

# GIFTED EDUCATION PRESS

P. O. Box 1586  
10201 Yuma Court  
Manassas, VA 22110  
(703) 369-5017

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME ONE, NUMBER 3

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1987

The articles in this issue reflect two important needs: to improve curricula for the gifted, and to upgrade the training of teachers of these students. First, Ken Chuska, an experienced school man who supervises programs for the gifted in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, discusses the proper environment for establishing effective curricula for the gifted, and what principals, superintendents and other administrators can do to develop this type of environment. This paper was originally written for the Pennsylvania Department of Education during the spring of 1986 as part of a White Paper (including articles by several other authors) on educating the gifted in this state. Although it is not yet available for distribution to educators in Pennsylvania or other states, we hope this White Paper will be issued shortly.

The article by Hans Jellen (Assistant Professor of Education at Southern Illinois University) and John Verduin (Professor of Education at this University) emphasizes the need to develop formal training programs for teachers of the gifted. The recommendations of these authors include rigorous courses in Differential Education for the Gifted, and formal accreditation procedures for teachers who receive this training. These recommendations should be carefully studied by all university faculty interested in improving the education of teachers of the gifted, and by state and national boards concerned with upgrading the quality of teacher training. Jellen's and Verduin's paper should be particularly informative to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards which was recently established by the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. We urge this board to establish such standards for teachers of the gifted.

The last article by Mike Walters, teacher in the New York City Public Schools, is a review of a book of major importance to all educators — Cultural Literacy by E. D. Hirsch, Jr. Interestingly, this is one of the few current books on the problems of school curricula to make the Best Seller List in many years. Every developer of programs for the gifted should study Hirsch's ideas for their application to designing strong content-based courses of study. As his book illustrates, these courses should emphasize knowledge and information from history, philosophy, literature, foreign languages and other subjects of the humanities. The heritage and values of American society and Western Civilization must be taught with rigor and intellectual integrity through these subjects. The papers by Ken Chuska, and Hans Jellen and John Verduin, emphasize that administrators and teachers must take the initiative and carefully design the learning environment in order to achieve the goals of cultural literacy discussed by Hirsch, and which have been so incisively critiqued by Walters.

Again, we encourage you to send in your comments, criticisms and rebuttals to these articles. We are also seeking new articles of 2 to 3 pages (typed and single-spaced) on all topics concerned with improving the identification and teaching of the gifted.

Maurice D. Fisher, Publisher

PUBLISHER OF BOOKS ON DIFFERENTIAL EDUCATION FOR THE GIFTED

**THE CHALLENGE OF DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE CURRICULUM FOR THE GIFTED**

BY KENNETH CHUSKA, SUPERVISOR      PROGRAMS FOR THE GIFTED  
 ALLEGHENY INTERMEDIATE UNIT 3      PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

**Consider this** -- the evolution of the ways schools have become organized has created learning barriers for the gifted, and problems for teachers and administrators. The early schools were usually one-room affairs (a subject of much derision today). However, gifted students who attended these school houses could not be prohibited from learning what the older students were taught. Thus, the curriculum and instruction were open-ended and non-graded. However, later organizational changes have effectively removed those options for the gifted by basing grade level placement on students' chronological ages. In the days of the one-room school, **acceleration** and **enrichment** had to be accepted by teachers because there was no way to "hide" the advanced content, instruction, materials and class discussions of older and more advanced students. But today, those same enrichment possibilities of the one-room school have to be accomplished by more complex administrative decisions because of the current practice of using chronological ages to determine grade level placement.

Most curricula are currently written with a general population in mind because schools do not have the numbers of identified gifted to write specific lessons for them. Thus, it is usually a matter of adapting and modifying existing curricula that must be considered for use in gifted programs. In addition, the curricula are usually articulated among different grade levels; and therefore, are intended to constitute a continuum. These factors, **articulation** and **a continuum**, have important ramifications for the education of the gifted.

Along with these factors, some **major characteristics** of the gifted that must be considered are -- they:

- learn more with less drill and fewer concrete examples.
- learn more in a shorter period of time.
- learn many things earlier than other students.
- have a wide variety of interests.

