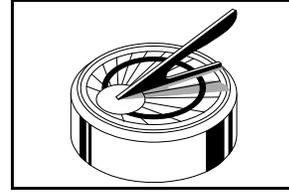


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In the first issue (April 1987), James LoGiudice wrote about the need for developing a rigorous curriculum for the gifted. He said, "...our primary purpose must be to implement programs with both academic substance and rigor." In the Fall 1987 issue, Professor Virgil S. Ward also discussed the need for rigorous differential education programs. As one of the originators of the term, "differential education," his article emphasized the lack of rigor and integrity in a field which, in its early years, showed great promise and innovation. The meaning of "differential education," as Ward defined it, has radically changed during the last fifteen years to emphasize instructional methods; whereas his original conception stressed the type, quality and organization of the curriculum as presented in a highly stimulating education environment. Is this progress? I doubt it.

Another article from *GEPQ's* early days (June-July 1987) is former Congressman Mario Biaggi's description of legislation that was the precursor to the Javits Act originally passed by Congress in 1988. One of the provisions of this Act is the theme of the Fall 2005 issue – the identification and education of gifted minority students. Eighteen years after the original legislation, how much progress has the gifted field made in reaching this goal? The answer and what educators do with this answer may well determine the direction of gifted education for many decades ahead.

I have asked Professor Donna Ford of Vanderbilt University to write a column on this major problem concerned with the identification and education of gifted minority students. I urge you to carefully read her analysis and recommendations, and welcome all comments and letters. The article by Bobbi Murphy, middle school teacher in the Huntsville, Alabama Public Schools, discusses her nationally recognized writing program for gifted minority students. Murphy has been selected as her school system's 2005-06 Secondary Teacher of the Year, a well deserved award for a teacher of great energy and dedication. Many long-term readers of *GEPQ* know that I have supported rigorous early education programs for young gifted students. Professors Margaret A. McGuire, Cynthia G. Simpson and Barbara Polnick of Sam Houston State University discuss some of the important research in early development affecting the identification and education of these students. They emphasize that the rapid increase in knowledge has been simulated by advances in brain research. One of our best writers, Ross Butchart, has an excellent article on why humanities programs should have an important place in the education of the gifted. His book, Quotations for Creative Insights and Inspiration (1999), is based on the ideas he presents in this article. Michael Walters, our yeoman humanities expert, concludes the Fall 2005 issue with his essay on the life of Mozart and what it can teach us about gifted education.

Maurice D. Fisher, Ph.D. Publisher

Greetings for a successful 2005-06 school year in educating gifted students! During the summer of 2005, I have placed the early issues of *GEPQ* on our web site. The articles from the first ten years are a mini-history of problems still confronting this field.

Ten Suggestions for Increasing Diversity in Gifted Education

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We are witnessing a drastic increase in the number of culturally diverse students in our nation and its schools. Groups previously considered ‘minorities’ are now the majority in several cities and schools. And our society has changed and is changing in response to this diversity. Unlike previous generations, we now know that these demographic and cultural changes cannot be ignored or trivialized in any way. Such diversity offers both challenges and promises. How we address these changes in the field of gifted education will have profound influences in several ways. These changes compel us to self-reflect and to question our views about people who are different from us. First, how comfortable are we as educators with such demographic changes? Second, how much experience and training do we have to work with gifted students who differ from traditional or mainstream students? Third, how skilled are we at addressing the academic, intellectual, affective, and social needs of gifted students who differ from traditional or mainstream students? Fourth, what resources are needed to meet the needs of diverse students and their families? Finally, how must our definitions, theories, paradigms, instruments, and research be modified to meet the needs of diverse gifted students?

It is with great pleasure that I write the first of a new column on cultural diversity for the *Gifted Education Press Quarterly*.

This column is a timely and proactive response to the ever increasing diversity in our school districts. My hope is that this column will offer food for thought as well as suggestions to help educators increase their effectiveness with culturally diverse gifted students. A range of topics will be addressed in the column, including identification, testing, curriculum, underachievement, social-emotional needs, and working with and understanding diverse families. This first column focuses on one of the most stubborn problems in our field – the under-representation of culturally diverse students.

A week before writing this column, I searched for more recent data on the representation of diverse students in gifted education. I do this several times each year, hoping that a national report will indicate that culturally diverse students are better represented in gifted education than in previous years. For the last few years, I have used data from the Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Survey for a national perspective and for the most recent statistics. Two years are shown in Figure 1. As I reported in a 1998 publication that summarized trends in the representation of diverse students in gifted education since the 1980s, little has changed – Black/African American, Latino/Hispanic American, and American Indian students continue to be as under-represented in gifted education as they were over 20 years ago.

Figure 1. National Demographics of Gifted and Talented Programs in 1998 and 2000.

Race/ Ethnicity	1998		2000	
	% School District	% Gifted & Talented	% School District	% Gifted & Talented
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	1.1%	0.87	1.16	.91
Black	17.0%	8.40	16.99	8.23
Hispanic/Latino	14.3%	8.63	16.13	9.54

Source: Elementary and Secondary Schools Civil Rights Survey.

