



# WorldGifted

Newsletter of The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children

[www.world-gifted.org](http://www.world-gifted.org)

## Winner Twins Winning Despite the Odds



*The Winner twins, Brittany and Brianna, at age 12, America's youngest multiple award-winning authors*

Adversity and prodigy are generally not used together, especially when the adversity becomes the catalyst for brilliance and the prodigy focuses his or her success on helping others.

Prodigy is defined as "someone who at an early age masters one or more skills at an adult level." The Winner twins earned that distinction at 12 years of age; their novel won multiple awards and gained national attention. Their story, however, is much more than latent traits emerging and taking the form of the written word. Their story is one of near-death experiences, learning disabilities, and heart.

At twelve weeks of age and still in the womb, tragedy

struck as mother and children fell victim to a mysterious illness. Doctors and specialists scrambled to administer tests on the three lives that were held in the balance, only to come up empty-handed and with no explanation. Clergy of all denominations lined up to visit the dying mother and children. Soon, the mother's skin began to grey, and the pain medications stopped working. The medical consensus was that the babies had already been adversely affected and, without knowing why all were dying, there was no treatment to prescribe and no remedy. The only remaining option was high-risk, exploratory surgery.

Their father held their mother's hand; the wheels squeaked on the gurney as they approached the operating room. The attendant and doctors were

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## A Message from the President

Taisir Subhi Yamin

### Gifted Education in the 21st Century: Questions to Ponder

During the last few months, I have been involved in a number of events concerned with giftedness; creativity, excellence in education, peace through education, e-Learning, and talent development. These events and similar ones taking place around the world have caused me to ponder a number of interesting questions.

From the ideal point of view, education aims at creating communitarian subjects endowed with scientific rationality and universal humanism. Education should turn this potentiality into actuality and should socially organize this creative human power. That is how I understand excellence in education.

Excellence in education and gifted education should play a major role in addressing the practical approaches needed to develop blueprints of reform.

Renzulli and Reis (2009) contend that "if we are not conscious of ways to help our children pursue their creative productivity, we must consider the consequences" (p. 229). This implies that we have to make our schools meaningful for all students and to help them believe in their strengths.

Mark Runco (2007) concluded that "most educational efforts emphasize convergent thinking, and, therefore, may do very little, if anything, for creative potential" (p. 5).

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## Executive Administrator's Message



This issue of the newsletter, the second, of 2010, marks the completion of my third year in the position as Executive Administrator and Editor of the newsletter. How quickly the time has passed and how much has changed in this time period.

At Headquarters, we have fully embraced the technological revolution, and without the donated professional services of our expert IT Manager, Dr. Stephen. Klassen, and the University of Winnipeg infrastructure and support, including staff, facilities, and services, it would be virtually impossible for the WCGTC to exist. It has taken thousands of hours of unpaid labour to bring the WCGTC into its current state. Financially, The World Council has never, in its thirty-four years of existence, been in a healthier state. For the first time, a formal and professional audit has been performed, certifying the integrity of all financial transactions and records. Operationally, the corporation has never before enjoyed such effective and efficient functioning, especially technologically, as it does today.

As part of the "electronfication", I am pleased to report that I have undertaken another ambitious archiving project, and with its completion, all of the WCGTC journals that are available at Headquarters are now available to our members online. This was, once again, accomplished with the assistance of Dr. Klassen and Sarah Dietrich. As you will see in the respective article on page 3, we are missing a number of issues of the journals, published under three different titles since 1982, and we would be much obliged if anyone in possession of such issues would provide Headquarters with the same for online publication.

Electronic communication is also allowing us to process memberships more efficiently. I am pleased to inform you that we have recently completed the processing of two new affiliate members, namely, Public Establishment National Student Academy (Lithuania) and Dan Voiculescu's Foundation for Romania's Development. Not only does this create a reciprocal benefit to the WCGTC and the affiliates, but it also strengthens our joint advocacy efforts by broadening our efforts nationally and globally.

In this edition, you will meet the Winner twins, who overcame monumental challenges and are using their gifts for the benefit of humankind. Discover The Davidson Academy in Nevada, established in 2006, that offers a unique programming option and operates on a philosophy of acceleration to meet the needs of gifted children. Mary Doyle Powell's narrative presents the story of another unique approach to meeting the needs of gifted children and their parents in West Wicklow, Ireland, and Nubia Williams, a recent addition to our official delegates, relates how her gifted brother has inspired her to take a major, innovative step to promote gifted education in her country.

Our being in a transition time between two biennial conferences has afforded me the opportunity to return to office management concerns, which has involved the updating of records and files, taking inventory, reviewing procedures, compiling financials, and drafting policies for corporate compliance. My office assistant, Morna Christian, departed at the end of June. Morna's career background as a legal secretary, executive secretary, and university registrar has provided the WCGTC with invaluable skills. She will be deeply missed at Headquarters. I am also pleased to announce that Dean McCluskey and ACCESS Director, Phil Baker, have provided the means to retain the administrative assistant position. As yet, the position has not been filled.

Non-profit corporations are driven by their mission, and as we look forward to new initiatives and head into our conference year, it is incumbent upon us to keep worldwide advocacy for our gifted and talented children at the centre of our day-to-day activities and of our planning for the future.

*Cathrine Froese Klassen*  
*Executive Administrator and Editor*

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## Research and Exchange Project in Cuba

A delegation for professionals specializing in the education and advocacy for gifted and talented children is planned to travel to Cuba for the purpose of professional research and exchange in January 2011. This project will be developed in consultation with Academic Travel Abroad, a licensed, travel-service provider for travel to Cuba, by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the US Treasury Department. Citizens from the USA who are professionals in the field of gifted and talented education and advocacy may participate in this program for the purpose of professional research and exchange and will receive

full license to travel as part of this delegation, as regulated by OFAC.

Dr. Dorothy Sisk of Lamar University will lead the delegation. Dates for this program will be announced shortly. The estimated program cost is approximately \$3900, inclusive of all meals, accommodations, and documentation for American citizens to travel to Cuba.