Four questions are raised concerning the decisions that have to be made about educating the gifted as a result of taking into account the curriculum factors of **articulation** and **a continuum**, and the above characteristics of the gifted:

1. Assuming that the curriculum as written constitutes a continuum, where should a student who exhibits the characteristics listed above be **placed on that continuum**? (This is one form of an acceleration component.)
2. Once placed, what criteria should be used to determine that the **pace of the students' progress through the curriculum** is appropriate?
3. For those students who demonstrate the above characteristics, how can the basic curriculum, and its accompanying resources be enriched to provide

opportunities for **greater breadth and depth of study?** (This is usually considered an enrichment provision.)

4. How can a challenging curriculum be developed through the levels of thinking involved along the upper ends of the following continua? Simple-to-Complex and Concrete-to-Abstract.

Before proceeding to answer these questions, two desired end-results must be addressed by the reader:

1. **What are the consequences or benefits of a student being identified as gifted in my school?**
2. **What do I want the curricula of the school to accomplish for the gifted?**

The types of curriculum decisions to be made will depend on concrete answers to these questions.

What enables these questions to be addressed and resulting decisions to be made? Fortunately, school leaders have various powers to make the desired modifications of the curriculum, and they are already using these powers to produce positive changes for the gifted. But others may not recognize the level of effectiveness that their use can accomplish for these students.

The overriding power that the educational leader has at his/her command is the **power of flexibility**. The use of this power allows exploration of a variety of avenues in making a decision, while not rejecting any possibility without examination. Some other more concrete powers are to:

1. assign students to an appropriate entry level on the curriculum continuum.
2. make flexible the pace at which students will progress through the curriculum.
3. organize the school to accomplish the goals that the curriculum should achieve for the gifted.
4. arrange for proper resources as related to kind, number, and level that will make the appropriate breath and depth of studies possible.
5. set a tone or atmosphere in the school that is conducive to a positive attitude about the education of the gifted.
6. promote curricular developments and modifications necessary for those students who exhibit the accepted characteristics of the gifted. Included here would be attention to the variety, number and level of educational objectives and expectations.
7. provide a variety of outlets for gifted students who exhibit gifts and talents beyond the basic curriculum.
8. assign gifted students to teachers who indicate a strong desire to work with them, and express a willingness to provide appropriate curriculum modifications.

9. provide inservice training opportunities for teachers to upgrade their knowledge and skills in modifying and implementing an appropriate curriculum.
10. promote a high degree of expectations for student attainment that leads to academic excellence and scholarship.

These eleven powers (including the one of flexibility), while not exhaustive, clearly indicate that the educational leader of the school does, indeed, have the ability to provide effective programs for the gifted. As indicated earlier, many educational leaders are effectively using these powers today. Others must begin to increase their powers for the improvement of gifted education in the nation. By thoughtfully exercising these powers, a quality curriculum for the gifted can be developed and implemented which includes the following characteristics:

- Has a definite teaching model based upon experts such as Benjamin Bloom, Paul Brandwein, Jerome Bruner, J. P. Guilford, Harry Passow, Joseph Renzulli, Abraham Tannenbaum, Donald Treffinger, or Virgil Ward.
- Provides resources and activities commensurate with the level of need of the students and which extend beyond the basic curriculum.
- Has objectives that transcend subject matter in such areas as thinking skills, creativity, leadership training, concept development, and research.
- Has continuity and articulation.
- Is implemented by teachers knowledgeable about giftedness.
- Includes the library and community resources as integral parts of student learning.
- Provides for flexibility of administration in individual goals and abilities.
- Provides for exceptions in case of extreme abilities.
- Allows for implementation strategies and practices based on the characteristics of the gifted.
- Has standards that call for the high quality of work.
- Is evaluated regularly. ¶¶

\*\*\*\*\*

Most powerful is he who has himself in his power.      Seneca

There is no knowledge that is not power.      Ralph Waldo Emerson

I know of nothing sublime which is not some modification of power.  
    Edmund Burke

We thought, because we had power, we had wisdom.      Stephen Vincent Benet

**A NEED FOR DRASTIC REFORM IN TRAINING OF DIFFERENTIAL EDUCATION FOR THE  
 GIFTED-EDUCATIONISTS<sup>1</sup>**      By HANS G. JELLEN AND JOHN R. VERDUIN, JR.  
 SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY      CARBONDALE, ILLINOIS

Introducing DEG-Training

DEG-Educationists must transcend the traditional role of classroom teachers or trainers by using educational as well as developmental opportunities in and out of school which contribute to the holistic development of the gifted learner. Since traditional teaching is primarily associated with knowledge transmission or fact-giving, the pedagogy of Differential Education for the Gifted must be a radical departure from both in order to obtain justification, acceptance, and even admiration in any school setting. For these positive outcomes to occur, DEG-Educationists must be carefully selected and trained to fulfill the complex roles associated with DEG-Teaching, DEG-Facilitating, and DEG-Counseling.