With this dismal conclusion in mind, I’d like to share 10 recommendations for school personnel to consider in their efforts to diversify gifted education. Elsewhere, I have written that school personnel, especially teachers and administrators,

must be proactive and aggressive in seeking to ‘desegregate’ gifted education. I am convinced that we can do a better job of identifying and serving diverse students. To recruit and retain more diverse students in gifted programs, the following seem to be a place to start:

(1) Talent Development. A talent development philosophy and program holds much promise for recruiting diverse students in gifted education. Talent development, as recognized by the 1993 federal definition of gifted, is an acknowledgment that some highly capable students have failed to reach their promise because of lack of exposure and opportunity. Given that many diverse students are likelier to live in poverty than White students, they may lack key academic skills, resources, and educational experiences. A talent development approach encourages us to find and develop students' potential. Increasing students' vocabulary, reading skills, study skills, test-taking skills, and academic self-concept can go a long way in improving their academic performance.

(2) Formal Diversity Training. To date, few educators seem to have substantive multicultural or cross-cultural training. To work effectively and proactively with students (and families) who are different in terms of culture, language, communication, behaviors, learning styles, and other variables, educators must receive formal training. Educators who have cross-cultural knowledge, dispositions and skills are more likely to be proactive, aggressive and effective at implementing the changes suggested herein.

(3) Teacher Referral. It appears to be commonly assumed and accepted that diverse students are under-represented due to poor test scores. While this is certainly a significant contributing factor, we must also consider the extent to which teachers, counselors, and other school personnel may under-refer diverse students for gifted education screening. What biases and stereotypes keep us from seeing the strengths of diverse students (Ford et al., 2003)? School personnel should collect information on the number and sources of referrals. If diverse students are not being adequately referred, then school personnel will need to consider other ways to initiate screening of diverse students (e.g., screen all students at certain grade levels; screen all students who score at a certain level on achievement and/or intelligence tests).

(4) Standardized, Norm-Referenced Tests. Much controversy, confusion and frustration exist regarding the efficacy of using traditional tests of intelligence with diverse students, especially if the students live in poverty. Before selecting any test, school personnel need to explore reviews on the tests being considered to see if they are valid and reliable for diverse students. Only those tests that are considered culturally fair should be adopted (see Ford, 2004). Several scholars recommend the inclusion of non-verbal tests in the assessment process (Naglieri & Ford, 2003) as they tend to be less verbally and culturally loaded than traditional tests.

(5) Other Instruments. Nomination and referral forms, as well as checklists, can also contain biases or have a disparate impact on diverse students. School personnel should conduct validity and reliability checks to explore and then to decrease or eliminate these problems. For example, is the terminology

offensive? Are examples of gifted characteristics stereotypical? Is the language unclear or confusing? Were cultural differences considered when developing the instrument?

(6) Early Assessment. Research indicates that many Black students, particularly males, begin to underachieve and lose interest in schools between grades two and four. This phenomenon, known as the 'second-grade syndrome,' compels us to assess diverse students early. That is, the earlier we begin the process of identifying diverse students, the more likely we are to reach them before poor motivation, low achievement, peer pressure, or other barriers set in.

(7) Test Score History. It is equally important that we look at students' overall history of test scores. Data also indicate that diverse students do better on tests in the early grades; their test scores decrease as they progress through school. Thus, a middle or high school student scoring in the 60th percentile may have scored much higher in elementary school. The fact that the student scored high at some point needs to be considered and investigated. What factors contribute to the current low scores?

(8) Multiple Instruments. Few people would go to the doctor and allow him/her to make a diagnosis based on one piece of information. The same holds true in education. No one test score should be used to make a decision about students. We need to be comprehensive in our evaluation of all students. Thus, we should move away from the concept of 'testing' or 'identifying' gifted students to the concept of 'assessment.' The more information we have about students, the most likely we are: (a) to be accurate in our conclusions and decisions based on the information collected; and (b) to understand diverse students' needs and to design services based on those needs.

(9) Multiple Sources. Referrals should not be limited to educators. Primary care givers and community members have valuable information about diverse students that should be considered. And the forms we ask diverse families to complete should be culturally sensitive, concrete, language friendly, and readable.

(10) Outreach. Just as we advertise and promote summer school, after-school programs, contests, etc., to our school constituents, we must reach out to diverse communities about gifted education programs. It would be helpful to advise on popular and minority-owned or minority-targeted radio stations, TV stations, and newspapers, as well as places of worship and organizations.

To date, it appears that our past and current efforts to improve the participation of diverse students in gifted programs have not had a significant impact. Nationally, these students have always been poorly represented in gifted education. The previous suggestions are offered in the hope that schools will consider what is not working in their current practices. Let us eliminate what is not working and consider other instruments, policies and

procedures. It is my hope that one day soon, we will see the fruits of our collective efforts. It is my hope that reports will finally show that diverse students are well-represented in gifted education. As I've stated elsewhere, "a mind is a terrible thing to waste" (United Negro College Fund). Likewise, a mind is a terrible thing to erase (Ford & Harris, 1999).

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Growing Young Gifted Authors in An Inner City School

**Bobbi Murphy Teacher of the Gifted
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Writing is something most students consider an arduous task. At least my students do. Several years ago, I designed a project that deals with the problem fairly effectively. Before I tell you about what worked for me, let me tell you about my middle school and its location.

