

GIFTED EDUCATION PRESS

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NEWSLETTER VOLUME THREE, NUMBER FOUR OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1989

This first issue of the 1989-90 school year begins with a lesson in the history of education for the gifted by Linda Weiss Morris, Executive Director, North Carolina Association for the Gifted and Talented. She presents a detailed historical account of a very active and innovative statewide program, including the development of concepts of giftedness and appropriate differentiated programs, during the thirty years since North Carolina started planning programs for gifted. We welcome further historical descriptions of programs for the gifted in other states and local school districts for publication in this newsletter. These descriptions can show how much progress has been made in the last twenty to thirty years and help educators to more confidently determine the future of this field. As the great philosopher, George Santayana (1863-1952) said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

We salute two academic stars who have had a great influence upon the education of gifted students in North Carolina. Professor Virgil S. Ward is a graduate of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and was influential in establishing the curriculum for The North Carolina Governor's School (see his article on this topic in The Gifted and Talented: Their Education and Development. [A. Harry Passow, Editor]. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979). James J. Gallagher has been very influential in North Carolina and across the nation through his training of students at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and his excellent textbooks on educating the gifted. Clearly, the work accomplished in differential education for the gifted in this progressive Southern state has been the result of creative ideas generated by dedicated individuals at the state, local and university levels. We are particularly interested in hearing from our readers in North Carolina regarding Dr. Morris' article.

The second article is a gemstone of conciseness in arguing for placing gifted students together in a self-contained program to give them the best possible education. When we first read this article in SOI News: Structure of Intellect Newsletter, we wrote to Dr. Mary Meeker who is the Editor-Publisher and to the author, Dr. Paul Plowman, for permission to reprint it. Of course, Plowman was one of the grand designers of excellent programs for the gifted during his decades of outstanding work in the California State Department of Education.

The brilliant essay by Michael Walters on teaching the gifted about Spanish writers, the interesting comments by Dr. Diane Ravitch on the great books debate at Stanford University and elsewhere, and the brief reviews of three books-worth-reading all represent ideas and concepts that are essential for educators of the gifted to know about, to reflect upon and to help improve their differentiated curriculum. May your 1989-90 school year be very successful! Maurice D. Fisher, Publisher

PUBLISHER OF BOOKS ON DIFFERENTIAL EDUCATION FOR THE GIFTED

NORTH CAROLINA: COMMITMENT TO GIFTED STUDENTS BY LINDA WEISS
MORRIS, Ed.D., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NORTH CAROLINA ASSOCIATION FOR
THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

Thirty years ago this summer the North Carolina General Assembly established a commission to design a framework for the education of the State's gifted students. Five school districts were selected to serve as pilot sites in the investigation of the need and feasibility of identifying and serving these children. Identifying and serving, the two components of what would become a state mandate, continue to be studied during the fall of 1989!

Definition and Identification

The concept of what a gifted child is has changed several times during the past thirty years. Some of the changes have resulted in subtle fine tuning, others have been more radical in nature. The original definition adopted in Article 38, Public School Laws of North Carolina, by the 1961 General Assembly serves as an interesting beginning point for examination. In 1961 the General Assembly declared: "The term 'exceptionally talented child' means a pupil in the public school system of North Carolina who possesses the following qualifications: (a) A group intelligence quotient of 120 or higher, (b) A majority of marks of A and B, (c) Emotional adjustment that is average or better, (d) Achievement at least two grades above the State norm, or in the upper 10% of local norms of the administrative unit, and (e) Shall be recommended by the pupil's teacher or principal. The State Board is authorized to change the foregoing criteria for qualification as an exceptionally talented child, if deemed necessary, provided the qualifications shall be uniform in application."

While most of the criteria were fairly clear-cut in nature, it was not explained how one would decide if a student's "emotional adjustment" was "average or better." Another possible problem could arise if a child met criteria a-d but neither the pupil's teacher nor principal would recommend him or her for consideration. In 1971 the State Board took action regarding these two areas of concern by deleting items c and e. The Board then added a new criterion. Children would be considered gifted if they "possess(ed) other characteristics of giftedness and talents to the extent that they need and can profit from programs for the gifted and talented." It appeared that while making the definition clearer in the two most subjective areas, it actually created an enormous new area of even more subjectivity!