DEG-Training is a shift of focus from fact-giving to fact-finding, from fixed knowledge to generative contents, from authoritarian teaching styles to cooperative learning, and from autocratic evaluation procedures to democratic assessment techniques. With these pedagogical essentials in mind, it is expected that DEG-Educationists will cause higher levels of learning, deeper levels of internalizing knowledge, and broader levels of understanding. All of these objectives should contribute to behavioral outcomes that can be linked to socially responsible Knowledge Production (KP) in all realms of meaning, not only for Gifted Learners attending a given DEG-Program, but also on the part of DEG-Educationists selected and trained for this important mission. For these educational and developmental objectives to be achieved, the selected teachers must be exposed to and well-grounded in DEG-Pedagogy. The major characteristics of this pedagogy are described below.

Acquiring Generative Contents or Operative Knowledge Through DEG-Training

Most teacher training programs focus on factual contents or terminal knowledge which operate at lower conceptual levels, encouraging teachers to depend primarily on rote memory and authority rather than on judgement and inference. Teaching in regular schools becomes, therefore, a fact-giving and -regulating act which triggers and reproduces lower-level types of thinking by teachers and students. Since factual contents or fixed knowledge reinforce unproductive, non-critical, unimaginative, shallow, and arbitrary modes of thought, many teacher training institutions must be viewed as the cause of intellectual, as well as academic, mediocrity in our schools. DEG-Training becomes, therefore, a deliberate effort to break this vicious cycle of intellectual and academic mediocrity.

<sup>1</sup>The term DEG-Educationist is used to point out the importance of specialty training in the area of "Differential Education for the Gifted (DEG)." DEG is an acronym adopted from Virgil S. Ward (1980) to replace the illogical and semantic misnomer of so-called "Gifted/Talented Education."

DEG-Trainees must become familiar with generative contents or operative knowledge which demand from them higher-order thinking in the areas of analysis, inference, insight, judgment, association and imagination. Such generative contents as functional concepts, great ideas, perspectives upon knowledge, significant theses or antitheses, hidden realities, or summary analyses can be found in all "realms of meaning" (Ward, 1962). According to Phenix (1964), "Ethics or moral knowledge; Synnoetics or personal/social knowledge; Synoptics or historic-philosophical knowledge; Symbolics or communicative-symbolic knowledge; Empirics or scientific knowledge; and Esthetics or artistic knowledge" represent a defensible set of knowledge on the whole suited to the curricular needs of DEG-Training or Programming. This set of knowledge generating concepts is most appropriate in gifted programs because it: (a) contributes to the personal, social, and academic development of teachers and the taught; (b) discourages subject-specific thinking but encourages interdisciplinary and complex learning; (c) has generative or operative value which forces teachers and learners into new types of learning not usually covered in regular schools; (d) articulates and reforms curricular planning for DEG-Programs; and (e) resists the prioritizing, particularizing, and even "prostituting" or marketing of certain types of knowledge. It maintains the integrity of knowledge on the whole (from Jellen and Verduin, in progress). A strong and broad liberal-arts background becomes, therefore, a prerequisite for applicants to DEG-Training programs.

### Conclusion

The actual program for DEG-Educationists should be based upon the Holmes Group recommendations as described in the Holmes Report (1985). This report was abstracted by the Association of Teacher Educators (1986), and contains the following important points:

First, a strong B.A. or B.S. degree in the liberal arts and/or sciences should be required prior to admittance to DEG-Training programs. The professional training in Differential Education for the Gifted would include two years of intensive studies and controlled practice in the foundations of DEG, DEG-Pedagogy, DEG-Program Development, and DEG-Evaluation Procedures. A final or third year would be spent as a DEG-Intern in carefully selected and supervised field-based situations which could be local, state, national or international in nature. A terminal "Masters of Science Degree in DEG" would be granted upon the successful completion of all Requirements in programs preferably approved by the National Education Association and American Psychological Association.¶¶

### REFERENCES

- Association of Teacher Educators-ATE (Fall, 1986). "Visions of reform: Implications for the education profession." pp. 8-9. Reston, VA: ATE.
- Jellen, H. & Verduin, J. R. (1986). Handbook for Differential Education of the Gifted: A Taxonomy of 32 Key Concepts. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