I teach at a school that is the only inner-city school in Huntsville, Alabama. The school campus is surrounded by businesses and is located at the intersection of three main thoroughfares. There is no one distinct neighborhood. Five neighborhood elementary schools feed into the school and it serves three public housing developments. All these factors contribute to the challenges typifying urban-life in America today. The community's ethnic diversity, socioeconomic level, educational stance, and cultural perspective are clearly evident within our school. Since the school did not achieve Annual Yearly Progress on the SAT10, the *No Child Left Behind* Act allows parents the option of transferring their children to other schools. There, the gap is narrowing as more parents of the higher achieving students take advantage of this option.

The student population has shown a slow but steady increase over the past five years. Currently, 465 students are on the roll and 69% are minorities (African American, Hispanic, and Asian). The number enrolled in the gifted program is 41 or a little less than 10%. The school is very transient with students withdrawing and enrolling weekly. Approximately 25% of the student body changes during any given school year.

The Gifted Education Program operates under the auspices of the Special Education Department in the state of Alabama to challenge kindergarten through grade twelve identified gifted learners. Like other gifted programs in the United States, the

development of full intellectual potential occurs through differentiated instructional activities varied in depth, breath, complexity and pace.

The necessary qualifications for classification as gifted require:

- A full scale/composite IQ score at least 2 standard deviations above the mean on an individually administered test of intellectual abilities appropriately standardized on students of his/her age and administered by an Alabama licensed psychologist or psychometrist, OR
- A combined score of at least seventeen when scores are entered into the cells of the Standard Matrix for Eligibility Determination, at least two points of which are earned on the aptitude/intelligence tests.

Referrals:

- Students may be referred to the gifted services by parents, teachers, peers or self.
- Referral forms may be requested from the classroom gifted teacher, Special Education Office or school counselor.
- Upon completion, forms may be returned to the gifted teacher.
- Students are eligible based on several different criteria: Intellectual ability, achievement test scores and/or grades, classroom performance, and/or products that show task commitment, creativity and evidence of high levels of thinking.

The referral process involves: (1) academic information collected by the gifted teacher/Special Education Office; (2) information surveyed for recommendation; (3) request for parent's permission; (4) administration of Intelligence Test; (5) eligibility determination; (6) parent notification of results; and (7) placement if eligible.

Writing Program

How many times have you sat down to read a student's paper and the first line is so boring, you almost fall asleep trying to get through it? As an English teacher, it is my job to give students the necessary background to add a little zest to their papers, to generate excitement and add interest by introducing them to the basic elements of writing such as conflict, setting, and point of view. The first step in doing this involves getting them interested in writing and a desire to carry through.

Two years ago, at the first teachers' meeting of the school year, I was sitting in the Von Braun Civic Center along with 2,000 other teachers. I thought to myself, "It's too early to start school and it's too hot to be in the classroom." At that moment, Erin Grunwell, a former teacher from California, took the stage, and related how 150 teenagers changed themselves and the world around them by publishing their own writings.

I remember thinking, "Why can't I do that with my 8th graders? I require them to keep a journal. Why not try and get their journals published?" Journal writing has been an incredibly flexible instructional tool, useful across the entire curriculum. It gives students an opportunity to express on paper their ideas, observations, and emotions.

Together, my students and I read *The Freedom Writers' Diary* (1999), the collected writings of Ms. Grunwell's students. They were not overly excited about doing this project, but they did not shy away from the challenge; they worked hard and tested their limits. They chose to be better than they thought they could be. The creation of their book, *Reality Street*, took the entire school year. At times I thought it would never be accomplished and I am sure they felt the same way. As the second semester of school passed, they looked at what they had written and a spark of enthusiasm began to burn.

There were many legal angles to cover. Permission was needed from the parents for the students to participate in this project. A lawyer was needed for the paper work to set up a non-profit corporation.

Briefly, the project scope was this: As a group, the students picked the topics they wanted to write about. These included family, love/hate, neighborhood, friends, school, and several others. Our school is in a working-class area of Huntsville. About half of the students come from single-parent homes. Many have financial difficulty and their neighborhoods and family lives aren't always peaceful. Some wrote about gang fights and gunshots at night. Others wrote about their own problems including trips to the local detention home. Several times a week they would work in the computer lab writing down their thoughts, type them out, revise, retype, edit and type them again. They critiqued their own and their classmates' work. Some, caught up in the wave of creativity, added poetry. After we completed the final draft, we were fortunate to have

Teledyne Brown Engineering to provide the first printing and Computer Systems Corporation do the second printing – both gratis.

Once the book was ready for sale, two book stores had signing parties. The first was the most exciting, as it was done at a locally owned store with newspaper and TV coverage. The students, parents, families, friends, teachers and strangers crowded into the store with the 14 young authors sitting at a long table signing their names in an assembly line fashion. The second signing was at Barnes and Noble with students individually speaking about their part in the book.

The next step was to send the authors out to speak about the book and offer it for sale – the proceeds of which go into a trust fund for their college education. Over the course of the year, since the book first came out, they have spoken to groups from 25 people to over 2,000. The local publicity has been overwhelming. Every TV station, several radio stations and two local papers have featured the class/story.

