in 1818. He is a trustee on the Ottawa Catholic School Board, chairs the Ottawa Catholic School Board's Historical Committee, and also serves on the Board's Special Education Advisory Committee, a provincially mandated committee that advises on special education matters, including gifted education. Mr. Curry attended the 18th World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children in Vancouver, British Columbia in August 2009, the first time that he had attended such a World Conference.

The 18th World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children of August 2009 was my first. I had come across some mention of it at some point earlier in the year and decided to attend, not because I had ever heard of The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children before, but because I had developed something of an interest in our school board's programming for the gifted. This interest had been whetted by my attendance at an earlier conference in Toronto, hosted by the Association for Bright Children of Ontario, which opened my eyes more to the world of the gifted and the challenges they face in their learning.

Little did I realize for what I had registered. Sure, it was a multi-day conference, running from Monday, August 3 to Friday, August 7, in Vancouver, British Columbia, one of the most beautiful cities in the world, so I learned, but, what a conference! There was an awesome number of presentations, sessions, and workshops running throughout virtually every day.

Prior to beginning each day, time had to be spent going through the descriptions of the numerous sessions offered, trying to pick out the ones that appeared to be of most interest to me. I was there, first and foremost, to try to deepen my knowledge about gifted education, but, just as importantly, I was there with a particular focus—I wanted to try to discover just where gifted education was headed and how these new approaches and insights about gifted education were being implemented on the ground or, more appropriately perhaps, in the classroom. I was particularly interested in trying to learn how these new approaches got from the research stage to the classroom and what the trustees' role, if any, would be in facilitating this. As a trustee of the Catholic School Board in Ottawa, Ontario, I wanted to return home with ideas and strategies that could see the best in gifted education embraced by my Board and, thereby, go to benefit our gifted students.

I ended up returning home with several thoughts, but somewhat lacking in this primary goal. Did I enjoy the conference? Did I learn a lot? Was I filled with enthusiasm for the cause of gifted education? You bet, I was.

Primarily, I learned that I have an awful lot to learn about gifted education and, on the other side of the coin, that there is so much to learn. This knowledge was gained, thanks to the research and pilot projects and other initiatives that are going on all around the world, due, in large part, to the work and coordinating efforts of The World Council. Today, so much has been done in gifted education and research, from which we can all learn. This is best evidenced by the plethora of presentations, sessions, and workshops held at the conference. The work is going on virtually worldwide.

I learned that the latest focus in gifted education is not so much on developing stand-alone gifted programs, but more on promoting the use of innovative and established strategies that help the gifted specifically, but that also are exceptional strategies for teaching students of all abilities. In this day and age, when differentiated instruction is being promoted and encouraged, such a focus is priceless.

Having said this, however, gifted students can benefit from such an approach only if the teacher realizes the challenges which a gifted child may face and has a full understanding of how a gifted child learns.

While every teacher, at least in our jurisdiction, is exposed to the challenge of special education and has some basic understanding and appreciation of the needs of special education students, it seems that giftedness is often considered less of a special need and more of what its name implies—a gift, rather than a special need. In our Board, for instance, there are 268 identified students with an autism exceptionality (our

total enrolment is 39,327 students). Many times, around the Board table, staff notes the growth of the autism exceptionality among our students, sometimes even referring to it as of almost epidemic proportions. Indeed, I do not wish to belittle this in any way. Autism is happening more and more often and is an exceptionality that causes concern and distress for many parents. It deserves all the attention—and probably more—that it is currently receiving in schools everywhere.

Our Board, however, has 693 students identified with giftedness as their exceptionality, almost three times more than those identified with autism. Yet, there is no talk of its epidemic proportions; there is not the same urgency and concern expressed. After all, our Board, like so many school boards, has provided programs for the gifted for numerous years now. Things are under control; the gifted are doing just fine...but, are they?

Even if they are, are they reaching their full potential?

For some, being gifted is easy. Their giftedness is widespread and everything seems to come easily to them, but there is so much more to giftedness than this one, small segment of students.

There are many for whom giftedness is limited to one area or subject. There are many whose very giftedness brings with it different ways of learning. There are others whose giftedness brings with it socialization problems or special ways of learning or perceiving the world which may make it difficult for them to fit into the world of regular ways of learning.

Not being a teacher, I found it fascinating to learn at the conference about some of these learning challenges that face some gifted students: perfectionism, heightened curiosity, easy comprehension, high technology skills, extreme sensitivities, introversion or extroversion, a desire for self-directed learning, an amplified sensitivity and creativity, and motivation not by grades but by the enjoyment of learning.

Of course, while I may have absorbed all of this at the conference, I am sure that many, if not most others, knew this going in. Indeed, there were many occasions, as I sat there at a presentation or session at the conference, when I wished that I had been a teacher and were more familiar with this knowledge, some of which is, no doubt, fairly basic; however, I am not a teacher, but simply a trustee, entrusted by my community to be involved in setting policy for our School Board and to ensure that our students are achieving success. This, though, does include our gifted students.