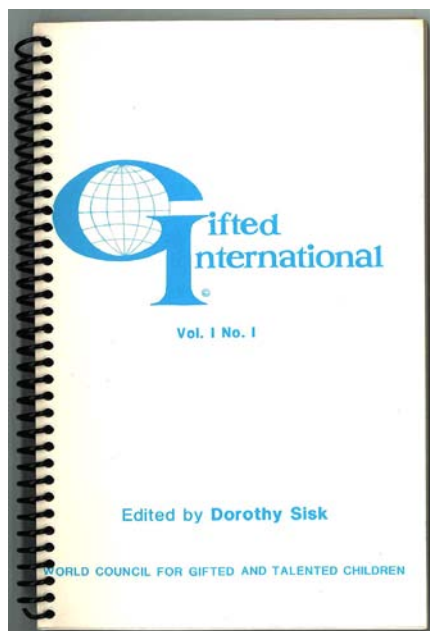
For additional information, contact Academic Travel Abroad, 1920 N Street NW, Washington DC, at 877-298-9677 or at [www.professionalsabroad.org](http://www.professionalsabroad.org).

# The WCGTC Archive Online

In the previous issue of our newsletter, I announced the completion of the archiving of our newsletter and the subsequent online posting. With that achievement, I immediately embarked on an even more ambitious project, namely, the electronic journal archive, and directed the preparation of the files of all of the available issues of our journal that we have on hand in the office for electronic conversion and posting online.

With the assistance of, once again, our IT Manager, Dr. Stephen Klassen, and student assistant, Sarah Dietrich, this project was finished on June 30th. Dr. Klassen conceptualized the approach and layout and supervised the technical aspects of the work. After having the spines cut at the University print shop, Sarah spent many hours photocopying entire volumes (in cases where single existing copies prevented us from cutting), then scanning, making cosmetic adjustments on individual files, compiling abstracts, and cataloguing the files, while Dr. Klassen created the webpages and posted all of the files.

The journal was originally published under the title *GATE: Gifted and Talented Education*, and three volumes were published by Levcho Zdravchev in Bulgaria. Regrettably, none of these copies have found their way into Headquarters. When the editorship was assumed by Dorothy Sisk, in the USA, the name of the journal was changed to *Gifted International*. As far as can be determined from available hard copies, nine volumes were published, although the numbering of the volumes suggests that there may be more journals which have not been preserved at previous headquarters offices. When John Feldhusen



became the editor, the name was changed to *Gifted and Talented International*, the name that has been retained. Thirty-one volumes in 30 issues have been published under the current title.

The online archive, including the current issue, contains 404 articles in 40 volumes from 1982 to 2009.

The archive is searchable by volume, by abstract, and by the individual article.

The record of published volumes, as listed in the accompanying table (See below), shows that there are missing volumes in addition to the three editions of *GATE: Gifted and Talented Education*. In the case where there is only a second issue (Volume 6), it appears that a first issue would have been published. In the years where there is only the first issue (Volumes 1, 8, and 12), it is not clear whether second issues exist. For the years where volumes are missing all together (Volumes 2 and 5), we have not been able to determine whether any publishing took place.

Headquarters is on a search for any missing published volumes and would appreciate your assistance in acquiring them, either on a temporary loan or as a donation to our permanent, hard-copy collection. If you can help us with this, please, contact [headquarters@world-gifted.org](mailto:headquarters@world-gifted.org).

We are happy not only that we have been able to bring the publication archive to completion and preserved another component of our history in this way, but that we are also able to provide our membership with this “new”, valuable, online reading and research material.

*GATE:*

*Gifted and Talented Education*

Three issues: no copies available

Volume and issue numbers and dates of publication unknown

*Gifted International*

Volume 1(1), 1982

Volume 3(1), 1985

Volume 3(2), no date

Volume 4(1), 1987

Volume 4(2), 1987

Volume 6(2), 1990

Volume 7(1), 1991

Volume 7(2), 1993

Volume 8(1), 1993

*Gifted and Talented International*

Volume 9(1), 1994

Volume 9(2), 1994

Volume 10(1), 1995

Volume 10(2), 1995

Volume 11(1), 1996

Volume 11(2), 1996

Volume 12(1), 1997

Volume 13(1), 1998

Volume 13(2), 1998

Volume 14(1), 1999

Volume 14(2), 1999

Volume 15(1), 2000

Volume 15(2), 2000

Volume 16(1), 2001

Volume 16(2), 2001

Volume 17(1), 2002

Volume 17(2), 2002

Volume 18(1), 2003

Volume 18(2), 2003

Volume 19(1), 2004

Volume 19(2), 2004

Volume 20(1), 2005

Volume 20(2), 2005

Volume 21(1), 2006

Volume 21(2), 2006

Volume 22(1), 2007

Volume 22(2), 2007

Volume 23(1), 2008

Volume 23(2) with 24(1), 2008 and 2009

Volume 24(2), 2009

*Cathrine Froese Klassen, Editor*

# Farewell, and fare well, Morna



Morna about to embark on her journey to the West

It was a fortuitous meeting on campus a year-and-a-half ago of two friends from long ago. Morna Christian was sitting in the cafeteria before going to her Psychology class, where I espied her. It was at the very time that I was looking for an executive assistant to manage the proposal and abstract submissions for the 2009 conference. I had certainly come across the right person, not only for this job, but also for the vacated executive assistant job after the conference work was done. Having worked as a legal and executive secretary, and, more recently, as university registrar, Morna came to us with all the skills and experience needed for this diverse job. It is difficult for me to imagine what the office and the office work will be like without her, as she was a rare find. How she will be missed at Headquarters!