An old African saying, "It takes a village to raise a child," has proved true in the case of this book and the city of Huntsville. Doctors donated money, our lawyer did the legal work *pro bono*, John Stallworth (a member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame) wrote the introduction, Homer Hickam (author of *October Sky*, 1999) acted as the students' mentor and wrote the foreword, our Mayor purchased copies to hand out to visiting dignitaries, and two large defense contractor companies did the printing. Our local library purchased copies for all of its branches. Parents, families and friends have helped out. I have had 99% parental involvement, something rarely seen in a Title I school. All of this help was not lining up waiting to be asked. It took many phone calls, visits and being extremely tenacious.

Last spring, donations enabled three students to fly to Washington, D.C. to present a copy of the book to the Secretary of Education Rod Paige, Congressman Bud Kramer and to the Holocaust Museum. This project has opened doors they never knew existed.

Despite the problems some students face in their everyday lives, they are still young teenagers with the same problems as any of their peers, no matter where they live. They struggle to understand how they fit into the world, who they can trust and how to make decisions. They are in their second year of high school now and from all reports doing well. To quote one father, "When the book was finally finished, I felt the sense of pride that every parent feels when their child accomplishes something extraordinary. Among learning what it takes to put a book together from start to finish, my daughter learned how to effectively work with other people, both adults and her peers."

On one visit to the class, Homer Hickam told the students, "Millions of people want to write and be published. Only a few can. You are among those few and this can never be taken away from you."

Over the next few years, until their graduation from high school, students still are writing in their journals. I hope that we can compile these writings and have a 3rd edition of the book. This has been one way to reach my students and help them grow beyond the limitations they believe they have.

Since publishing *Reality Street*, creative writing and journaling is a main stay of my 8th grade curriculum. I tell students that with writing, they are able to be imaginative, emotional, intuitive, and original or just be themselves.

The 2004-2005 school year project was much different from *Reality Street*. In the past few years, our school system has had an ever increasing influx of Spanish speaking students. It was time for students to learn about a culture different from theirs. I contacted a second grade teacher in Boulder, Colorado that I have known for many years. Her students are 2nd graders who whose first language is Spanish. Both her school and mine have similar demographics, Title I with 95% of the children receiving free lunch. My plan was to have the older students write stories in both Spanish and English, have the book printed and with several of them, fly to Colorado to present the books to the second graders.

Through emails and digital photos, the two classes became acquainted. Each second grader answered a series of short questions:

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- What are the names of your brothers and sisters?
- Do you have any pets? Describe them.
- What is your favorite food and color?
- What do you like to do for fun?
- What is your favorite movie/TV show?

The 8th graders incorporated the information from the answers in the stories they wrote. You are probably wondering what type of stories the middle schoolers wanted to write about. Their first ideas were about life as they saw it: who is dating who, cheerleading, school, problems in the neighborhood, what family member is in jail and so on. Initially, they did not understand those were not appropriate subjects for elementary school. They had to transport themselves back to 2nd grade and think like seven year olds. What types of stories did they enjoy? What was their favorite story? What did they think about? Children at this point in their lives have an intuitive feeling for what seems like a story and what doesn't. By reading stories in second grade books, students developed a sense of what type of story they needed to write. They began to see similarities and differences between stories of different genres and content and began to form an idea of what they wanted to write about. Students then did research on Hispanic customs, food, traditions, language and culture. Armed with this knowledge, their creative juices began to flow and the stories came forth.

From the start, they read each other's work and commented on it. This way students were provided with an audience for their work. They were more attentive to the comments by their peers than to comments from me. Of course, as with much student interaction, this feedback needed to be modeled and monitored. Once they realized that they would be co-authors in a book, motivation was at a high level for them to do extra work with revising and proofreading, which they might otherwise not do. After many weeks of writing and editing, the stories were ready "to go to press."

Again, as with *Reality Street*, none of this could have been accomplished without help from the community. I received money from several grants to pay for the printing of the book and for the trip to Boulder. A local business did the translations of the stories from English to Spanish. Local business clubs and churches gave donations. Some students went on a speaking circuit about the book and presented copies to local elementary schools. People in Colorado as well helped with the project. A newspaper agency in Denver took my students to lunch at a popular restaurant. A family near Boulder generously opened up their home and invited us to stay with them. They were treated to dinner several evenings during their stay. As one student said during the trip, "This place feels like home."

Many were reluctant to fly from Huntsville to Denver. Traveling 1,288 miles from home is a big step when one has rarely left his/her home state. Those that did go with me shared many new adventures: flying, deep snow, the Rocky Mountains, skiing and snowboarding, altitude sickness and the ever present airport security checks.

The highlight of the trip was presenting the books to the second graders. I don't know who was more excited, the 7 year olds or the 13 year olds. Amid a flourish of cameras flashing, they finally met and shared an afternoon. For the students that I accompanied, their learning experiences were expanded beyond the walls of a classroom into the vast world outside. These experiences cannot be duplicated in a classroom but are nevertheless an integral part of learning. This field trip and any field trip can best be described as a living laboratory in which learning is acquired through active experience with the resources of the outside community.