During the conference, I came to realize that there is nothing to be gained by entering a debate about the advantages of the different models for the delivery of a gifted program. From what I picked up at the conference, it seems that enrichment programs, acceleration programs, and withdrawal programs all have their advocates and all can be justified by research. In my view, these are debates and decisions best left with experienced educators, who can determine what would work best in a particular situation.

I did learn at the conference, however, that the key to any successful and worthwhile gifted education program is a

widespread professional development program that allows every teacher to know and understand fully the challenges, both academic and behavioral, facing gifted students. Such an enhanced awareness of gifted education is essential to a successful program. Teachers of the gifted must know how to pull the gifted out to the edge of their learning competence—don't let them slide.

On returning home from the conference, I put together, for my fellow trustees, a report which outlined the 19 different sessions and workshops I had attended personally at the conference. It contained five recommendations which, at the time, I thought could enhance the delivery of gifted education for our School Board or any school board.

Upon further analysis, I see that a couple of the recommendations are flawed, not because of their goal, but because they might impinge upon basic principles that are a foundation of our school board.

I recommended in my report the development and preparation of a Gifted Children's Bill of Rights. I do not take credit for such a concept; a workshop, led by Nancy Green and Jeff Danielian of the National Association for Gifted Children in the United States, exposed me to that Association's Bill of Rights. It advocates that a gifted child has a right to know about his or her giftedness, to learn something new every day, to be passionate about his or her talent area without apologies, to have an identity beyond his or her talent area, to feel good about accomplishments, to make mistakes, to seek guidance in the development of his or her talent, to have multiple peer groups and a variety of friends, to choose which talent area he or she wishes to pursue, and not to be gifted at everything.

The benefit of a Bill of Rights for gifted children is that it is confirmation to them that they are appreciated for who they are and that their learning environment acknowledges that they face challenges associated with their giftedness.

The flaw in a Bill of Rights for the gifted comes when a school board, like ours, has a policy of inclusion. This applies to all students. To have a specific Bill of Rights applying to only a segment of the student population would be a negation of this inclusive policy.

This is the same flaw for my second recommendation, namely, that school improvement plans, which are a practice in our province of Ontario, should make specific reference to gifted education and should identify gifted education as a priority. School improvement plans must, however, by their very nature, apply to all students and their academic success, so, singling out the gifted from others is not an inclusive approach.

Other recommendations arising out of my participation in the World Conference were the implementation of a gifted awareness week on either a board-wide or individual school basis, provision of enhanced information and advocacy opportunities for parents, and more professional development for teachers with a focus on gifted education.

What I now see, however, is that there exists a gap between the advances being made in gifted education in research and pilot projects in isolated situations around the world and the

real world of public-funded education. The essence of this gap lies in the questions “How can the new ideas and approaches related to gifted education get into the classrooms of the nation?” and “How can this gap be bridged so that gifted students everywhere get to benefit from the advances in understanding that are happening with regard to learning by gifted and talented children?”

It seems to me that the solution lies in The World Council beginning to focus more on the implementation of gifted education strategies at the grassroots level. Part of the solution also might be in The World Council entering into discussions that, hopefully, become eventual partnerships with school boards, which will see the latest research on how the gifted learn transformed into teaching strategies in the classroom. School board administrators and decision-makers need to be targeted so that they can come to realize that gifted education has advanced in recent years, thanks to the worldwide research that has occurred.

These school board administrators and decision makers also can contribute to the gifted education dialogue by letting gifted education researchers and others interested in gifted education know the challenges that these administrators and decision-makers face in their daily jobs as educators. A perfect example is the proposed Bill of Rights for Gifted Students—a great concept, but, for a school board that advocates inclusion for all students, a problem, as previously described. Another example is the increasing incidence of autism in today’s student body. This requires an increasing allocation of resources to combat this high-profile exceptionality as, indeed, should be the case. This also means, however, fewer resources to allocate towards innovative programs for the gifted. It is a balancing act that school boards must deal with all the time and, perhaps, something that does not enter the ideal world of research.

So, any partnership between The World Council and those right on the ground in day-to-day public education can be a two-way street, with each party helping the other to under-

stand its particular challenges and outlooks. It is only through such dialogue and partnership that the latest developments in gifted education can find their way into curriculum and classrooms and allow our gifted students to reach their full potential, thus benefitting the society of the future.

There is much to be done to enhance gifted education around the world, but it can only be done if those governing education at the local level, that is, school board administrators and trustees, are exposed to advances in gifted learning. Once this happens, the research and pilot projects and limited experiences described in the many sessions at the World Conference in Vancouver have a chance to become the norm far and wide in the public education classrooms of the world.