Morna and her husband are relocating to Vancouver Island. On behalf of The World Council, I wish them health and great satisfaction in their new, but familiar, surroundings, where she grew up. Before she left, Morna wrote a brief note for this newsletter edition:

*As I retire from the Headquarters' office of the WCGTC, I wish to share my appreciation for the opportunity to serve as an Assistant to the Executive Administrator, Cathrine Froese Klassen. It has been an exciting learning experience for me in the world of gifted and talented children and their education. Assisting at the 18<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference, held in Vancouver last year, was a particular delight, as I was able to meet many people, from many different countries, whose passion is to identify gifted children and increase their opportunities for education. Working with Cathrine has been a particular pleasure, and I will miss her attention to detail, her high organizational abilities, her vast wisdom and knowledge, her compassion for people, her devotion to her work, and, most of all, her friendship.*

*Although my husband and I will miss our friends in Winnipeg and the abundance of crystal blue skies throughout most of the year, we are looking forward to our "new life" on Vancouver Island, in British Columbia, where we plan to relocate for our retirement years. We also hope to travel, in our motor home, throughout the years to visit our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren—perhaps, even a World Council biennial conference. Who knows?*

*I wish The World Council well as it continues in its mission and the Headquarters' office, in particular, as the multitude of tasks in managing members, delegates, affiliates, finances, corporate and tax requirements, publications, and many more responsibilities, are handled with expediency and care.*

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## Winner Twins (continued from p.1)

silent; all knew there was little hope in finding the problem and a good possibility that none would survive the surgery. Slowly, he let go of her hand and watched as the gurney disappeared behind the operating doors. He remembered the last words the doctor had spoken while in the hospital room: "We will do our best to save the mother, but the twins are only 12 weeks old..."

During the operation, the surgeons discovered, hidden under the uterus, a gangrenous ovary which was releasing deadly toxins into the mother and children as it decayed. When it was removed and all surgeons concurred that the danger had passed, one of the observing doctors left the operating room to tell the family.

The doctor stepped into the waiting room, pulling back his surgical cap, and their father saw the relief on his face. While all were elated at the news, the doctor reminded them that



A Winner twin, struggling for her life

there was no way of knowing how the twins had been affected before they were born. He warned that it would be a challenge to keep the twins in the womb for another six months.

No one could have known that the surgery had nicked the uterus, until, at twenty-six weeks, the uterus ruptured. An emergency C-section brought identical, mirror-image twins—Brittany and Brianna Winner—into

the world, premature and fighting for life, but alive.

Within days, their weight dropped to under three pounds each, and underdeveloped lungs struggled on the respirators. Their parents watched them helplessly through the clear incubators in the neonatal, intensive-care unit. Tiny fingers clung to life, struggling for a chance to be a part of the world. Machines and computers monitored every vital sign twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

But, the twins fought valiantly, and slowly they gained strength.

After months of difficulties, they were, finally, released from the hospital.

Their early years were consumed with hospital stays and health issues resulting from their premature birth. The twins approached each health challenge with the same vitality they had demonstrated while in the incubators in the neonatal, intensive-care unit. They never allowed their physical limitations to stop them from experiencing life.

They were told that they were destined to live a life limited by learning disabilities, but their gifts in storytelling, art, and music began to emerge early. At six years old, Brittany began selling her art to local businesses, and at age seven years, Brianna was singing a cappella in front of audiences as large as 30,000 people.

At the end of fourth grade, with college-level comprehension, vocabularies, and verbal acuity, the twins were diagnosed with dyslexia, dysgraphia, diminished visual acuity and tracking, and more. Defying the odds, they undertook what appeared to be an impossible task: writing a full-length novel. The Winner twins utilized special software that converted speech to text, and, in the nine months that followed, completed an 80,000-word novel and were recognized as child prodigies.

Here is an excerpt from chapter three of their first book of the multiple award-winning *Strand* series, *Strand Prophecy*.



*As the President sat down at his desk, he knocked a small round mirror on its side. Framed in sterling silver, it was a gift from the First Lady the day he took office. She presented it to him during a rare quiet moment on inauguration day. It was early morning in the Oval Office, and he still remembered the exact words she said when she gave it to him.*

*"You are an emotional man," she told him, "and your feelings influence your decisions. You can't help it, dear. It always shows on your face, which is why I'm giving you this mirror. If you're lost in your own thoughts, look in the mirror. You will see how you are feeling, and it will help you gain perspective on your decisions. You are the President of the United States of America and the most powerful man on the planet, but if you can see yourself as others do, it*

*will help you control your emotions."*

*The President picked up the mirror and looked at himself. He saw an angry man, angry that people had died, angry that Vitimani was hurt. And he had a predisposed urge to blame it on Strand. He didn't like theatrics and he didn't like getting played a fool in front of the media.*

*He looked out the window again and onto the south lawn. Suddenly, a cloaked figure dropped to its knees in front of the window. It was a man, but it was something more. It was Strand.*

*The President jumped out of his chair and stood tall and erect at the window, not intimidated in the least. Strand's cloak covered most of his exoskeleton as he stood up. The piercing stare of his luminous eyes met the President's unwavering gaze for a long moment.*

*Strand reached into his cloak, pulled out an envelope, and held it up for the President to see. He turned and walked toward the French doors a few yards away.*

*As Strand advanced, he retracted a portion of his exoskeleton to expose a portion of unprotected arm. He wanted the President to know for sure that he was human and not a machine.*

*The President walked over to the French doors to meet Strand. Whatever technology Strand possessed, it was far superior to anything in the US arsenal, and now he was flaunting it by circumventing all security and dropping in for uninvited visits.*

*The President's face was red with anger as he opened the doors forcefully.*

*"State your business here." \**

The novel, entitled *The Strand Prophecy*, was the first in the six-part *Strand* book series. It soon gained national recognition as a bestseller and won numerous awards, including Best Young Adult Fic-

tion and Best New Author. The book became part of a national Accelerated Reader program in 65,000 schools across America and was stocked in all Barnes and Nobles stores, nationwide.

When the first cheque from the sales of their books came in, the Winner twins were asked what they wanted to do with the money. They responded by saying that they wanted to help kids, and the best way to do that was to tell them their story, to promote reading, writing, overcoming obstacles, and believing in your dreams. "Our philosophy is to focus on your strengths and strengthen your weaknesses," Brianna says. "When you focus on your strengths, you gain confidence and the perspective that helps you conquer your weaknesses," continued her sister Brittany.