References for Jellen and Verduin Article — Continued

- Jellen, H. & Verduin, J. R. (in progress). DEG-Workbook for Factor III: An Instrumentation of the Demands of Knowledge. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Phenix, P. (1964). Realms of Meaning. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Ward, V., et al. (1962). The Gifted Student: A Manual for Program Improvement. Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board.
- Ward, V. (1980). Differential Education for the Gifted. Los Angeles: National/State Leadership Training Institute on the Gifted and Talented. ¶¶

\*\*\*\*\*

REVIEW OF A BOOK OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE TO EDUCATORS OF THE GIFTED

Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs To Know by E. D. Hirsch, Jr. (Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

Language is not an abstract construction of the learned, or of dictionary makers, but it is something arising out of the work, needs, ties, joys, affections, tastes, of long generations of humanity, and has its bases broad and low, close to the ground.

Walt Whitman, Slang In America

....a smattering of everything and a knowledge of nothing.

Charles Dickens, Sketches by Boz

It is usually the descriptive part of a book that a reviewer agrees with, while the prescriptive part can be a troublesome concern. For example, an author may describe in brilliant, passionate and intense prose, the social inequities of a particular situation. Yet, when it comes to the prescriptive analysis of this situation, such as supporting the use of violence or terrorism, then one can find disagreement on ethical grounds. This reviewer's response to Hirsch's book is just the reverse; I am sympathetic to his prescriptive analysis but have serious concerns about his description of the cultural literacy problem in the United States.

His prescriptive statements are right-on-target, particularly as they relate to Differential Education for the Gifted. Thus, Hirsch argues that we must return to a curriculum which teaches critical thinking skills by using a humanities curriculum. The cultural literacy list (by Hirsch, Kett and Trefil) in the Appendix includes the range and depth of such a curriculum. It should be noted that James LoGiudice (Supervisor of Programs for the Gifted and Talented in the Bucks County, Pennsylvania Public Schools) and his staff have been using a humanities curriculum for the gifted during the last ten years. This curriculum

uses an interdisciplinary approach in history, philosophy, literature, drama, foreign languages and the social sciences. In addition, this reviewer has taught the following literary works to elementary level "disadvantaged" students in the New York City Public Schools for several years: Julius Caesar by Shakespeare, The Tell Tale Heart and The Raven by Poe, The Old Man And The Sea by Hemingway, The Bear by Faulkner, Faust by Goethe, The Diary of Anne Frank, the biography of Lincoln by Carl Sandburg, and the autobiography of Frederick Douglass. These two examples show that certain educators of the gifted have already been using the type of curriculum recommended by Hirsch -- one based upon the humanities.

I completely agree with the author's insistence that American education should heed its cultural heritage and past, and I believe that cultural literacy is especially relevant and urgent for gifted programs. Hirsch has performed a wonderful service for educators of the gifted by stressing the: (1) absence of culturally based facts and concepts in the typical curriculum, and (2) consequences of using a curriculum which has as its primary thrust, the development of "critical thinking skills." As he so clearly demonstrates, students cannot be critical thinkers if they do not have important subjects and topics to think about.

As a classroom teacher, I am very concerned with Hirsch's descriptive analysis of cultural illiteracy in America's schools. First, his recommended curriculum (as illustrated by his cultural literacy list) places little emphasis on the human factors which underlie learning. Clearly, students will not understand and apply the contents of this list as a result of mere exposure to the words contained therein. The genius of John Dewey was his sensitivity to the psychological and social parameters which affect culturally based learning. Unfortunately, Hirsch has misunderstood Dewey (especially the pedagogical aspects of Dewey's work), and uses him as a straw man to criticize educational approaches which he (Hirsch) views as being dysfunctional. Dewey was not in favor of a "neutral" curriculum which does not address specific topics and concepts, but just the opposite. He was also keenly aware of how various human and social conditions affect learning. And he identified pedagogical methods which helped to transfer American cultural values to large numbers of immigrant children enrolled in urban school districts during the first half of this century. For John Dewey (unlike Edward Lee Thorndike), it was not a mass of teeming illiterate misfits from Ireland, Italy and Eastern Europe who attended these schools, but potentially well-informed and literate citizens who required certain instructional strategies to achieve cultural literacy. The school system of New York City, which was so greatly influenced by Dewey, has produced several generations of Nobel Prize winners, world renowned writers, scientists, and cabinet members for the Presidents of the United States.