There has to be a meeting of the minds and The World Council needs to take the first steps to make it happen. It may be by offering sessions pertaining to implementation strategies at the next World Conference; it may be by inviting certain school board administrators and teachers to the World Conference, perhaps to make presentations; it may be by opening up dialogues with various school boards, or even provincial education ministries, on how The World Council can work at a more grassroots level to bring the latest in gifted education approaches to the classroom; it may be by a wider distribution of The World Council newsletter or, perhaps, implementation of a new newsletter specifically geared to school board decision-makers.

There is a lot for The World Council to think about. It is doing great work, but, if this does not result in advances in gifted education in our classrooms, the scope of the work is diminished. The goal of everyone, I believe, is to have programs and approaches that allow every gifted student the opportunity to reach his or her full potential and to flourish. We all want this for every student. This should include the gifted, but does it, at present?

John C. Curry

Trustee of the Catholic School Board in Ottawa, Ontario

WCGTC Conference 2011

Please, note the particulars and begin to plan early to attend.

Date: August 8th – 12th, 2011

Place: Incheon, Korea

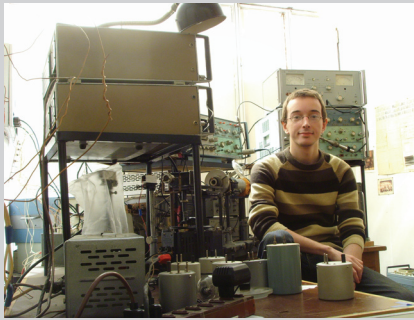
**Conference Venue: Convention Center
Incheon University**

Accommodation: Sheraton Incheon Hotel (main conference hotel, five-minute walk to the venue) and the University dormitory

2013 Hosting Bid Announcement

During the past year, a number of countries have indicated their interest in hosting the 2013 WCGTC World Conference. Headquarters has provided inquirers with the WCGTC Biennial Conference Planning Development Guide. The deadline for indicating your intention to submit a bid, in a formal letter, is April 1, 2010, and the deadline for submission of the bid is August 31, 2010. If you are planning on entering the competition to host the 2013 Conference, please, contact Headquarters at headquarters@world-gifted.org to request a Guide.

International Young Physicists' Tournament



Physicist, Ilya Martchenko pursuing a Ph.D. at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland

Ilya Martchenko first became familiar with the Young Physicists' Tournaments in 1999 and has, since then, acted as a participant, team leader, advisor, juror, and problem contributor at many national and international YPTs. He also became a founding member of YPT-related POISK Centre at St. Petersburg State University, Russia, in 2004. Between 2005 and 2008, he presented a series of physics questions and demonstrations on Russian Channel 5. Having obtained a Master degree in St. Petersburg, he is now pursuing a Ph.D. at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, working on condensed matter physics and nanotechnology. He combines his devotion to physics with professional interests in content-based, second-language acquisition and physics education.

Overview of the IYPT

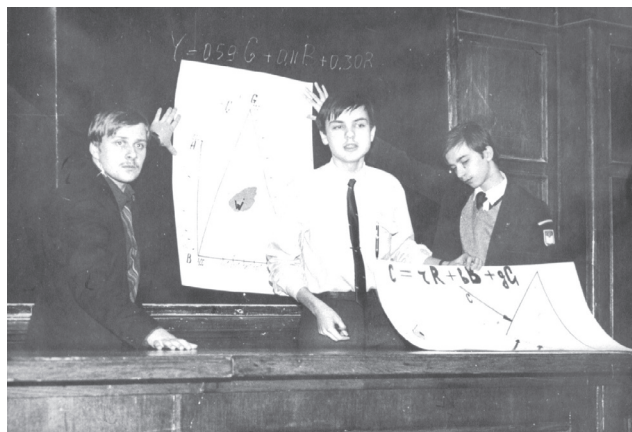
In 1979, a group of enthusiastic Soviet physicists, led by Evgeny Yunosov, initiated a small and unique competition: Young Physicists' Tournament (YPT). Unlike earlier physics contests for secondary school students, the problems at YPT were research-oriented and encouraged participants to study some unusual and fascinating, everyday-life phenomena.

In 1988, the YPT attracted its first non-Soviet participants and, since then, it has grown from a Russian-language competition into one of the world's largest and most prestigious, international physics contests, with almost 30 nations competing annually.



Evgeny Yunosov and a team captain from the Moscow School 47 during the first IYPT (1988)

The tournament provides participants with an environment wherein they can perform valuable and independent scientific research without being required to find expensive equipment. Normally, there is almost a full year for the participants to investigate open-ended, non-examination tasks, form teams and, finally, defend the work before competitors and a panel of jurors.



Participants from Moscow School 710 make a presentation in 1988 with visual aids typical of the time period

The cornerstones of the competition have not changed significantly since the 1980s—interest-guided, informal learning; practice; teamwork; co-operation; and opportunities to establish contacts with professional physicists and other children who share a genuine interest in physics. In 2008, Evgeny Yunosov described the tournament in these words: “. . . I would say that the tournament is an action that produces an anomalously high concentration of talented people in a single location.”