The "If You Can Dream It... You Can Write It!" tour was born and presented to schools at no charge. The demand was overwhelming, and the twins were placed on independent study in order to facilitate the tour schedule. While touring, the twins completed and published the second novel in the *Strand* series entitled *Extinctions Embrace*, released a CD of original music,



opened a non-profit company, as CEO and CFO, entitled Motivate 2 Learn, and were seen and heard nationally on numerous television and radio shows.

Over the course of 15 months, the “If You Can Dream It... You Can Write It!” tour was presented to over 70,000 students, at no cost to the schools.

The twins then expanded globally, via video conferencing. This high-definition video format facilitated the Winner twins in meeting with classrooms, large audiences, and educators from



all over the world. Their message of overcoming challenges and believing in yourself is universal, for each of us, at some time, has faced a

situation which seemed insurmountable. The Winner twins are available via video teleconference to speak to students, parents, and educators by simply contacting them through their non-profit company, Motivate 2 Learn ([www.motivate2learn.org](http://www.motivate2learn.org)).

The Winner twins have been on many television shows and radio shows. They have been “special celebrity guests” at trade shows and comic conventions.

They are often asked by parents and educators, “What is it, from a kid’s perspective, that is particularly meaningful and empowering?” The twin’s philosophy is “Focus on your strengths and strengthen your weaknesses.” This is best explained by Brianna when she says to her audiences, “Focus on what you are good at and become the best you can at that, whatever it is, whether soccer or fishing. Build your confidence by achieving in something that you love to do and learn from it that you are talented and successful. Then, with that confidence, approach your weakness with new-found strength and belief in yourself.”

Brianna’s words reflect her experiences which led to both her and her sister’s achievements. When the twins were growing up, they were encouraged to explore without restricting their passions. While one delved deeply into art, and the other enjoyed singing, both excelled in storytelling and role playing. They created thousands of universes and their inhabitants. They thrived in this supportive and positive environment with the knowledge that whenever they wanted to share, there were adults eager to listen and participate.

The twins are singer song-writers. One of the first songs they wrote was composed at age 11 and is entitled “Express Yourself.” The lyrics of the song are the embodiment of their journey, their spirit, and what they bring to audiences around the world.

### *Express Yourself*

*Express yourself and be the way you want to be  
Express yourself and be the way you want to be  
Express yourself and be the way you want to be*

*Don't be afraid to shine brighter than bright,  
show your true colors now express yourself*

*Don't be afraid to shine brighter than bright,  
show your true colors now express yourself*

*I like the way life rolls with its twists and turnarounds,*

*just be yourself and everything will work out*

*Don't be afraid to shine brighter than bright,  
show your true colors now express yourself*

*Don't be afraid to shine brighter than bright,  
show your true colors now express yourself*

*Why be someone else that you'll never ever be,*

*just be yourself and be happy*

*Don't be afraid to shine brighter than bright,  
show your true colors now express yourself*

*Don't be afraid to shine brighter than bright,  
show your true colors now express yourself*

*So high tonight*

*express yourself the way you truly are  
and fly*

*Don't be afraid to shine brighter than bright,  
show your true colors now express yourself*

*Don't be afraid to shine brighter than bright,  
show your true colors now express yourself*

*Express yourself and be the way you want to be*

*Express yourself and be the way you want to be*

*Express yourself and be the way you want to be\**

As the Winner twins graduate from eighth grade, they have published the second book in the *Strand* series, entitled *Extinctions Embrace* and are nearing completion of the third. They are drafting the screenplay and have started a production company, Shivita Films, LLC, for the development of a major motion picture based on the first book in the *Strand* series. They continue to create, broadening their writing to include a series of motivational books to assist teens, and have begun work on a number of television projects.

When the twins are home, they love to cook, garden, watch movies, read, and take care of their two goats, two dogs, and their bird, named Princess.

*Ilene and Jeff Winner*

*Parents of Brianna and Brittany*

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# Thinking Big about Gifted Education: The Davidson Academy of Nevada

A common misperception is that profoundly gifted students have an easy time in school and get straight A's without studying and that this lack of challenge is acceptable. This, however, is a false assumption. All students, including the gifted, need to be nurtured with access to an education that helps them learn and achieve at a level appropriate to their abilities, rather than just to their age.

This belief that when we set limits based on age, we limit students' potential and their contributions to humanity led Bob



and Jan Davidson to establish The Davidson Academy of Nevada in 2006. The Davidsons are gifted education philanthropists and former educational software entrepreneurs. In 1999, they founded the Davidson Institute for Talent Development, a national, non-profit company that supports profoundly gifted young people under the age of 18 with programs, including educational advocacy, talent development, scholarships, and a

summer camp. These students and their families often asked the Davidsons if they would start a school for the profoundly gifted, which led to the creation of The Davidson Academy.

Currently in its fourth school year, The Davidson Academy is the first free, public school of its kind in the United States for profoundly gifted, middle- and high-school students.

"They believe in trying different things, and if certain things don't work, don't do them anymore, and if other things work, build on that. That's a very different way of running a school than you are going to see in most institutions," maintains Dr. Jon Wade, Davidson Academy parent.

Located on the University of Nevada, Reno campus, The Davidson Academy seeks to provide students with an advanced educational opportunity matched to their abilities, strengths, and interests. Unlike many traditional school settings, the Academy's classes are not grouped by age-based grades, but by ability level. Students can accelerate, by subject, through required middle- and high-school curricula at their own pace, with access to university courses when appropriate.

"All of the kids here are really invested in academic success, and the teachers and advisors are dedicated to helping us with our goals," says Davidson Academy student Chloe Williamson.

"The Academy has allowed me to achieve things I never would have thought possible."

To gain admission to The Davidson Academy of Nevada, prospective students must

- score 99.9% or above on accepted intelligence tests and / or on the ACT, SAT, or Explore test;
- perform at an academic level of advanced middle school or higher in all subjects;
- exhibit superior intellectual development and academic achievement;
- demonstrate motivation, social and emotional maturity, and overall readiness for an accelerated educational environment; and
- be, or intend to be, residents of Nevada.