For those who chose not to go on the trip, they have something tangible. Publication is an useful and satisfying conclusion for their project. Having a book that contains a story they wrote is a source of pride, and a way to share the specialness and success of writing with his/her family.

"What is success? To laugh often and much, to win the respect of intelligent people and affection of children, to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends, to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others, to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition, to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded!" *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

How Young is Too Young?
A Case for Early Identification of Gifted Learners

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It has been said that while no child is born gifted, all children are born with the potential for giftedness (Clark, 1998). What happens after the child is born becomes the catalyst that propels a child to reach, or fall short of intellectual promise. An explosion of research has surfaced within the last ten years that supports the premise that young children who are gifted must be identified early, and certainly before grade three, in order to best address their academic needs (Koshy, 2002). This article attempts to build the case for early identification of very young gifted learners by addressing the question, "Why should giftedness be identified early?"

When gifted children are not identified early, they miss opportunities for maximizing growth and development. It has been well researched that an enriched environment has a significant impact on supporting and encouraging young gifted children (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997; Damiani, 1997; Hall, 1993). This impact, in which an enriched environment plays on the educational needs of young gifted children, has led to a major change towards early intervention and formal programs. Such programs address the specific and unique needs of the young gifted child (Burns & Tunnard, 1991; Feldhusen, 1992). Koshy (2002) states: "One of the main objectives of teaching is to make appropriate educational provisions to help all children to achieve their full potential; in the case of gifted children that aim is no different. We need to create a classroom environment which encourages children to become effective thinkers, problem-solvers and to exercise their creative and productive thinking capabilities." (p. 36)

Diminished opportunities in structured early learning environment

When educators wait until the third grade to screen for gifted programs, as currently practiced in public education, the windows of learning start to close and these children begin to lose their potential. When the opportunities for intellectual stimulation are limited, curiosity diminishes, enthusiasm wanes, imagination dies, and motivation is lost, sometimes forever (Feldhusen, 1992). Only through early identification-intervention and the creation of an environment rich in opportunities and responsive to the abilities, interests and needs of the young gifted child, can a child's potential be nurtured (Bergert & Burnette, 2001; Clark, 1998; Subotnik, 2003).

Need for supportive early learning environments

The years from birth to three are the most crucial window in a child's life (Bailey, Bruer, Symons & Lichtman, 2001). A major argument for the early identification of young children who are gifted is that the parents need to know their young child's potential if they are to provide the supportive and nourishing environment their child requires. It is during this time that educators, too, can provide children with the best chance for ultimate educational and life-long success by working with parents and early learning environments, such as day-care facilities and pre-schools in the design of programs which stimulate and challenge the minds of the gifted (Harrison, 2004; Koshy, 2002).

Need for stimulation of early brain development

Brain research has exploded in recent years with the advent of space age technologies that allow us to study the evolving brain without harming it (Bruer, 1999; Washington, 2002). We know that the brain goes through two distinct periods where significant growth takes place. Shortly after conception, the neural tube forms and provides the basic foundation of brain development. Neuron development is rapid from around the 42nd day through the end of the second trimester (Bruer, 1999). This explosion of activity is purely biological and genetic in nature (Lindsey, 1998-1999).

The second period of rapid change occurs from birth and continues as the child grows and matures. At birth, a child's brain is a largely unconnected mesh of brain cells (Hall, 1993). Current studies estimate that a child is born with 100 billion brain cells, many more than the child will ever need (Lindsey, 1998-1999; SERVE, 2001). As a child experiences the surrounding world, synapses are formed between neurons and the brain begins to organize itself into a fully integrated mechanism. The literature is rich with the important implications of this time in brain development. Appropriate environment, stimulation, good nutrition and sensitive parenting provide the groundwork for positive neurological development. As reported in a Carnegie Corporation (1994) research report, five key findings are critical to providing our youngest children with a healthy start:

First, the brain development that takes place during the prenatal period and in the first year of life is more rapid and extensive than we previously realized.

Second, brain development is much more vulnerable to environmental influence than we ever suspected.

Third, the influence of early environment on brain development is long lasting.

Fourth, the environment affects not only the number of brain cells and number of connections among them, but also the way these connections are "wired."

And fifth, we have new scientific evidence for the negative impact of early stress on brain function.

With such compelling evidence, we must address this need.

How can giftedness be identified early?

Despite the importance of early intervention, there are very few programs available to the gifted child until he reaches school age (Hall, 1993). The factors inhibiting the establishment of more programs are: ineffective or unreliable assessment and identification measures; hesitancy about early identification; lack of successful models of programs; philosophical differences between early childhood educators and gifted educators; and lack of trained personnel (Hymer & Michel, 2002).

By observing the interaction of young children and their families, researchers have been able to further identify characteristics of giftedness. At birth, gifted children are noted as being expressive, alert, and sensitive to the human voice, characteristics not observed in infants of average development. Often these children are seen as having difficult temperaments due to their intense interaction and involvement in their environment (Dalzell, 1998). They show significantly greater goal directness with longer attention spans (Damiani, 1997) when compared to their chronological peers. Additional traits manifest themselves as these children grow. Verbal and intellectual precocity both have been noted, not for their content, but for the extraordinary performance by children so young (Roedell, 1980). Results from a recent study conducted by Harrison (2004) provided evidence that young gifted children function at a higher level of complexity, sensitivity and connectivity than their peers as they strive to make sense of their early worlds. In this study, the initial population was identified through a parental nomination process and data were gathered through parent observations, diary and anecdotal records, as well as work samples.

