

GIFTED EDUCATION PRESS

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NEWSLETTER
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This issue contains excerpts from H.R. 543, legislation for gifted and talented programs (\$25 million appropriation) presented before the U.S. House of Representatives by Congressman Mario Biaggi. (The underlining of various words and phrases is our way of emphasizing important points, and is not in the original version of this Act.) This is a remarkable Congressional Act because it addresses two very pressing needs -- to increase the number of minority and economically disadvantaged students who are identified as gifted and talented, and to establish a national research and development center on the problems of identifying and educating all gifted and talented students. We commend Congressman Biaggi for his strong support of this legislation, and we urge you to send a letter or telegram of support to his office at the following address: Congress of the United States; 2428 Rayburn House Office Building; Washington, D.C. 20515. Also, please ask your Congressman to vote for this legislation. Federal programs for educating the gifted were terminated in 1981 with the closing of The Office of Gifted and Talented Programs in the U.S. Department of Education.

Two new books of major importance to American education and society, particularly gifted programs, are : (1) Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know by E. D. Hirsch Jr. (Houghton Mifflin, 1987); and (2) The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students by Allan Bloom (Simon & Schuster, 1987).

Hirsch is a Professor of English at the University of Virginia, while Bloom is a Professor of Political Philosophy at the University of Chicago. We will review both of these books in the future. They should be read by all educators of the gifted because they analyze a major problem of teaching in the 1980's -- secondary level and college students' lack of cultural literacy and knowledge of the historical roots of Western civilization. This is where approximately twenty-five years of a curriculum devoid of a core of knowledge and cultural standards has apparently led. The average American high school student appears to have little knowledge or understanding of influential ideas from literature, philosophy and history, or of the important writers, thinkers, doers and scientists who developed these ideas. "Who is he?" -- was the question asked by a young bookstore employee when we inquired about books by Mark Twain!

Two of our authors, James LoGiudice and Michael Walters, have also been concerned with the apparent lack of substantive content in public school curricula. Both have attempted to remedy this situation by designing and implementing (during the last ten years) a humanities curriculum for gifted students -- LoGiudice in the Bucks County (PA) Public Schools, and Walters in the New York City Public Schools.>>

Maurice D. Fisher, Publisher

PUBLISHER OF BOOKS ON DIFFERENTIAL EDUCATION FOR THE GIFTED

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GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN AND YOUTH EDUCATION ACT
 HIGHLIGHTS OF LEGISLATION INTRODUCED IN THE 100TH
 CONGRESS BY MARIO BIAGGI, M.C.

FINDINGS AND PURPOSES

(a) FINDINGS -- The Congress finds and declares that --

(1) gifted and talented children and youth are a natural resource vital to the future of the nation and its security and well-being;

(2) unless the special abilities of gifted and talented children and youth are recognized and developed during their elementary and secondary school years, much of their special potential for contributing to the national interest is likely to be lost;

(3) gifted and talented children and youth from economically disadvantaged families and areas are at greatest risk of being unrecognized and of not being provided adequate or appropriate educational services;

(4) State and local educational agencies and private nonprofit schools often lack the necessary specialized resources to plan and implement effective programs for the early identification of gifted and talented children and youth for the provision of educational services and programs appropriate to their special needs; and

(5) the Federal Government can best carry out the limited but essential role of stimulating research and development and personnel training, and providing a national focal point of information and technical assistance, that is necessary to insure that our Nation's schools are able to meet the special education needs of gifted and talented children and youth, and thereby serve a profound national interest.

(b) STATEMENT OF PURPOSE -- It is the purpose of this Act to provide financial assistance to State and local educational agencies, institutions of higher education, and other public and private agencies and organizations, to initiate a coordinated program of research, demonstration projects, personnel training, and similar activities designed to build a nationwide capability in our elementary and secondary schools to identify and meet the special educational needs of gifted and talented children and youth....

AUTHORIZED PROGRAMS

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM -- From the sums appropriated under section 9 in any fiscal year the Secretary of Education (after consultation with the advisory committee established pursuant to section 7) shall make grants to or contracts with State educational agencies, local educational agencies, institutions of higher education, or other public and private agencies and organizations (including

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Indian tribes ... and Hawaiian native organizations)....