Applicants must also submit a completed application form, in addition to letters of recommendation from teachers and mentors. The admissions staff focuses heavily on goodness of fit—they look at the whole child, not just grades and test scores. The Davidson Academy is a different type of school, and the staff wants to ensure that any student who attends will be successful with the fast-paced curriculum. To this end, the Academy hosts monthly tours and assessments, where prospective students can tour the school, meet the faculty and students, and get a sense of what the school is like. The Davidson Academy has grown steadily from 35 students in the first year to 91 today.

"We really look at the whole child, not just the academic side of the students when we work with them. So, it's a very dynamic environment," says Davidson Academy Director, Colleen Harsin. "They make great social connections in the context of learning their academics."

Since The Davidson Academy is a non-residential day school, families who do not currently live in the Reno area must move in order for their students to attend the school. This is a major commitment for any parent to make for a child's education, and the fact that families have moved to Reno from around the United States, and one family from Australia, speaks volumes. Approximately half of the Academy's families have moved to Reno from out of state.

Many students who had previously been withdrawn and were underachieving at school come to the Academy. Once they find a community of like-minded peers and a curriculum that they can embrace, they flourish academically and socially. Academy students can laugh, play basketball, and discuss Greek philosophy together, simultaneously fitting in and moving forward.

"One of the other great parts about the Academy is the atmosphere, the people, and all the social opportunities presented by going to school with intellectual peers who think on the same level and at the same speed as I do," iterates David Ellison, Davidson Academy student.

The Davidson Academy seeks to match the education to the student, rather than requiring students to conform to a curriculum that doesn't meet their needs. One crucial aspect of achieving this goal is the Personalized Learning Plan (PLP). The purpose of the PLP is to deepen and strengthen the learning experience for all Davidson Academy students, consistent with The Davidson Academy's philosophy of treating students as individuals who are invested in their own learning. The PLP is essentially a road map to help the student, parents, and Academy staff determine at what level the students are, individually, and how to help them realize their academic goals.

"My classes are challenging, but really fun. We move at a faster pace, getting more done in a shorter time. I learn beyond my textbooks, taking my knowledge further than what happens within the classroom," explains Davidson Academy student, Dylan Bowman.

Davidson Academy students follow a core curriculum, based in English, mathematics, history and science, to fulfill Academy graduation requirements. Classes are taught at an advanced level with high expectations, and strong emphasis is placed on critical thinking across all subjects. The Academy is a "writing-across-the-curriculum" school, meaning that the ability to write clearly is integrated into all classes, regardless of the subject matter. Course credit is given at both the middle- and high-school level, and students frequently utilize both levels of the curriculum simultaneously as they progress through the Academy.

"I do meet all the state standards, but my curriculum is shaped by the students," confirms Larry Kramp, Davidson Academy instructor. "They tell me what they want to learn and what's interesting to them, and I fit that into the curriculum."

At The Davidson Academy, the faculty and administration believe that academics are only one component of a child's education and development. In keeping with the whole-child philosophy, there are numerous clubs and extracurricular activities

available to students. From student council and drama club to a community-service club and cross-country running, students are encouraged to develop all of their talents in order to become contributing members of their communities.

"There are numerous advantages that the Academy has over the average middle school or high school, namely, the availability of university courses, a great environment full of very supportive people, and more. It offers many opportunities that can't be found elsewhere," says Andy Wei, Davidson Academy graduate.

As students move through The Davidson Academy, they do so with a set of core values that they have

developed with the administration. These core values of responsibility, integrity, balance, leadership, pursuit of knowledge, and respect inspire the students, both academically and in their growth as young adults.

"I really wanted to go here mostly because of the challenge, but I really didn't know socially it would be great, too," satates Katie Daw, Davidson Academy student. "There are so many different

personalities here. It's so lively all the time."

The belief that the education should fit the child, instead of requiring the child to conform to the education, is the guiding force behind The Davidson Academy of Nevada. Bob and Jan Davidson are "thinking big about gifted education" and encourage the rest of the world to do the same.

Davidson Academy student, Misha Raffiee, concludes, "My decision to attend the Academy

has created a new chapter in my life—one filled with exciting opportunities, a fulfilling academic and social environment, and friends whom I hope to be in contact with for a long time."

*Julie Dudley, Communications Director,  
for the Staff of the Davidson Academy of Nevada*





# Delegate Discourse



## Austria

This school year, the Ministry for Education, Arts, and Culture issued a decree for gifted education as a basis for the support and promotion of gifted students in all Austrian schools. The decree defines giftedness as an individual's potential for outstanding achievements, and it propagates the systematic promotion of gifts and the gifted in all school forms and grades through a variety of provision measures. The teacher training colleges will support the teachers by providing special workshops and seminars on the issues dealt with in the decree. In addition, the Austrian Research and Support Center for the Gifted and Talented has provided a list with useful documents on their website for teachers.

Recently, the new Institute of Science and Technology (IST) Austria near Vienna has opened its doors. IST Austria is a post-graduate, academic institution which will perform basic research at a world-leading standard and shall open up and develop new areas of research. It is committed to becoming a world-class research centre offering, by 2016, an international, state-of-the-art environment for approximately 500 scientists and doctoral students.

In order to intensify cooperation between universities and teacher training colleges with regard to gifted education and research, the Austrian Ministry for Education, Arts, and Culture (BMUKK), the Ministry of Science and Research (BMWFW), and the Austrian Research and Support Center for the Gifted and Talented (ÖZBF) organized a conference for teacher-training colleges and universities in November 2009. The objectives of the conference were to find or create opportunities for joint teaching courses and joint research projects and to discuss competencies of teacher trainees relevant for gifted education.

*Claudia Resch for  
Roswitha Bergsmann, Waltraud Rosner,  
Kornelia Tischler*



## Denmark

A pilot project, supported by the Ministry of Education—a diploma course for teachers—was held during the winter. The course was conducted by the University College in Copenhagen, and exams were held in May 2010. We expect to continue the initiative with a new course next year. Johanna Raffan, from the United Kingdom, was invited as guest speaker during the project. She has given many lectures in different municipalities and has been an inspiring lecturer in local, teacher-training courses.