IYPT when compared with ‘real’ research and problem-solving tests

Criterion	Tests and Examinations	“Real” Research in a Physics Lab	Young Physicists’ Tournament
General or special knowledge required?	Solid, well-structured, broad knowledge is required in certain areas of physics.	Time to learn everything is limited and an expert in aerodynamics is unlikely to require nuanced knowledge in quantum optics.	Problems focus on quite specific phenomena, and participants are implicitly taught to combine a general physics background with expertise in relatively narrow fields.
Start-to-finish solution or investigation?	Problems are formulated in detail with little choice to simplify, generalize, or re-formulate the problem.	The researcher needs to define and pose a specific and realistic problem and needs more experienced group-leader help.	The areas of research are suggested in the tasks, but participants and team leaders set goals, decide on the priorities, and the set the direction of the work.
Is there a “correct” answer?	The correct answer is known to organizers in advance. The choice of solution method is often limited.	The answer is never known in advance, and even its existence is uncertain. Some would argue that the term “answer” is irrelevant.	No predetermined answer to the problem exists. Participants learn to deal with the situation and find their own approach to open-ended tasks.
Is it possible to provide necessary results or solve the problems quickly?	Background concepts and theories are known and a skilled physicist is likely to get the answer in a matter of minutes.	Background knowledge is crucial, but a thoughtful, time-taking, experimental or theoretical analysis is necessary before the desired outcome is obtained.	Participants learn relevant physics and how to choose a strategy to obtain their own results. Much time is needed to complete projects up to a competitive level.
Learning to distinguish between one’s own contribution and earlier work by others	Maximum scores are obtained if a participant reproduces a solution approach read earlier in a book.	Strong personal motivation to be familiar with the results of others; they quote earlier results correctly and never repeat earlier work.	May be expected to become a key aspect at IYPTs. Recently updated regulations encourage that.
Developing ideas through discussing current work with peers	No discussion of current results with competitors is expected. Such discussions are probably prohibited.	Many groups work in the same area on related problems. Researchers exchange ideas and results via papers and conferences, which benefits everyone.	Problems are the same for participants worldwide, but teams approach problems differently. May teach natural and mutually enriching exchange of ideas.
Peer review	Participants are highly motivated to find possible mistakes in their own solutions, but they feel confident that any mistake will be detected by the organizers in a very short time.	Every result is peer reviewed. Researchers feel personally responsible to cross-check results for possible drawbacks or mistakes and help others with the same.	Participants have the opportunity to receive feedback from teammates, leaders, jurors and competitors. IYPT motivates towards a critical approach and checking results.
How is the quality of results evaluated?	Grades depend on the number of problems having correct answers.	Number of references to publications and peer review. Detailed and general studies are valuable, as they contribute to knowledge in the field.	Participants are free to choose the aspects they study. Juror grades rely only on the project’s relevance, consistency, and novelty, though the issue often remains questionable.
Scientific skepticism in evaluating relevance of own work and achievements of others	Tests effectively teach detecting mistakes and choosing best solution strategy, but possibly not interpreting the relevance and importance of the work done.	Strict personal responsibility not only to detect drawbacks or mistakes, but to optimize priorities, choose direction of the work, and evaluate outcome relevance critically.	Participants learn to choose problems they find interesting, effective, and relevant during all stages and can reject reporting some problems. Taking the floor as opponents and reviewers is key.
Learning to work with scientific literature and bibliography indexes	Preparatory work with literature is a key aspect of tests. Limited chances to learn surveying literature during problem solving. No handbooks or internet access is permitted.	Crucial aspect of the daily research	Participants learn to look for relevant information during the preparation and competition, striving to be critically conversant with the common knowledge in the field.
Learning foreign languages for professional communication	Opportunities to learn languages are not always visible.	An important aspect of the daily research. English is not the native language for a majority of researchers worldwide, and daily life in many labs is often multilingual.	IYPT and smaller competitions are held in English, giving a chance to learn professional English early. Other languages may be helpful at regional meetings.
Presentation techniques and skills to hold a discussion	Chances to learn are limited; little public speaking is expected.	Important for everyday research.	Public speaking and reasoning are key aspects that IYPT teaches in practice.
Teamwork skills	The competition is individual.	Almost all experimental physicists work in teams.	The IYPT is a competition for teams.

Note: Other areas of comparison, not shown in the above table, include Time management and deadlines, Novel results found, Learning new experimental techniques, and Learning to write scientific prose.

Educational potential of the IYPT

The concept of the tournament became influential, and several countries initiated similar competitions for university undergraduates, who are, technically, forbidden to participate at the IYPT. One priority is to attract new nations where the competition is not yet established.



The Dutch team at the third IYPT (1990), among the first active Western European participants, having joined in 1989

The projects at IYPT are presented and defended at scientific discussions, historically called “Physics Fights.” Such fights share much in common with science seminars, thesis defenses, or scientific conferences and are structured so that teams switch roles as reporters, opponents, and reviewers.