(b) USES OF FUNDS -- Programs and projects funded under this section may include --

(1) preservice and inservice training (including fellowships) for personnel (including leadership personnel) involved in the education of gifted and talented children and youth;

(2) establishment and operation of model projects and exemplary programs for the identification and education of gifted and talented children and youth, including summer programs and cooperative programs involving business, industry and education;

(3) strengthening the capability of State educational agencies and institutions of higher education to provide leadership and assistance to local educational agencies and nonprofit private schools in the planning, operation, and improvement of programs for the identification and education of gifted and talented children and youth;

(4) programs of technical assistance and information dissemination; and

(5) carrying out (through the National Center for Research and Development in the Education of Gifted and Talented Children and Youth established pursuant to subsection (c) --

(A) research on methods and techniques for identifying and teaching gifted and talented children and youth, and

(B) program evaluations, surveys, and the collection, analysis, and development of information needed to accomplish the purposes of this Act.

(c) ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL CENTER -- The Secretary of Education shall establish a National Center for Research and Development in the Education of Gifted and Talented Children and Youth through grants to or contracts with one or more institutions of higher education or State educational agencies, or a combination or consortium of such institutions and agencies....

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

In the administration of this Act the Secretary (and the advisory committee established pursuant to section 7) shall give highest priority --

(1) to the identification of gifted and talented children and youth who may not be identified through traditional assessment methods (including the economically disadvantaged, individuals of limited English proficiency, and individuals with handicaps) and to education programs designed to include gifted and talented children and youth from such groups; and

(2) to programs and projects designed to develop or improve the capability of schools in an entire State or region of the Nation through cooperative efforts ... to plan, conduct and improve programs for the identification and education of gifted and talented children and youth.>>

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THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY TO GIFTED STUDENTS

By James LoGiudice, Supervisor Programs for the Gifted
Bucks County, Pennsylvania Intermediate Unit 22

Philosophy should be the underpinning and connecting point for much of what gifted students learn at the intermediate and high school levels. The teaching of philosophical content and use of philosophical methods of inquiry can bring needed academic rigor to gifted programming. Students, especially highly able ones, are confronted everywhere they turn in school with courses and teachers emphasizing the mastery of content, listing of facts, and mainly insisting upon data gathering. The latter is too often the major focus of high school courses; even honors programs seem primarily concerned with covering great amounts of factual material. It is as if the measure of these courses is evaluated by the quantity of material included, not their quality.

What is needed in gifted programs at the secondary level is a learning approach or specific courses which help (even push) the gifted to make sense out of these facts and the large blocks of content they are mastering. **Philosophy** points the direction for understanding this information, and for establishing meaningful connections between ideas.

The study of philosophy is a comprehensive way to help gifted adolescents see relationships between their day-to-day learning and the larger issues or questions which always face mankind. Here, bright students can meet first-hand other thoughtful persons -- the philosophers through the centuries, who were also concerned with profound and complicated issues. These philosophical matters transcend time, space, and more particularly, specific subject-matter boundaries. What better means is there for assuring that inquisitive students begin to glimpse the inter-disciplinary nature of high school subjects?

In the present age, the public schools are faced with the serious dilemma of educating students for working in society, and at the same time, for developing their sensibility to important human values rooted in ethics, aesthetics, politics, and cultural improvement. During the last two decades, the schools have overemphasized the development of work-related skills and programs to the detriment of courses of study which concentrate on examining underlying ideas and seminal ideals. In order to grasp the connection between political and cultural change, gifted students must know about the origins of knowledge, and the systematic search for solutions. One major purpose of teaching philosophy is to restore a balance in our schools by offering gifted students the opportunity to discuss, read, write, reflect and think about significant philosophical and societal issues.

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High school philosophy courses should concentrate upon the following questions:

- What is truth? How can one verify a statement or thing to be true?
- What is beauty? What criteria should be used to determine beauty?
- What is the relationship of aesthetics to ethics, politics, manners, and the civilizing behavior of modern society?
- What do societies mean by equality? Can equality become a reality in most societies?
- What is a just society? How do concepts of justice vary with the nature of the political system in which one lives?
- What are some important types of ethical values which should guide the development of a just society?
- What are some important principles of rational thinking? How can rational thinking be used to improve one's own life and the lives of one's family members and peers?