Among teachers in some municipalities, a network has been established on the internet where teachers can exchange ideas, share experiences, and support each other.

A new book on the education of gifted and talented children will be released late summer. The authors are Poul Nissen, Kirsten Baltzer, and the undersigned. We have received requests from other publishers, but, at the moment, our time is too limited to begin another writing project.

As an educational psychologist, I have undertaken many assessments of children, given advice to parents, and been to school to give supervision to teachers. Apart from this, I have given many presentations at schools and in municipalities on how to include gifted children in the mainstream school system.

I work closely together with two researchers from the Danish University on Education, Poul Nissen (PhD) and Assistant Professor Kirsten Baltzer, on the issues of gifted children. At the moment, we are undertaking research on small, local projects about gifted education in various parts of the country.

I also work closely with the Gifted Children Network in Denmark, a parent organization which has earlier been, and probably will be, represented in The World Council.

I also work with the Danish Ministry of Education and shall be part of a new

working group through the Ministry, where we shall, among other things, discuss how to support the gifted children in the Danish school system.

*Ole Kyed*



## Hong Kong

At the Hong Kong Annual Gifted Education Conference, on May 21, 2010, Dr. Tracy L. Cross, Executive Director of the Center for Gifted Education, The College of William & Mary, USA, gave a keynote address on differentiated curriculum, teaching strategies, and organizations for nurturing the gifted. The Conference was co-organized by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Education Bureau and the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education. The Conference brought together academics, teachers, social workers, educational psychologists, and school administrators to consider strategies and directions for the development of gifted education and to share experiences in provisions made for gifted learners. There were 15 concurrent sessions on such issues as learner diversity, creativity and critical thinking in Liberal Studies, science pull-out programs, and bilingual drama. At the end of the conference, in his keynote address, Professor Joseph J. Y. Sung, the Vice-Chancellor Designate of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, encouraged teachers to nurture gifted students in three key directions: thinking out of the box, learning from failure, and open-mindedness.

On May 15, the first conference for parents of gifted children in Hong Kong was held, with the theme "Focus on the Future: Learning Opportunities for Gifted Children." It was organized by the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education. The purposes of the conference were to provide an overview of different types of provision for gifted children, both in and outside Hong Kong, and to inform parents about what they might do in practical terms to be supportive in their children's learning.

Various programs, including the ongo-

ing teacher professional-development program, the parent education program, learning and teaching resources, schools-and-teachers network, and in-school and out-of-school activities for gifted learners, all continue. They are organized by The Gifted Education Section of the Education Bureau, the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education, the Quality Education Fund Gifted Education Thematic Network, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the City University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Baptist University, the Hong Kong Institute of Education, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, the University of Hong Kong, and different schools and non-government organizations.

For additional information about gifted education in Hong Kong, see: <http://cd.edb.gov.hk/ge>

<http://hkage.org.hk/en/index.html>

*Mantak Yuen, Stephen Tommis, Pui Tin Chan, and Helen Siu Yin Ku-Yu*



## India

The government of India has taken a special initiative to identify and mentor gifted children, particularly in mathematics and science. A round-table discussion was organized jointly by the Indian National Science Academy and the Indo-US Science and Technology Forum. It took place over a period of three days, from January 27 to 29, 2010. There were participants both from the United States and India. The principal investigators of the project are Prof. Krishna Maitra from India and Dr. Marcia Del Court from the USA. A number of organizations working in different parts of India came together to share their experiences. Participants from Johns Hopkins University and from the National Research Center on Gifted and Talented shared their research findings and experiences with the gifted. At the penultimate day, a model was presented for identifying and nurturing the gifted, both from school settings as well as from out-of-school settings.

*Krishna Maitra*



## Trinidad and Tobago

Recently, I founded the Caribbean Gifted and Talented Foundation. The objective of the Foundation is to embark upon a sensitization and training drive to broaden the interest group in the area of education and the development of gifted and talented children. One of the main expectations is that the Foundation will establish the framework and mechanisms for the implementation of policies and programs to cater for the needs of the gifted and talented in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Foundation has begun to network with universities, schools, and other institutions, including the University of Trinidad and Tobago, and plans are underway to host a training workshop for educators and parents to further gifted and talented education in our country.

*Nubia Williams*

## New Affiliates Welcomed

The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children realizes that strength for advocacy is gained through the collective effort of foundations, federations, and organizations, and we invite such groups from around the world to become members. Each time this happens, our message goes out farther and gains more attention in circles that influence policy making and decision making. Within the past few months, The World Council has welcomed two new organizations as affiliate members.

### Public Establishment National Student Academy (Republic of Lithuania)

The Public Establishment National Student Academy was founded in Vilnius, in the Republic of Lithuania. It has at its heart the goal “to provide the conditions for children with outstanding achievements and motivation, especially gifted children and young people to receive such educational services and acquire such discipline and personality nurturing aptitudes which they have no possibility to acquire during usual classes.” They fully realize that to provide such conditions requires highly qualified specialists if the gifted are to acquire a depth of knowledge and to attain the desired achievements. Not only does this involve academic development in the children’s chosen fields of learning, but it also requires research to understand better the basis for nurturing gifted children and to improve the intellectual development, as well as their social competencies. The studies

are also to include programs for informal education. Ultimately, the goal of the Academy is also intended to provide educational services for highly advanced and motivated children in Lithuania that compare with those of other European countries.

### The Dan Voiculescu Foundation for Romania’s Development

The Dan Voiculescu Foundation for Romania’s Development in Bucharest, under the presidency of Camelia Voiculescu, is purposed to support, encourage, and promote Romanian human and professional values, in various areas of the social and economic, technical and scientific life, culture, and art, and, thereby, reintegrating Romania into the European circle of values. These values involve elaborating and implementing the activities, actions, and projects designed for children, school and university students, graduates, and other youths.

The Foundation recognizes that to accomplish its purpose, youths will have to be identified, with equal opportunity, in various areas, and their development has to be supported. Such development further requires the creation and delivery of continuing, professional-training program in various areas of interest targeting all categories within the population, giving priority to the youths. The program is to include the organization of school and educational programs, both formal and informal, for the goal of developing the abilities of children and young people. All of the activities are to be designed so as to create the necessary conditions to achieve the main goal.