Research suggests a multi-pronged approach to identification to better serve children. Such programs use teacher observations, rating scales, student portfolios, screening materials, parent inventories, and actual performance assessments to identify young gifted children at an early age (Harrison, 2004; Hymer & Michel, 2002; Koshy, 2002). This major change has been especially important in addressing the needs of the economically disadvantaged or culturally different (Torrance, 1998).

Children as young as eight months have been tested to predict future giftedness with mixed results. A more promising and useful tool has been to utilize anecdotal records from parents of gifted children and direct observation. Through a variety of methods, common characteristics have emerged that can predict giftedness in the young child (Dalzell, 1998; Koshy, 2002).

Need for differentiated curriculum and instruction

Young gifted children have needs that require special techniques to provide the most positive outcomes. They require a differentiated curriculum (Sak, 2004) that will address the differences in their physical, academic, and intellectual development (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Koshy, 2002; Hymer & Michel, 2002). It is not unusual for a preschool through third grade child identified as gifted to display a wide range of readiness from age appropriate to well into the high school range, with no two children displaying exactly the same strengths and weaknesses. A differentiated curriculum addresses the wide degree of attention spans and high levels of curiosity by providing a wider variety of interesting activities at a faster pace with ample opportunity to stand, move, and actively interact with the materials in the classroom. In addition, young gifted children need a nonjudgmental setting where they can safely explore their world and their superior intelligence in the least restrictive, least adult-directed environment (Burns & Tunnard, 1991). It is imperative that those working with the young gifted child recognize the importance of the interconnections between all aspects of each child's development rather than focusing on a particular area of "giftedness" (Hymer & Michel, 2002; Koshy, 2002).

To address the unique needs of the young gifted child, a variety of techniques and methods must be used (Goldberg, 2002). Peggy Snowden (1994) describes these needs by using the acronym CIBER: C-Capitalize; I-Integrate; B-Balance; E-Expose and Enhance; and R-be Realistic. To *capitalize* on the child's interest is to provide learning opportunities that support the child's expressed interests or areas of curiosity. By *integrating* these learning experiences across the domains of development and learning, the child forms connections and webs that provide the basis for future explorations. As with all early childhood curriculums, a *balance* of activities should be provided that encompass quiet and active, outside and inside, alone or with others, observation and participation, and structured or non-structured (Snowden & Christian, 1998). By *exposing* a young gifted child to a wide variety of learning opportunities, the child comes to understand that there is no limit in how to approach learning. *Enhancing* opportunities will provide the child with a framework to delve into the unusual and creative side of learning. It should be noted that while gifted children are frequently very verbal and have advanced vocabularies and /or mathematical abilities, they may have other areas of development that are age appropriate or under developed. Therefore, adults must be realistic in their expectations and provide the young gifted child with opportunities to develop areas of strengths while addressing

other areas. Unrealistic expectations by the adult or the young gifted child can result in perfectionism or under achievement (Burns & Tunnard, 1991). This is especially important in dealing with the highly gifted young child. It is imperative for educators and parents to self-check that they are incorporating the major domains of development and learning into their children's experiences: cognitive, affective, psychomotor and communicative (Koshy, 2002).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Where does this leave the young gifted child? Clearly new research is showing a positive correlation between early identification and the need for early intervention; however, more studies and research need to be conducted and examined. There are several programs around the country that have documented their initial successes. More information is needed on the long-term successes or findings of these studies.

For parents of young gifted children, frustration may exist when seeking practical information about their children's unique needs. In addition, issues of high quality childcare come into account for working parents. Several organizations dedicate themselves to the enrichment and support of young gifted children. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has performed extensive research into what is "best practice" for young children (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997). This organization has joined with other groups who seek to establish and define quality in early childhood programs that offer the most effective environment and philosophy to the growth and development of children. NAEYC and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) have collaborated and published a joint position statement on Early Learning Standards (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2002). This document clearly defines the expectations of high quality childcare.

The two groups have also examined curriculum, assessment and program evaluation (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003). This position statement contains a clearly defined and research supported plan for how these issues should be addressed to best meet the needs of children. These position statements, as well as others located on the NAEYC website, have a recurring theme of *meeting the unique needs of the individual child*.

The need for an environment that is rich in opportunities and responsive to the abilities, interests and needs of the young gifted child are repeatedly documented in the literature. These issues are addressed through the accreditation standards and other position statements from NAEYC. Additionally, more research and the resulting literature must be developed that will provide concrete and reasonable ideas to support parents with the tools to meet their young gifted children's needs. Further studies that include a parental component must be encouraged as we look to the needs of the whole child and family.