A discussion-based Physics Fight at the third IYPT (1990), with jurors grading the performance of teams. Standing (left to right): International Organizing Committee member, M. Nikolaev; winning participant, Konstantin Yufryakov; and Physics Fight jury chair, Sergei Varlamov

It is commonly agreed that the tournament is an effective opportunity for students to develop manifold expertise in physics, gain self-confidence and experience in public speaking, develop presentation techniques, and make acquaintance with other young people deeply interested in physics. Practice and communication contribute to personal, self-determined motivation. Such competencies may be important for life, not only for physics research. Several participants of early IYPTs became

very successful in industry and business and credited their YPT background as good schooling, even calling it a “springboard”.

The tournament may be considered complex in terms of implicitly teaching many competencies at once, from advanced math and physics to foreign languages, polemics, and goal setting skills. Developing such competencies is stimulated by the open, competitive atmosphere of the IYPT and the direct needs of a research project, rather than by formal, external training or instruction. Quite notably, a consensus exists that the highest possible standards are crucial to maintaining the keen enthusiasm of participants. The combination of these qualities makes possible the notable recognition that the tournament enjoys today.

Gathering the IYPT history: You can help

In the rush of the growth of the competition, the opportunities for maintaining the archives of the earliest YPTs and IYPTs were sometimes neglected.

The considerable interest that the today's IYPT community has in the history of the competition has motivated the author and his colleagues to start investigating the details of early IYPTs and Soviet-based YPTs and locating original documents, proceedings, problems, results, and information on participants. Quite naturally, many of these materials were not written in English or in Russian, but in local languages of participants. (Documents in over ten languages are now on the list.)

As of 2010, our research priorities are

1. to trace, proofread, and translate the problems for 1979 - 1987 and 1988 - 1993 into English,
2. to locate information on teams and results in 1979 - 1987 and 1988 - 1993, and
3. to clarify how the regulations and the typical research projects of the Tournament evolved since 1979.

Plans exist to catalogue the growing archives online. Any contributions from the readers on early IYPTs are warmly welcomed.

The 2010 IYPT

The 23rd tournament will be held in Vienna, Austria, from July 9 to July 16, 2010. Seventeen problems have been formulated for this tournament, including Electromagnetic cannon, Brilliant pattern, Steel balls, Soap film, Grid, Ice, Two flasks, Liquid light guide, Sticky water, Calm surface, Sand, Wet towels, Shrieking rod, Magnetic spring, Paper anemometer, Rotating spring, and Kelvin's dropper.

Web links:

<http://iypt.at> is the page of the forthcoming 23rd IYPT

<http://iypt.org> is the central page of the competition

<http://blog.ilyam.org> and <http://ilyam.org> are the author's pages, with interviews and notes relating to the IYPT history.

Ilya Martchenko

University of Fribourg

in cooperation with C. Froese Klassen

Defining the Elusive “Gifted”

*Intelligence and Genius. Consider the fact that intelligence cannot be seen; nevertheless, its effects can be seen and measured. The fact that intelligence cannot be seen does not mean that it is not real or that it is unimportant.

Many scientists attempt to identify attributes of intelligence as they are related to or reflected in behavior; thus, intelligent behavior can be observed. In this way, psychologists attempt to define intelligence, but it is still not adequately defined. The opinion of scientists—psychologists and sociologists who have studied intelligence—is that intelligence is extremely diverse.

Intelligence is the capacity, or the ability and the adaptability, to solve new problems that tend to become constants in life. It has also been characterized as being a mental process that incorporates speed, efficiency, agility, and energy to overcome obstacles in life's daily tasks, uses these abilities to make conventional and innovative conjectures, and produces both services and products. It is well known that exercising these skills has the result of increasing them, in the application of intrinsic capabilities and in the acquisition of many more and new skills.

When intelligence is studied or measured, it is usually the intelligent behavior that is observed, not the intelligence itself. Intelligent action is the very product of intelligence.

Every child has the right to receive educational aid to the limit of his or her abilities, regardless of whether the abilities are small or great. It is important that, in the pursuit of a “demographic philosophy” for all children and young people, opportunity is available to them to learn in a general, rather than a limited, way in order to measure the full extent of their abilities.

Who is an exceptional being? Several terms are used to give a definition and to answer this question. Considerable analysis would be needed to understand it fully. Some use the term when referring to a particularly brilliant person or to someone with an unusual talent. It is generally accepted that the term refers both to someone with low ability and to the one who is super-gifted. For the present purpose, an exceptional person is defined as one whose abilities are different from those of the general average with regard to mental characteristics, sensitivity, neuromuscular or physical characteristics, emotional behavior, or communication ability, etc. An individual is considered “exceptional” only when it is deemed necessary to change the process for fulfilling that individual's educational needs.