*Cathrine Froese Klassen, Editor*

# Motivated to Advocate: One Delegate's Story

Over the past twenty years, my interest has been in the area of honing the potential of the gifted and talented. This passion was first inspired in 1992 when I was fortunate to witness my youngest brother, Atiba Williams, play entire tunes on the steelpan for birthday parties and concerts at 18 months of age. He could also name any note, sung or played, which is a rare, musical gift known as "absolute pitch."

Throughout the years, it was very challenging trying to understand his gift and trying to ensure that he was continuously stimulated and motivated. Already at three years of age, Atiba opened the Dimanche Gras (Big Sunday) show with a solo steelpan performance of the Trinidad and Tobago national anthem. The Dimanche Gras is an annual national celebration showcasing the best portrayals and performances of all the local art forms and expressions presented during our Carnival Festival.

By the age of nine, Atiba composed passages had arranged and performed music for the said National Panorama Competition. Four years later, at age 13, he attended the University of the West Indies in the BA Musical Arts Degree program (not for official credit) and passed two Level II Jazz Theory courses.

Last year, Atiba completed an IB program at the United World College in Italy, where he was exposed to other exceptional musicians. Having just turned 20 in April 2010, Atiba is on scholarship at the University of Oklahoma, USA, where he is continuing his journey in realizing his full potential. He is spending this summer in Hong Kong, learning through exploration, practice, and performance.

I believe that developing human potential in all areas, such as the arts, sciences, sports, and business, is the key to any progressive society. Nurturing skills and abilities, encouraging a



*Atiba Williams playing the steelpan at four years of age*

positive work ethic, challenging brighter children, and discovering in all of us our creative capacity are very important for innovation and development. There are many children and young adults unaware of their potential and without the proper guidance here in Trinidad and Tobago. For these reasons, I have decided to embark upon a sensitization and training drive, first of all, to widen the pool of persons interested in the education and development of the gifted and talented. This initiative is to be realized through a non-profit organization that I have recently founded, namely, the Caribbean Gifted and Talented Foundation. My expectation is that this Foundation will establish the framework and mechanisms for the implementation of policies and programs to cater for the needs of the gifted and talented.



*Nubia Williams and Dr. M. Ransome, with Special Education students at the University of Trinidad and Tobago*

We have begun making linkages with universities, schools, and other institutions in an effort to realize the goals of the Foundation. Just last week, I was invited by Dr. M. Ransome to conduct a lecture with students of the Special Education undergraduate program at the University of Trinidad and Tobago. The presentation was well received, and some students indicated strong interest in pursuing work in the field of gifted and talented education.

At the moment, the Caribbean Gifted and Talented Foundation is also seeking to obtain sponsorships to conduct workshops and other activities. We are planning to host a sensitization, hands-on workshop for educators, parents, and other interested persons later this year so that we can all better understand the need for study, training, and promotion of the gifted and talented in Trinidad and Tobago.

*Nubia Williams  
Delegate for Trinidad and Tobago*

# The West Wicklow Gifted Children's Association

*Mary Doyle Powell, Chairwoman of the West Wicklow Gifted Children's Association, shared the history of the founding and development of the WWGCA with me over the past few months. The following is a compilation of the narratives.*

## **My Motivation**

I started my project in Kingston, Ontario, as a founding member of the Gifted Children's Association, when I was on the staff at Queen's University and realized that the local schools could not meet the academic needs of the professors' children, as well as those of other gifted children. I started my own school for gifted preschoolers and had some older children, as well. We transferred to Ireland and joined the Irish Association for Gifted Children. When it closed down, I started my own West Wicklow Gifted Children's Association and expanded it to include all gifted people, which is more sensible in a thinly populated, rural area. We, currently, have a network of 164 people, and we do a lot of practical projects during this economic downturn. We find we work very effectively together.

## **The Founding**

When I arrived in Ireland, from Canada, in 1999, I immediately looked around for information on the organizations that dealt with giftedness. I found only one, namely, the Irish Society for Gifted Children, at Carmichael House in Dublin. Chairwoman, Margaret McKeon, assisted by Ms McCarty and some graduate students from Trinity College, were the backbone of the organization. It became increasingly difficult to get members to work on committees as the Celtic Tiger (the economic boom period from 1997 to 2005) swept all types of people into its trajectory, and volunteers, in terms of hours of volunteer work, were unavailable. Since I lived 65 kilometers from the center of the action, which centered on the Center for Talented Youth at Dublin City University, I decided to start a branch for local children.

The parent group in Dublin sent me a list of 13 children. I decided to survey the children for the purpose of determining their interests, which turned out, mostly, to be reading. I, therefore, worked on library projects, such as art in the library. Fifteen children signed up, and the local library paid me some money, which I reinvested in the organization's coffers. The second area of interest was natural science, so I got involved in the local peat land and ecological area. The Ministry of Education then arranged bus tours to these areas. Hobbies were also considered, among them dancing and cooking, so we arranged

ethnic cooking classes for 30 teenagers at the local college. I was paid by the Ministry of Education, and the money was given back to the organization.

We now work one-on-one in schools. Very seldom is the curriculum boring. Typically, we find a physical illness at the root of many of the gifted children's problems. Many have almost undetectable cerebral palsy. Some children are truly brilliant. The Irish are very proud of their gifted children, but newcomers into the country feel that the culture is complex. They expect to find a backward place, and, instead, they find that the people are on the leading edge. This factor creates competitiveness for newcomers, which can result in despair. My committee and I work with newcomers through their adjustment phase. The standards are very high, and the internet has given learning opportunities to the poor, who now maintain jobs in the IT sector and have moved into positions of note in society. We strongly advise experiential training for gifted children before entering university due to the fast pace of change in the country. We are funded by the Health Service Executive (HSE), Vocational Education (VEC), and European development funds. Our clients are protected by privacy and confidentiality laws, so we cannot ask for endorsements.