There is a wealth of information on the functioning and development of the human brain. New information is being discovered at such a rapid rate that it is difficult to remain up-to-date. Additional studies of infants and toddlers, as related to encouraging their potential for giftedness, are necessary to ensure that every child is given the best possible opportunity to succeed. Although additional research is needed in the aforementioned areas, educators should understand and provide a supportive environment for these young children who display characteristics of gifted learners. As Hymer & Michel (2002) point out: "There is little point in helping our students identify and nurture their unique gifts and talents if we aren't modeling these processes ourselves" (p. 96). An enriched environment and differentiated curriculum will enhance learning for all children and only further expand the minds of young gifted learners.

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The Humanities: Enlightening or Obsolete?

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“So, how’s (name) been doing in school?” A popular question this, asked of teachers literally hundreds of times by parents of their students – particularly in conjunction with formal interviews that accompany term report cards.

But what became increasingly evident during my latter years as a classroom teacher was the narrow scope to which this query had evolved. For instead of seeking an understanding of their child’s overall academic progress, parents applied the question more to mean: “So, how’s (name) been doing in Science and Mathematics?” To my surprise, attempts to engage interest about achievements in Language Arts or Social Studies often met with polite indifference.

So, what value can be attributed to the humanities? Given the extraordinary increase of knowledge in Information Technology in recent years, can we even justify giving the likes of history, English, philosophy, or foreign languages places in the syllabus? Or should their study be removed from our curricula?

When I first gave thought to writing this article, ceremonies commemorating the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz dominated the local media. Old movie clips revealing the atrocities committed at this camp of horrors were nightly reminders of humankind’s capacity for prejudice, hatred, injustice, and barbarism. Who could remain unmoved while witnessing the tears of survivors as they relived the anguish and torment of their past memories – remembrances that for six decades had provoked recurring nightmares?

At the same time, a survey revealed that thirty-four percent of students in grades 8-10 did not have an understanding of the

meaning or significance of the Holocaust. This ignorance now begs the question: “Could the Holocaust happen again?” Does it support George Santayana’s famous quotation: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

To study history is to realize that humankind would be the wiser to march into the future looking backwards. For it is a truism that to know where you’ve come from gives direction to where you’re going. Principles of civility gleaned from the past endure, and when employed by leaders of wisdom and vision can strengthen the foundation for future initiatives. But for this to happen our schools must be bastions opposed to thoughtless implementation of popular fads, trends or products, which while they advance understandings, also have their limitations. Information Technology, with its accompanying tool, the computer, and its accompanying disciplines, Science and Mathematics, has allowed for marvelous advancements in human achievement. Nevertheless, for all its marvels, IT alone cannot oppose the rise of a dictator who would impose another holocaust on the world.

To undertake a thorough study of ancient cultures is to go beyond their history to appreciate the scientific legacy they left to modern civilization. No investigation of Sumerian culture would be complete without acquiring knowledge of its system of irrigation. The architecture of ancient Greece is emulated in modern structures; the magnitude of the pyramids of ancient Egypt so immense they are visible from space. The aqueducts of ancient Rome were so perfected that their construction had a one-inch decline in elevation over a one-mile expanse of terrain. As ancient cultures developed, science and history merged to form a symbiotic relationship that today’s gifted students can understand, appreciate, and view as an avenue into their future.

To speak and write English well is the mark of an educated person; to appreciate its literature is the mark of a refined person. For a teacher to have his students study a sonnet is to invite them to appreciate the genius of the likes of Shakespeare, Petrarch, and Spencer. But to challenge his students to write a sonnet, that same teacher promotes a creativity that demands patience, promotes frustration, and (hopefully) results in elation. Moreover, it allows the student to realize freedom exists within imposed limitations. For as Madeleine L'Engle revealed through Calvin in *A Wrinkle in Time*, life itself can be compared to a sonnet, a strict form, but which when its restraints are accepted permits complete freedom of expression.

In 1990, the death of Nancy Cruzan brought end-of-life issues to the forefront. The passing of Terri Schiavo on March 31 of this year elevated them to a public event – one that involved legal opinions, political involvement, religious beliefs, ethical concerns, and media scrutiny. In hindsight, it is clear that scientific investigation played a minimal role as the immediacy of the daily drama played out on the TV screens across North America. In truth, it was not the rationality of science, but the 'human' component of our very human nature, on display in full expression for all viewers to witness, that captivated the national psyche.

And herein lies the essential value that can be attributed to the humanities. For a teacher to foster the study of such disciplines as art, literature, music, history, and philosophy is to have his students investigate the evolution and potential future course of humankind itself. And in so doing forces them to confront anew those concerns that have confounded generations – questions such as: What is/are the purpose(s) of life? What principles should govern civilized human conduct? What relationships exist among our mental, emotional, and physical realities?

In the final analysis, to study the humanities is to explore the very core of all that makes us human. Their study forms a bridge between our past and future, offers role models worthy of our emulation, suggests hope for our well being, and reveals a foundation to create beauty in our lives.

The humanities are complex, complete, and consuming in scope. These qualities also define the essence of human existence, a nature that is accepted as profound and requires no justification to exist.

Neither should the study of this nature have to justify its existence as an integral part of our nations' curricula.

Developing a Course in Humanities Education for the Gifted

Stephen Covey advises us to begin with the end in mind. Sound counsel indeed for the educator intent on developing a course in the humanities for the gifted. For to do so requires he go beyond the question, 'What do I want to teach my students?' to ask, 'What understandings and attitudes do I want my students to acquire as a result of my teaching?'