Indeed, as we look back in history, we find that the concept of educating each child to the full limit of his or her ability is relatively new. Currently, the United States, as well as some European countries and the Soviet Union, provide an education for exceptional children with programming that has emerged from general knowledge. Practically all the countries that have established a universal, compulsory education program have found that the general programs for ordinary children are not adequate for exceptional children.

Who are the gifted children? The most important, common characteristic we find in determining that a child is gifted or talented is when it comes to our attention that the child has creative, artistic, physical, leadership, or visual/spatial superiority. The main discerning factor is the differing and varied degrees of observable talent. A gifted child is one who consistently demonstrates a remarkable behavior in any area of development. When defining a gifted child, an effort is made to avoid depending very strongly on an IQ test; however, when a child needs to be selected or identified, the majority of schools and specialists base their findings on this test due, in part, to the fact that few alternative testing measures exist. Another reason why IQ testing is used is because it demonstrates abilities in different areas. In fact, to receive a high ranking in the IQ test, the subject also needs to demonstrate a considerable ability in many areas or a tremendous ability in one area.

When a child demonstrates that he or she is gifted, we should think about general terms and, for practical purposes, that a person with superior ability interacts with facts, ideas, relations, creativity, and different characteristics that are not addressed or identified in IQ testing. These might be special aptitudes, such as social, physical, artistic, musical, linguistic, and more specific academic areas. To determine that a child is superior in intelligence is only one factor in the selection and identification of a gifted child. Knowledge and study of the characteristics of the special abilities of a gifted child are the basic ingredients to follow in an effort to qualify them as gifted.

The term “gifted” is relatively new in an educational sense. In the 1800s, Dr. William T. Harris, Superintendent of Schools in St. Louis, discussed a plan for the acceleration of gifted children so that they would receive new and bigger challenges in their education in order that they would not become restless and bored. In the early twentieth century, publications came to light, such as “Classes for Gifted Children” (Whipple G.M. 1919), which were experimental studies of the aforementioned method of instruction. Another such study, titled “Problems of Education in Gifted Children” (Henry T.S. 1920), used the term “gifted” to describe students who were able to work through a program much more quickly and efficiently than the majority of the ordinary students. Later, in 1921, Lewis Terman began his brilliant study on gifted children and geniuses. He believed that academically supporting an exceptional, superior child was essential for the development of the country. He used the term “genius” in the title of his book, but later talked about the subjects in his study as “gifted”, which established the label in the educational vocabulary.

During the 1950s, interest in the education of gifted children in the United States was scientific. This interest was not new, by any means. Through the centuries, several cultures have tried to develop those individuals who showed a superior intelligence. The gifted ones, as well as other individuals with exceptional capacities, were marked by the social, political, and

philosophical needs that arose in the societies at those times. Already in Ancient Greece, well over 2,000 years ago, Plato said that children with superior intelligence must be selected at an early age in order to provide them with specialized forms of instruction in the sciences, philosophy, and metaphysics. Plato believed that the survival of Greek democracy would be possible through this ability to educate special, superior citizens for leadership tasks and special positions in the society.

In spite of the efforts of individuals who dedicated themselves to propose and to implement programs for certain scholastic systems and who initiated special classes for gifted children, it was not until very recently that these programs received the necessary support, and that solely in the developed countries.

**Translated from Spanish*

Ana Azuela
President, IDDENT
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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 to other members, such as events or initiatives, news about regional organizations, profiles of individual members, or announcements of upcoming events.

Please, forward submissions to The World Council Headquarters, c/o The University of Winnipeg, 515 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3B 2E9.

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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The Post-Graduate Connection

An e-mail discussion that Wendy Stewart and I had last month has birthed a new idea for collaboration among post-graduate students. Wendy, a Ph.D. student in gifted education, inquired about the possibility of assembling contact information of fellow post-graduates to find out who is working in this area at this level, what their interest areas are, the nature of the research in which they are involved, and the goal that they are pursuing. I invited Wendy to become the contact person, and she agreed. I am also prepared to open a webpage to post the contributions as they are submitted.

If you are a post-graduate in the field of gifted education, please, write a brief paragraph about yourself and your studies—interests, research, and goals—and forward it to the “Post-Graduate Connection.”

Wendy is the President of the Gifted and Talented Children’s Association of South Australia and State Director of the Australian Association for the Education of Gifted and Talented. Her e-mail address is stew0069@flinders.edu.au

Cathrine Froese Klassen



Two issues of *Gifted and Talented International*, a combined edition of Volume 23. No. 2 and Volume 24. No. 1, and a single edition, Volume 24. No. 2., have been posted on The World Council website at <http://world-gifted.org>.

Delegate Discourse



Australia

In December 2009, the GATE division of the Western Australian Department of Education ran a statewide professional development event, "Developing an Academic Extension Program." This event was designed to support both non-selective, secondary schools wishing to establish local, academic extension and enrichment programs and those catering for rural and regional gifted students. Keynote speakers from Australia and Singapore presented a range of models tied to examples of successful programs, strategies, and pedagogical approaches to an audience drawn from the primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors.