Gifted students have a great capacity for achieving insight, strength, and courage which come with the effective use of their intellect. The pursuit of profound questions, the study of academically demanding content, and recognizing how to relate these activities to understanding the present are the keys to developing this unique capacity. They are the keys, also, to building the search for wisdom in high school gifted programs and curricula that too often have become cliché-ridden and sterile. Philosophy can chart a course for attaining wisdom, increasing moral sensibility, and developing a viewpoint which allows one to see the larger perspectives of life.>>

Every day look at a beautiful picture, read a beautiful poem, listen to some beautiful music, and if possible, say some reasonable thing.

GOETHE

Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,/Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,/Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine---/Unweave a rainbow.

JOHN KEATS

Let no young man delay the study of philosophy, and let no old man become weary of it; for it is never too early nor too late to care for the well-being of the soul.

EPICURUS

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THE ECSTASY OF CREATIVE GENIUS IS THE BIRTHRIGHT OF EVERY GIFTED CHILD

By Win Wenger Director, Project Renaissance
Gaithersburg, Maryland

"Who'll open the bidding on Ludwig van Beethoven at 50 billion dollars?" How much value does a Beethoven, or an Einstein, or a Buckminster Fuller or a Leonardo da Vinci, contribute to the world? "What am I bid on Nikola Tesla? Surely, as much as on that Thomas A. Edison, light bulbs and all...."

Catherine Cox, writing in Lewis M. Terman's *Genetic Studies of Genius* (1926), observed that nearly all the great arts and great scientific discoveries and contributions (the things which make civilization possible and worthwhile) came from just a few individuals. This handful of cultural giants were no higher in intelligence than the average student in a typical gifted class -- in fact, most teachers of the gifted have students with higher IQ's than these intellectual giants.

One of the most frequently cited justifications for the special education of the gifted is the greater potential contribution which they can make to society. Yet, nearly all gifted children become (at best) bright technicians, and only a few reach the high levels of creativity based upon their potential. Is the "social contribution" rationale for gifted programs invalid, or have we missed something (derived from this rationale) which should be provided in these programs?

The usual response of educators to such a question is a shrug, indicating that teachers and school programs are not responsible for most gifted students' failure to become highly creative contributors to society, and that the rare incidence of Sir Francis Bacons, J. S. Bachs, and Norbert Wieners represents some unknown mystic quality which educators are unable to control or develop.

Balderdash! Since the 1940's, both the science and art of cultivating creativity and creative problem-solving ability have been well-known, starting with the work of Alex Osborn (who invented not only the familiar "brainstorming" technique but a highly systematic structure for eliciting creative genius in virtually anyone), and with William Gordon's and Gordon Prince's development of Synectics. John C. Gowan's exhaustive scholarship on the common characteristics and circumstances of creative genius, as it has occurred throughout history, helped to extend the science of creativity even further. Sidney J. Parnes, Edward DeBono, Tony Buzan, Roger von Oech, and others have made widely recognized contributions to the art and science of eliciting creative ingenuity. Clearly, the information and techniques are there, fully available to any teacher or school district responsible enough to take the initiative.

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Recent discoveries by Luiz Machado de Andrade about the role of the limbic system in learning, creativity, genius, and in all intellectual performance, have enriched the field of possibilities for developing gifted students' minds.

Let me state matters plainly. Any gifted students who do not fulfill their potential as creative geniuses are being shortchanged by their teachers and schools, given what is now known and so readily available for nurturing effective, productive creativity in the classroom. And if teachers **do start** to use these methods, they will have the satisfaction of seeing Rembrandts and Jonas Salks and Shakespeares emerge among their graduates.

The Joy of Creative Genius

Suppose that the "social contribution" idea **was not** a part of the rationale used to justify gifted education programs -- that only the special needs and opportunities of these children were given as reasons for such programs. Then, a powerful reason for providing gifted children with creativity experiences and training would still exist: the sheer joy of participating in these activities.