During this ten-year span programs were available first only in the few communities which had served as the pilot sites. The number of children reported to the Department of Public Instruction as being served

was 414 in the 1960-61 school year. By 1971 many school systems had begun to serve students through an itinerant, enrichment program and the number had grown to 23,677. Most of these programs were the result of local needs and/or pressures. North Carolina, while defining gifted and talented and supporting educational opportunities for the gifted, had not yet mandated that local school systems provide any specific services to these students. The Marland Report of 1972 and PL 94-142 were, however, about to have a tremendous impact on the education of these students. Public Law 94-142 required that all handicapped youngsters had the right to a free, appropriate public school education. In North Carolina the enabling legislation was written to include handicapped and gifted (grades K-12).

The first concern, identification, was not made easier by the newest definition which was influenced to a great degree by the Marland Report (1972). In 1975 a child came to be defined as gifted and talented if he/she fell "within the upper 10 percent in the total school district on intelligence tests, achievement tests, and/or scales that rate behavior characteristics. This child has academic talent and generally performs above average in his class work and/or may demonstrate a special talent in areas such as creativity, communication, leadership, decision making, forecasting and planning as indicated by the use of behavioral scales and checklists. Consideration must be given to the ethnic composition of the pupil population."

In 1979 the definition was re-written into one which, if anything, was even more vague! It dropped the "10%" criterion, but it said, "gifted and talented students are defined as those students who (1) possess demonstrated or potential intellectual, creative or specific academic abilities, and (2) need differentiated educational services beyond those being provided by the regular school program in order to realize their potentialities for self and society. A student may possess singularly or in combination these characteristics: general intellectual ability; specific academic aptitude; creative or productive thinking abilities." Many local administrators felt that if pressured almost any child could be identified as being gifted under one or more portions of this definition.

While the fear of identifying 100% of the population did not materialize, by December 1982 the number of students identified had grown to 57,916. This represented approximately 5% of the total school population and most school systems were not even identifying students at all grade levels. Another problem surfaced: 90.9% of those being identified were white and only 7.4% were black, yet the percentage of black youth in North Carolina was about triple this figure.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction appointed a

task force in 1983-84 and again in 1988-89 to address the issues of: (1) lack of minority identification, and (2) the growing population of identified majority students. By 1989 some school districts were identifying almost 11% of their students using the State criteria, but were receiving funding for only 3.9% ("What Will Your Schools Gain," 1988). In 1985, following the 1983-84 Task Force recommendations, North Carolina rewrote the definition once again. This time the definition moved to restrict the program to academically gifted students since that more accurately reflected the available services. The definition said these students were "defined as those who demonstrate or have the potential to demonstrate outstanding intellectual aptitude and specific academic ability...." The 1988-89 Task Force did not address any possible changes in the current (1985) definition. It did, however, recommend several changes in the identification procedures and that pilot programs be established to improve identification procedures among minority populations.

The 1988-89 Task Force also recommended another significant change in procedures for identifying gifted students in North Carolina: the elimination of the mandatory three-year re-evaluation of all students. Because the gifted are combined with the handicapped in North Carolina's legislation, gifted eligibility procedures have had to parallel those for the handicapped including the mandatory re-evaluation.

The issue of minority identification and re-evaluation are only two of the challenges currently being faced. The question of appropriate tests and the lack of individualized testing in the majority of the school systems also prevents many from feeling totally comfortable with current identification procedures. It is believed that the vast majority of the truly gifted students in North Carolina are being identified, but there is concern about the bright minority youngsters for whom the "number crunching" does not yield high enough scores for identification.

Several school systems have begun to tackle the issue of minority identification. The Greensboro City School System instituted a Special Academically Gifted Project during the 1986-87 school year to "address the issue of underrepresentation of minority students." The project focused on the testing aspect of identification and in their Annual Report of June 14, 1988, the authors reported a 140% increase in the number of minority students placed in the Academically Gifted program, grades 2 through 5 (Woods, 1988, p.12).

These issues are certainly not the only ones facing North Carolina educators today. How to identify the gifted/handicapped child, the nonconformist, and the young child continue to be areas of study. While North Carolina law mandates services in grades K-12, most school systems

do not begin programs until a child has reached third or fourth grade. The rationale given is that standardized data are available for all children in these grades. The tragedy is that it is too late for some youngsters.