My intent is not to offer a definitive list, but keeping Covey's insight as *the* guiding principle, allow me to suggest three concepts:

- Students should understand and appreciate their 'sense of connectiveness' to history (a term coined by Ken Osborne of the University of Manitoba to emphasize the need for students to see themselves as a link to the past and to the future).
- Students should understand and appreciate what it means to participate in the human experience; and that within this experience they have the opportunity to achieve through fortitude and honest endeavor.
- Students should understand and appreciate the different genres of written expression humanity has created throughout the course of history.

Assuming their acceptance, the following question now emerges: What course of study best allows students to acquire the essential knowledge and values to achieve these ends? Indeed what syllabus should the educator devise?

I believe the answers lie in developing a literature-based curriculum. And while I do not proffer an expansive list of titles that 'ought to be taught,' they should be selected from the following general areas:

- Books such as *Mythology* by Edith Hamilton that allow students to explore classical fables, myths, and legends.
- Books such as *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien that deal with the struggles of many characters.
- Books such as *Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank that deal with courage and sacrifice.
- Books such as *Captains Courageous* by Rudyard Kipling and anthologies such as *The Book of Virtues* by William J. Bennett that teach character.
- Adult allegories such as *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* by Jonathan Bach.
- Books such as *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle that deal with the eternal theme of growth to maturity.
- Biographies of great leaders and thinkers such as Gandhi, Lincoln, and Churchill.
- Science fiction stories by such writers as Isaac Asimov and Ray Bradbury.
- Historical novels.
- Collections of drama, including at least one Shakespearean play such as *Julius Caesar* or *Twelfth Night*.
- Collections of poetry by such anthologists as Oscar Williams and Louis Untermeyer.
- Self-help books such as *How to Win Friends & Influence People* by Dale Carnegie, *Think & Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill, and *The Psychology of Winning* by Denis Waitley.
- Collections of nursery rhymes and fairy tales.
- Essays by such writers as Ralph Waldo Emerson.
- Books that allow students to explore religions of the world.

A course in the humanities for the gifted student should be broad in scope such that he can investigate the lessons of history,

explore his nature and potential, visualize the world as seen through the perspectives of others, and speculate about the world of the future. And what one curriculum allows the student to achieve these ends? Perhaps John Sheffield (1648-1721) answered the question when he stated, "Of all the arts in which

the wise excel, Nature's chief masterpiece is writing well." For what better way exists for the gifted student to appreciate 'nature's chief masterpiece' to the fullest extent of its meaning than through a well thought out, thoroughly developed literature-based curriculum?

Lessons of the *Mostly Mozart Festival* and Contemporary Gifted Education

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"The Life of Mozart is the triumph of genius over precociousness. . . ." p. 1, **Mozart** by Peter Gay (1999, Viking)

"Goethe defined genius as a 'productive power' whose actions 'have consequences and lasting life,' and he noted that 'all the works of Mozart are of this sort.'" p. 3, Ibid.

The above quotes from Peter Gay's biography are very important for the development of gifted education. Mozart (1756-91) possessed an array of the traits of giftedness that cannot be explained as merely a form of multiple intelligences. His intelligence had range and depth. Gay describes how Mozart was not just a talented prodigy but someone who was creative, thoughtful and analytical. As a child, he was interested in mathematics. He also excelled in languages and was fluent in almost all of the major languages of Europe. To design a challenging curriculum for the gifted, it is first necessary to study the lives and productivity of individuals such as Mozart.

I recently attended a performance at the Lincoln Center during the ***Mostly Mozart Festival***. This month-long (July 28-August 27, 2005) daily concert series was primarily of Mozart's music. Besides the concerts, there were pre-concert lectures on his musical themes. The lecture I attended concentrated on Mozart's involvement with the city of Prague (currently part of the Czech Republic). Mozart felt that his native city of Salzburg, Austria did not appreciate his music. It was in Prague that he was artistically at home. This is what gifted students need, a sense of place that nurtures them. There can be no musical genius without an appreciative audience and outstanding performers. This is what he sought and found in Prague.

Mozart's Europe was part of the Enlightenment where members of the social elite participated in various cultural endeavors. They sponsored not only Mozart, but Johann Sebastian Bach and Joseph Haydn. European culture of that time was a concert hall and academy for composers and musicians. As an intense participant in this culture, Mozart (from an early age) traveled, studied and had exposure to the great musicians of his time. Moreover, his father and sister were also gifted musicians.

He was not only a great composer but also a major performer on the violin and piano, and he could also play other instruments such as the viola and oboe. When one hears a concert of his music, it is clear that he understood the relationship between the composer and the musician. For Mozart, there was no distinction, no disunity between composition and performance.

As I listened to the ***Mostly Mozart*** concert, I was aware that this composer continues to stimulate gifted individuals through the music score, the conductor, pianist and singer. We can learn many lessons from Mozart: Giftedness needs a support system and a community that give it a social context. Something stronger than a village is needed to support the development of giftedness. What is most important is to establish a community of gifted learners who can achieve intellectual synergy with each other.