Hirsch uses the term "schemata" as if it has no affective connotation. In this regard, why does he just barely mention an important scholar of human



development, Jean Piaget? Moreover, it is noteworthy that many individuals who have contributed important insights to Hirsch's ideas are not discussed in this book. George Herbert Mead, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Norththrop Frye, and Noam Chomsky have all developed significant ideas related to understanding language and culture. This author's descriptive analysis is too reductionistic, and this is perhaps why he has struck such a "raw nerve" for many Americans. It is very comforting to have the problems of cultural literacy explained so neatly. However, the education of students unfolds in a human context involving complex social issues. Neil Postman's Amusing Ourselves To Death: Public Discourse In The Age Of Show Business (1985) may not have total insight into these issues, but his book is very sensitive to the social context of literacy as related to modern American culture. (Editor's Note: See a review of this book in the April 1987 edition of this Newsletter.)

A further problem which I have with Hirsch's descriptive analysis is its lack of concern for the interaction between the cognitive and affective realms. The words and topics included in the cultural literacy list, besides possessing various cognitive structures, have many emotional characteristics. For example, it is more important for black students in the South Bronx to know that George Washington freed his slaves in his will because he had a moral revulsion to slavery than it is to know the myths behind the cherry tree incident. In addition, the aesthetic aspects of cultural literacy are very important. Thus, my students find the language of the Preamble to the Constitution to be very rich, dignified and personally meaningful to their present social conditions.

Hirsch should become more involved with educators of the gifted who are developing humanities-based curricula, since the work of these educators can help to forge a needed renaissance in the public schools. Scholars and field experts need to form a coalition to achieve this goal, and thereby revitalize American education.¶¶

**Michael E. Walters, New York City Public Schools**

\*\*\*\*\*

The communication which insures participation in a common understanding is one which secures similar emotional and intellectual dispositions....

**John Dewey, Democracy and Education**

There is an art of reading, as well as an art of thinking, and an art of writing.

**Isaac D'Israeli, Literary Character**

I want to know if I can live with what I know, and only that. **Albert Camus**

Mediocre men often have the most acquired knowledge. **Claude Bernard**

Culture is the widening of the mind and of the spirit. **Jawaharlal Nehru**

### The Need for Reform and Dynamic Leadership in Gifted Education

Since the publication of A Nation at Risk (1983) and other subsequent studies analyzing the problems of America's schools, the Educational Reform Movement has gained momentum and influence. However, it has had little apparent effect upon gifted education. This field still shows little improvement and suffers from a general malaise -- the corresponding obvious symptoms are the prevalence of stultified and entrenched ideas related to identifying and teaching the gifted, and the lack of criticism by influential educational leaders of questionable ideas and practices. Since the publication of the Richardson Study (1985), what substantive improvements have occurred at the national, state and local levels? Little or nothing by our observations. We still see the: (1) predominance of educational models which have -- little demonstrated validity (as might be demonstrated by using widely accepted principles of educational research), little educational value for gifted students, and no basis in common sense; (2) failure of educators to use their professional judgement and influence concerning what essential subjects and topics should be taught to the gifted; and (3) blatant commercialism of individuals who "tout" their ideas on how to teach these students.

Granted that these symptoms can be found in all areas of American Education, the field of Educating the Gifted should be particularly immune to such manifestations of weakness, thoughtlessness and self-interest, since it has direct responsibility for educating the best students our schools are presently capable of producing. Hence, this field must assume a dynamic leadership position in the Educational Reform Movement.

We resolve to help gifted education in this role by publishing articles and critiques which: (1) analyze its most serious problems; (2) criticize practices which cannot be supported by defensible theory and research; and (3) make innovative recommendations for improvement. Dynamic leadership first requires the forthright analysis and revision of entrenched ideas, and the development of innovative solutions to recurrent problems. Let us begin the 1987-88 school year by moving in a forward direction. ¶¶ MDF

\*\*\*\*\*

Future issues will include articles on the following topics: analysis of the current state-of-the-art of gifted education, review of Allan Bloom's book, The Closing of the American Mind, a black teacher's perception of gifted education, a parent's recommendations on how to improve this field, and the problems of teaching learning-disabled and underachieving gifted students. Please remember to send us the names and addresses of your colleagues who would like to receive copies of this Newsletter (without charge).