Two outstanding projects being introduced for highly able, secondary students in the state of Victoria in 2010 involve the opening in February of two new Victorian Department of Education schools. The Monash Science School at Monash University, Clayton Campus, will provide for approximately 200 Year 10 talented science students. The other exciting initiative is a new, co-educational Selective High School, Nossal High School, named after one of Australia's leading scientists, which aims to provide educationally challenging curriculum to 200 academically able Year 9 students who live in various parts of Melbourne. This school is being developed at the Monash University Berwick Campus.

The 11th Asia-Pacific Conference on Giftedness will be taking place in Sydney, Australia, from July 29th to August 1st this year.

Susan Knopfelmacher



Ecuador

The Sueño Mágico Educational Centre (The Magic Dream Educational Centre) is organizing the next academic, scientific, and cultural meeting, to be held from May 27th to June 8th, in Quito Ecuador (www.conferencistas.eu/congreso.htm). At this international forum, the promotion of gifted and talented children and

youth will be given special attention.

The prevention of academic frustration in these children requires the development and provision of opportunities for creative expression. Included in the sessions will be a review of the Renzulli enrichment model. There will also be an emphasis on planned creativity, not just academic achievement.

The education of gifted and talented children also involves working with parents and using diverse educational approaches. Gifted and talented children need to be identified early, and appropriate interventions must be in place in order for academic and creative development to be fostered. Gifted children are aware of their cognitive processes at an early age, and they are able to explain how they solve problems. Talent development in the school setting requires support, adequate professional time for deliberate planning, and the recognition of the need for gradual program implementation over several years.

Dra. Mg. Fanny Alencastro is the former co-founder and Director of the Sueño Mágico Educational Center in Quito, Ecuador. Her interest is related to the development of creativity, innovation, and giftedness in multicultural children and youths. She is also President (2007 – 2010) of the Ecuadorian Education Conference for Gifted Children and Youth and author of more than 70 articles, as well as a number of monographs and technical reports.

Dra. Mg. Fanny Alencastro



Greece

The academic and educational community was pleased to be informed that the next ICIE Conference will be held in Athens, Greece, from June 8th – 11th, 2010, in cooperation with Harokopio University of Athens. This is the second time that Greece will host an internationally represented conference for which the topic is based on a particularly unique scientific area. Our first experience was in 2002, when the 8th ECHA

conference took place successfully in Rhodes.

In our country, in the last decade, the issue of education for children of high ability has begun to concern the specialists, mainly educators and psychologists. Because of this, despite the developments taking place on an international level, in terms of Greek educational reality, the issue is a crucial topic open to dialogue, even today.

In Greece, even the most recent legislation on the education of individuals with special educational needs does not clearly define the specific category of students. Apart from data collection, which will assist, in the short term, in the identification of gifted students and the classification of their special needs for the formation of appropriate curriculum for the long term, one of the aims of those concerned is to inform and activate specialists and institutions for reforms and measures that will correspond to the demands and expectations of gifted and talented students.

We believe that the coming ICIE conference will be an important event for Greece and for the international community and will contribute greatly to the direction mentioned above. We welcome it in our country.

Dr. Theodoridou Sofia



Ireland

Margaret Keane, founder of Giftedkids.ie and recipient of the Social Entrepreneur Ireland 2009 award, has designed and launched a series of webinars, a pilot project aimed at both parents and teachers. The titles reflect the topics of the series: Characteristics of the Exceptionally Able; Educational Assessment; Dual Exceptionality – Aspergers, ADHD, Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Behavioural Issues; Classroom Strategies – Curriculum Differentiation, Enrichment, Acceleration.

tion, Online ICT Resources for Teachers; How to be your Child's Best Advocate – Supporting your Child at home and at School; and Social and Emotional Sensitivities.

The webinar series is free to all participants and is funded by Social Entrepreneurs Ireland. The National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) is also benevolently supporting this series.

The first one, Characteristics of The Exceptionally Able, entitled “Faster, Earlier and Differently,” took place at on Thursday, January 28th, and was co-presented by Margaret Keane and Anna Giblin. It was a huge success, with over ninety participants. Many more availed themselves of the recorded version. The participants included a mix of parents, teachers, and support agency staff. We received very positive feedback after the webinar. How to be Your Child's Best Advocate - Supporting your Child at Home and at School took place on March 25th. We are looking forward to the next in the series.
Anna Giblin



Jordan

Her Majesty Queen Rania recently reviewed the state of global education, the progress so far in achieving education for all, and the challenges still remaining.

The Queen's core message, delivered during a panel discussion at the World Economic Forum in Davos, resonated clearly in the halls of the Congress Centre: “There is no better equalizer in this world than education; it's the greatest justice you can give people.”

Addressing over 800 delegates at a plenary session titled “Rebuilding Education for the 21st Century,” Her Majesty asserted that “we need to work harder to save millions of children from ignorance and poverty.”