The last thirty years have seen North Carolina become one of the first states to mandate gifted education. It has also seen North Carolina willing to repeatedly make significant changes in its definition and identification in an on-going effort to truly and fairly identify the gifted. There is still a need, however, for many more changes before all concerned are satisfied that North Carolina has found the "best model possible."

Delivery of Services and Curriculum

Once a child or a group of children is identified, how should they be served? What should be included in the curriculum? Who should make these decisions? In North Carolina these decisions have always been left to the local school system. While there can be strength in diversity and certainly many of the programs for gifted students in North Carolina are second to none, there are some inherent weaknesses in this laissez-faire attitude. First, programs were often designed to primarily meet the needs of the local unit and not the individual child. There was one program for all children, with the program designed and then the children identified, instead of vice-versa. There was often only one type of program in a district at each level, and there might not be a continuum of services available either within a particular level or between them (Morris, 1986, p. 17).

The majority of elementary programs have, for the last seventeen years, focused on the resource room model, often with the services of an itinerant teacher serving several schools. As the number of certified teachers has grown and the level of funding for gifted students increased, some school systems are implementing more than one program model. The Chapel Hill-Carrboro Schools and the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools have both a resource and self-contained program. Children are screened for placement based on individual needs and abilities (Manuel, 1988). Both systems use individualized testing as part of the placement and decision making process to select children for the two components.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools has placed a class for identified high school students in each major area at each high school. Students no longer have to leave their base school to enroll in an Academically Gifted (AG) science or mathematics course and they are guaranteed that the class will only contain identified students. The consultant teacher has been used in several areas of North Carolina. Harnett County has

used the consultant model for several years (Aubrecht, 1988) as has Rowan County. While the classroom teacher has responsibility for the child's education, AG Lead Teachers provide advice, assistance, and materials for the student and teacher. (Each AG teacher has certification in educating the academically gifted and at least a Master's Degree.) Other school systems are investigating the special needs of the LD/AG child and are implementing programs for them. One, in Wake County, began as a pilot program in 1986-87 focusing on high school "at risk" academically gifted students.

North Carolina's Beacons

The Cape Hattress Lighthouse might be the most recognizable North Carolina beacon, but this state has also provided highly visible and recognizable beacons in the gifted field. The Governor's School, for example, was the first such program (established in 1963) for the gifted in the United States. This six week summer program is located on two college campuses and serves 800 students who receive a non-credit curriculum in: (1) academic subjects and creative technology; (2) philosophy; and (3) the study of self and society. At approximately the same time that the Governor's School was established, the School of the Arts was founded and started in Winston-Salem. The nationally recognized School of the Arts is a part of the University of North Carolina system, and serves high school and college students from across the United States who are gifted in art, music and drama.

The latest beacon is the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics in Durham. Established in 1978 by the North Carolina General Assembly, it was the first school of its kind in the nation and has become a national and international prototype. The school selects 400 high school juniors and seniors from North Carolina to attend this residential program. The first students enrolled in 1980. During the next three years over \$7.1 million in private donations supplemented the \$3.5 million operating budget and the gift of 15 buildings and 27 acres from Durham County. Each summer the faculty leads inservice training for North Carolina science and mathematics teachers. This component has strengthened local programs, and the School has challenged local high schools to improve their science and mathematics programs.

North Carolina's long-term commitment to an appropriate education for its gifted students has placed it in the forefront of many new and exciting developments. It is a commitment that is the result of visionary leaders understanding the needs of this group of students. It has caused the State to look and re-look at the many components of a suitable educational program from the definition to the curriculum. It is not a static commitment, but rather one that keeps those working with these youngsters in a continuing pattern of growth.>>

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acquire advanced thinking abilities more effectively than in regular classes.

Somehow the message must sink in to educators and politicians alike that:

You don't train a budding concert violinist or pianist in a cooperative learning milieu which includes children with little talent, poor auditory discrimination or eye-hand coordination problems.

You don't prepare an individual to become a star athlete in general gym classes which include children with poorly developed muscular agility and strength and inability to remember signals.

You don't produce rapier sharp minds by having individuals mull over basic learnings, mundane concepts, along with children who have little interest in what is being taught or capability to comprehend fully what the teacher is trying to teach.