## **The Effects of the Economic Downturn**

We continued working with the IAGC as long as it remained functional, but then, due to financial situations and

key people leaving or dying, the IAGC closed down. With nine committee members and a network of PhD's and others, we continued. The Institute of Advanced Studies was added to our group to facilitate graduate students doing research, especially self-directed learning. Our organization did not collect any fees because we wanted some outlet for non-mainstream students. When one does not use the word "university" in Ireland, one can proceed with a code of ethics and private resources, as well as with qualified staff on individual research projects.

The scarcity of funding is completely obvious in Ireland, as the government cutbacks are made public; for example, 900 vice-principals of schools have been dismissed; coupled with redundancies, this adds up to 2,500 in total. The wealthy parents of gifted children continue to pay for private agencies to provide courses for their children. One of the more popular courses is horsemanship, as many children own their own horses. In dollar terms, this would cost a minimum of five thousand Canadian dollars a year. Other less affluent people use the librar-



*WWGCA Chairwoman, Mary Doyle Powell*

ies, the local Gaelic Athletic League facilities, swimming pools, and skills workshops. We work continually with gifted people, who, in general, prefer not to work in groups because they are not of the accepted crowd. Many gifted newcomers feel socially slighted and retire.

The less able actually fare better in this leading edge, competitive climate. Speaking from personal experience, in my area, I am one of two people who drive a small, European, late-model car. My other neighbours drive Mercedes, have state-of-the-art computer systems, their children have lap-top computers to do their homework, and they enjoy at least three overseas holidays annually. The schools also arrange many cultural events. This area is a haven for the gifted—a place where they are accepted.

### ***Weekends at Wicklow***

We are situated in scenic West Wicklow, with its magnificent views of sixteen hills from our garden. We provide evening meals and breakfast. With our many years of experience working with gifted children in Canada and in Ireland, we include in our activities the parents sharing their experiences of raising gifted children. Touring the small town of Baltinglass and exploring local areas of interest on Sunday walks are also a part of the weekend events. The proceeds, after expenses, are donated to the West Wicklow Gifted Children's Association to support their work in meeting the needs of many gifted children. For further information, check out [www.visitwicklow.ie/accommodations](http://www.visitwicklow.ie/accommodations).

### ***Continuing Work***

The entry into education in Ireland is heavily controlled by teacher's unions. There is an Irish language fluency-level requirement, and six years is required to master this aspect of the curriculum. Some of my work involves language consulting work in

the schools, the salary of which I direct into our organization for operating expenses.

Our membership includes members suffering from depression, single-parent mothers, and older ladies running farms on their own. Part of our work consists of practical assistance, such as helping with the farm chores and completing technical farm papers, which can be burdensome.

As we are expected to cooperate with other organizations, I have chosen to work with [eco.gov.ie](http://eco.gov.ie), an environmental protection group, and with the legal arm of the single-parent family association. The latter involves doing court assessments for gifted children, when the parents separate, mostly on the basis of the children's choice, and we select the most convenient school locations. English parents coming into Ireland are inclined to segregate their children from the neighbours' children, causing additional challenges, with gifted and non-gifted children alike. We involve ourselves in a lot of social events, make situations workable, especially for the children, and we introduce parents to like minded-parents in terms of interest. Students no longer have the option of an expensive education, and banks are reluctant to loan money. On our network, we currently have eight consultants with PhD's, who recognize the value of self-directed study and assist us in our education of the children. Most PhD's I know are employed three days a week or less. With the sales of handcrafts, twice a year, we help out our members in need.

*Mary Doyle Powell*

*in cooperation with Cathrine Froese Klassen*

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### **Message From the President** *(cont'd from p.1)*

We are living in a digital world in which we have to re-invent and reform our educational systems. Education is the most powerful tool one can use to change the world. This era will call for creativity and innovation to meet all types of challenges of the 21st century.

It is time to ponder a number of interesting questions, which may also be the focus of future research papers, articles for our newsletter and journal, and biennial conference papers:

- Are we prepared to raise our children for the 21st century and to invest in gifted education?
- Do we need to change the existing outdated educational systems in different parts of the world?
- Why is gifted education important, and how could we strengthen our

ability to generate new ideas and thoughts to revolutionize the existing educational systems?

- What actions should the educational system take to promote, enhance, and improve creativity and innovation among stakeholders
- What are the foundations for creative learning and innovative teaching in the context of gifted education?
- What is the role of technology in the creative-learning environments and innovative teaching methods?
- What is the nature of the most effective curricula in promoting creativity and innovation in education?
- How can we promote inter-cultural dialogue to stimulate creativity and innovation in education in order to understand the world better and to improve standards of life?

- What are the barriers and constraints that prevent schools from offering special provisions to meet the special needs of the gifted and talented children?
- What is the value of international networking and platforms concerned with gifted education?
- To what degree are those in this field of knowledge influencing trends, approaches, and practices in different educational settings?

Together, we can find answers, realize our dreams, and achieve our aims and objectives.

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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 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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### ***World Gifted, June 2010***

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Warren Schuetz

*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:

September 3, 2010 for the third 2010 issue

December 10, 2010 for the first 2011 issue.

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

July 29 – August 1, 2010

11<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Conference on Giftedness

Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre

Darling Harbour, Australia

Theme: Thinking Smart: Effective Partnerships for Talent Development

[www.gifted2010.com.au](http://www.gifted2010.com.au)

November 11 – 14, 2010

57<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention - National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)

Atlanta, Georgia

Theme: Great Minds Leading the Way

<http://www.nagc.org>

February 25 - 27, 2011

49<sup>th</sup> Annual California for the Gifted Conference

Palm Springs Convention Center and Palm Springs Renaissance Hotel

[www.cagifted.org](http://www.cagifted.org)

August 8 – 12, 2011

19<sup>th</sup> WCGTC Biennial World Conference

Incheon University

Incheon, Korea

<http://www.worldgifted2011.or.kr>



### ***Gifted and Talented International***

The coming issue of *GTI*, Volume 25 (1), focussing on scientific creativity, is expected to be posted in August.

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