A new approach is required, one that presupposes bold, entrepreneurial, and creative strategies. In a nutshell, Her Majesty went on to say, we need to suggest an innovative way of thinking that defies conventional methods, breaks the mould of traditional financing, and rede-

fines success by focusing on what we get out of education systems, not just what we put into them.

This new approach, she pointed out, also includes the possibility of unifying the education sector under a single umbrella, much like the global health sector did ten years ago when it created the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations.

The session also focused on the need to prioritize and channel education funds, while finding innovative solutions, such as ICT and the digitization of learning, to equip teachers better and bridge the gap with the labor market.

As much as technology is pivotal, however, it cannot substitute for a good teacher, who needs to be able to show children how to use technology effectively, Queen Rania added, underscoring the importance of bringing prestige back to the teaching profession as a means of ensuring quality education in the classroom and creating the foundation for economic prosperity and social equity.

Along with the 1GOAL campaign, Queen Rania also launched Madrasati (My School), a public-private initiative aimed at refurbishing 500 public schools in the country over a five-year period. Since its inception in 2008, Madrasati has attracted 70 partners and completed renovation work in 200 dilapidated schools. The initiative has resulted in upgraded learning environments and inspiring creativity and motivation among students.

Janette Wakileh



Scotland

Scotland is continuing to develop and embed an exciting new curriculum framework. *Curriculum for Excellence* “... aims to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, enriched, and more flexible curriculum from 3 to 18, firmly focused on the needs of the child and young person” (*Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010*). There are exciting opportunities within this curriculum for highly able pupils. The flexibility and interdis-

nary nature of the framework allows staff to embed the depth, breadth, and personalization appropriate for highly able pupils; however, as with all curriculum frameworks, it is practice in the classroom that will transform these ideals into reality. In order to support schools, teachers, parents, and learners with this curriculum transition, the Scottish Network for Able Pupils (SNAP) has produced non-statutory guidelines. These guidelines are freely available to all schools and include audit materials, practical examples, continuing professional development activities, and a resource bank. SNAP is continuing to work with schools and education authorities across Scotland as they seek to make *Curriculum for Excellence* meaningful for highly able pupils through inservice events, subject development days, and consultation activities.

Provision for highly able students in Scotland is legislated in accordance with the Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act (2009). In practice, this means that all pupils, including highly able pupils, should receive a curriculum appropriate to their ability and additional support in their learning, should this be required. Recently, the Scottish Government conducted a consultation relating to the Code of Practice which accompanies the Act. This consultation sought to elicit views and opinions from the field of education and offered an opportunity to reflect upon the implementation of the Act. SNAP contributed to this consultation, ensuring that the needs of highly able pupils were present in the discussions.

Niamh Stack and Margaret Sutherland



Switzerland

EUROTALENT is the acronym for the European Committee Promoting the Education of Gifted and Talented Young People. With member organizations in 16 countries, founded in 1988, and hosted in Paris, Eurotalent has undergone major changes in its Executive Committee. When the 2010 elections were conducted,

Jean-Jacques Bertschi (Zurich, Switzerland) was elected to be the new president. Co-founder of Talenta School Zurich, Jean Bunault (Tours, France), who resigned after a long period of outstanding service, was elected Honorary President. He will remain president of Eurotalent's Scientific Committee.

Mohammed Dhergal (Strasbourg, France) is the General Secretary, and

Maurice Abergel (Paris, France) will take over as Treasurer. In addition, the following Vice-presidents serve on the Executive: Micheline Abergel (Paris, France), Abderrahim Daoudi (Paris, France), Federica Mormando (Milano, Italy), and Robert Mulvey (Udny Station, Scotland).

Eurotalent has expanded considerably in the last few years, integrating Russia and more Eastern countries, such as

Belarus, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Republic of Sakha, and the Ukraine.

Eurotalent remains, primarily, an open forum for gifted education. It reinforces the initiatives and activities of its member organizations and fights for the rights of gifted and talented children.

Jean-Jacques Bertschi



Calendar of Upcoming Events

July 29 – August 1, 2010

11th Asia Pacific Conference on Giftedness

Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre

Darling Harbour, Australia

Theme: Thinking Smart: Effective Partnerships for Talent Development

www.gifted2010.com.au

November 11 – 14, 2010

57th Annual Convention - National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)

Atlanta, Georgia

Theme: Great Minds Leading the Way

<http://www.nagc.org>

August 8 – 12, 2011

19th WCGTC Biennial World Conference

Incheon University

Incheon, Korea

World Gifted, March 2010

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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 300-word limit and be formatted double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman, and not justified. The submission deadlines for 2010 are as follows:

April 26, 2010 for the second 2010 issue,

September 3, 2010 for the third 2010 issue, and

December 10, 2010 for the first 2011 issue.



Gifted and Talented International

Articles for the journal are welcomed and may be submitted at any time.