You don't foster excellence without fostering the ability to: (1) interpret what is seen, heard, or felt -- C; (2) recall information and concepts -- M; (3) extrapolate from givens to what might be -- E; (4) solve problems by structuring ideas in order to reach conclusions -- N; and (5) distinguish the congruent from the incongruent -- D, the relevant from the irrelevant, the fragmented from the unified, and the significant from the insignificant. (Cognition, Memory, Evaluation, CoNvergent and Divergent Production)

The rise of California gifted and talented education to a place of respect throughout the world is attributable to persons who have had a common mission to combat the "Rising Tide of Mediocrity" and to achieve "Excellence."

We need the Politicians. Unless we awaken and move the political establishments; unless we energize and mobilize resources...

Unless gifted and talented education becomes a common cause, there is little chance to transform society and our economy so that we achieve the necessary human welfare programs, capture needed foreign markets, reduce our dependence upon hydrocarbons for fuel, reduce the crippling load of internal and foreign debt, and reduce personal failure due to school failure...

In the long run, we as a nation will become what we value. If we value and support mediocrity, we ourselves will be mediocre. If we value and support excellence, we will achieve excellence in every aspect of our lives.>>

THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING SPANISH LITERATURE IN A DIFFERENTIATED CURRICULUM BY MICHAEL E. WALTERS, NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy." Hamlet, Act I, Scene v,
Shakespeare

As a result of the recent wave of immigration from Third World countries, educators have become more aware of cultural diversity and our schools have increased the enrollment of children who have little foundation in Western culture. The parents of these children may demand revisions in the present curriculum which reflect their cultural heritage. However, the true educational task of the future will involve neither truncating the curriculum to satisfy their concerns, or a return to the "eternal verities" of Western civilization by studying the classics. Instead, it will involve developing experienced understanding of the meaning of civilization through studying different cultures. This summer I conducted a workshop for the Bilingual Department of District Nine, New York City Public Schools. This workshop stressed the major aspects of cultural diversity found in contemporary Spanish literature. This essay describes the highlights of that workshop as related to developing a multicultural curriculum for the gifted which broadens their understanding of Western and other civilizations.

By Spanish literature I mean not only the linguistic products of Spain (folktales, poetry, drama, prose), but that of the entire Spanish speaking world. The workshop showed how Spanish literature and Western culture interact with each other in a mutually beneficial manner.

The Spanish people, language, and culture were descended from several diverse racial, ethnic, and religious groups. First, there were the aboriginal inhabitants of the Iberian peninsula of Southern Mediterranean-Europe. Then there was the ethnic and religious mixture of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish inhabitants. The Muslim element came from North Africa and was commonly referred to as the Moors. Added to this diversity was the gypsy component of Andalusia in Southern Spain. The Spanish conquistadors settled Central and South America where their language and culture became predominant. However, this predominance was blended into the native Indian populations of these areas. In the last century layers of immigration from other parts of the world have been added, eg., Italians, Germans, Lebanese, and Jews fleeing Nazi persecution. The high ratio of intermarriage has created a new racial and cultural type, a mestizo civilization. In the Caribbean areas such as Cuba, Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico, there are also numerous African influences which have been portrayed as a "Creole" culture. The Blacks were brought to these Caribbean areas to work on the plantations. Therefore, a study of the literature of the Spanish speaking world is

indeed a harvest of cultural diversity which has been simultaneously influenced by and made its own unique contributions to Western culture.

A good example of this mutual influence is demonstrated by the literature of the picaro who is an adventurer, a rascal, a heroic and dashing rogue. This genre started with the Arabic poets of Andalusia who were influenced by the macho poetry of their Bedouin predecessors which glorified the code of masculinity and courage. Individuals such as Cervantes used the picaro as social satire, eg., the anti-hero pilgrim of chivalry, Don Quixote. Tobias Smollett and Henry Fielding directly used the picaresque novel for their time and place in The Expedition of Humphry Clinker and Tom Jones. Smollett's translation of Cervantes' Don Quixote has recently (1986) been reissued with a praiseworthy introduction by the Mexican writer, Carlos Fuentes. Charles Dickens and Lord Byron were also under the sway of the picaresque novel and characterization. In the United States such writers as Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway, and Saul Bellow continued the influence that originated as a Spanish format, the picaro.

In the last hundred years there has been a renaissance in Spanish literature. What is so remarkable about this productivity is its range: Ruben Dario of Nicaragua, Jose Marti of Cuba, Jorge Luis Borges of Argentina, Pablo Neruda of Chile, Gabriel Garcia Marquez of Columbia, Ferdinand Garcia Lorca of Spain. Besides this recent array of talent, there are many examples of a long tradition of wonderful female writers: Gabriela Mistral of Chile, San Juana De la Cruz of Mexico, Saint Teresa of Spain, and Julia De Burgos of Puerto Rico. All of these individuals represent cultural diversity in their literary work and their own personal lives. They all studied in universities where they encountered a curriculum which stressed the humanities of Western civilization. At the same time they expressed a keen political consciousness, deep and profound human emotions, and cultural and ethnic concerns.

When one reads this literature, the themes and images produce a sharp, piercing confrontation with cultural diversity. The study of the literature of the Spanish speaking world is a perfect example for the gifted of cultural diversity that respects, acknowledges and enlarges the heritage of Western civilization and the human condition.>>

"O, wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world
That has such people in't!"

The Tempest, Act V, Scene i, Shakespeare

"Writing, when properly managed (as you may be sure I think mine is), is but a different name for conversation." Laurence Sterne>>

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LETTER FROM DR. DIANE RAVITCH, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY--THE STANFORD DEBATE: THE WRONG ISSUES--

The debate over the reading list at Stanford University is one that I find puzzling, while many people whom I respect think that the issues are clear-cut. Although I admire classics and great books, I don't think it is sensible to canonize a short list -- or even a long list -- and insist that everyone must read those books above all others. Children, young adults, and adults can learn from all kinds of books, even books that no one would ever call classic.

From my perspective, I think that the Stanford faculty has the right and power to assign any books that it chooses; it is under no public mandate to teach any set list. It seems to me that academic freedom should protect the faculty both from demonstrators who ranted anti-western slogans and from the purists who objected to any change in the curriculum.

I was also disturbed by the presumption on almost everyone's part in the debate that women and blacks and other non-European white males are somehow not part of western culture. By anyone's standards, George Eliot and Jane Austen belong among the great books of western tradition. So do other writers who are not white males but who are nonetheless powerful in their use of language.

Nor should we be unduly disturbed by discussion of issues of race,

class, and gender. Like it or not, these are essential political issues, and they should not be ignored. Of course, you don't have to be a white male to enjoy Shakespeare or Dickens or Orwell. But the questions that are most important to us today are the very ones that students are likely to want to understand in their literature and history classes. They should be included in the curriculum not for affirmative action reasons, but because they are central to the life and thought of our times.

Since I spend most of my time thinking about curricular issues in elementary and secondary schools, rather than in higher education, the Stanford debate seems a bit arcane. In most of our schools, children are reading very few classic works. The basal readers that have come to dominate instruction in the first six grades should be called "banal readers."

For those who have children in public schools, the problem is not how to preserve a vaunted reading list drawn from the classics, but how to convince officials to allow children to read real books, literature of high quality by classic and contemporary writers, rather than the pre-packaged pablum that has insinuated itself into the schools.

The problem is acute, for in the present situation neither the gifted nor other children are likely to read the kind of literature that helps youngsters understand the difference between what is fine and what is dross.>> *****

BRIEF REVIEWS OF BOOKS THAT WE LIKE AND HIGHLY RECOMMEND

[1] Excellence In Educating The Gifted by J. Feldhusen, J. Van Tassel-Baska & K. Seeley (Love, 1989). Presents a thorough discussion of all major areas of identifying and developing programs such as the underachieving and handicapped gifted, gifted girls, program models, and developing an appropriate curriculum. This book should be particularly helpful in designing a differentiated curriculum because it contains excellent chapters on major subject areas. [2] The Writing Life by Annie Dillard (Harper & Row, 1989). This beautifully written work by one of the master metaphoric writers of our times should be used in every GT English course. She says that, "There is no shortage of good days. It is good lives that are hard to come by. A life of good days lived in the senses is not enough. The life of sensation is the life of greed; it requires more and more. The life of the spirit requires less and less; time is ample and its passage sweet. Who would call a day spent reading a good day? But a life spent reading -- that is a good life...." [3] The Republic of Letters by Daniel J. Boorstin (Library of Congress, 1989). The author is The Librarian Emeritus of Congress and a historian. His book expresses a sincere humanitarian concern for the role of libraries, books and other communication media in our society. He cautions us not to be overwhelmed by computers and mass media. In his section entitled "The mirage of 'Computer Literacy'" he says, "To use computers effectively requires a familiarity with books and a friendliness to books....The book is always "user friendly."...>>