Eureka! By all accounts (formal and informal, recent and long ago), the creatively ingenious **aha!** experience is one of the most joyous, exhilarating experiences one can have -- and unlike some pleasures, this feeling never gets used up. The ecstasy of creative genius is the birthright of every gifted child.

What greater satisfaction and long lasting happiness is there compared to that experienced by Bach or Handel or, indeed, the fulfillment experienced by anyone who knows he or she is contributing uniquely and positively to the well-being of others, and the richness of civilization? There are few justifications for providing special programs to gifted students which do not also support offering them creativity experiences and training. Therefore, go spread the joy of creative accomplishments!

The following are resources which would be especially helpful in learning how to teach creativity and effective problem-solving to gifted children:

J. J. Gordon. **Synectics.** New York: Harper & Row, 1961.

Alex Osborn. **Applied Imagination.** New York: Scribner's Sons, 1953.

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Sidney J. Parnes, R. B. Noller & A. M. Biondi. **Guide to Creative Action: Revised Edition of Creative Behavior Guide book.** New York: Scribner's Sons, 1977.

Sidney J. Parnes. **The Magic of Your Mind.** Buffalo, NY: Bearly Limited, 1981.

Win Wenger. **How to Increase Gifted Students' Creative Thinking and Imagination: A Step-by-Step Instructional Guide for Teachers and Administrators.** Manassas, VA: Gifted Education Press, 1985.

Win Wenger. **Toward a General Theory of Creativity, and Toward a General Theory of Genius.** East Aurora, NY: United Educational Services (pending).>>

BOOK REVIEW

The Joy of Reading: 210 Favorite Books, Plays, Poems, Essays, etc. What's in Them, Why Read Them by Charles Van Doren (Harmony Books, a Division of Crown Publishers, 1985).

The title of this book is the key to developing curricula for the gifted; it is the ability to transmit from one generation to the next, the joy of literate cultural participation. The true goal of literacy should be to teach students about their cultural heritage through the major writers of western civilization.

Because of his emphasis on how specific works of literature are part of a "great chain of being," the author pulsates with intellectual excitement. He is enthralled to discover the links between each writer's ideas.

Charles Van Doren was indeed a privileged child. He not only had his own family as a role model, but the household guests were paradigms of literacy. Imagine, as a child, being charmed by such intellectual enchanters as Mortimer Adler and Clifton Fadiman. His experiences illustrate an important insight for the education of gifted students: Van Doren did not benefit merely from the presence of these luminaries -- what was also transmitted to him was a joy of reading. The affective component of his encounters with intellectuals was as relevant as their academic achievements. In this environment, **The Great Books** were not just an intellectual exercise, but a positive emotional experience. These individuals emphasized to Van Doren that books were important because of the exciting ideas they contained.

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Van Doren was also exposed to the concepts of culture and holistic learning at an early age. Dynamic interdisciplinary studies occurred by comparing the ideas expressed in different books. Thus, in his essay on Euclid, Van Doren quotes the poetess Edna St. Vincent Millay -- "Euclid alone has looked on Beauty Bare" -- and uses her ideas to demonstrate the importance of this Greek mathematician. He also discusses the relationship between aesthetics and mathematics, and the meaning of the statement over the door to Plato's Academy: "Let no one enter here who has not studied geometry." This is the typical format of Van Doren's short essays on each one of the books which have given him pleasure. In a few pages, he does not merely tell the reader what the book is about; he seeks a more important goal instead. He wants to abet the reader's appetite, develop his intellectual palate. It is amazing how consistently he accomplishes this task. He can joyously display the poetry in a mathematician like Euclid, the humanistic concern of an Euripides, the profound satire of a Cervantes.

The Joy of Reading is indeed a treasure chest for any gifted student. The entire range of the Humanities is demonstrated here. Van Doren is especially skilled at illustrating how past masterpieces are relevant to our times. He has the knowledge for showing how both science and art reinforce each other's insights. But Van Doren's real appeal to the gifted student is his success in describing the personalities of the authors.

After reading this book, I felt a certain intellectual innocence returning, as if I were a gifted student learning the joy of intellectual discoveries. Teachers of the gifted can also make these discoveries by reading what Van Doren has to say about the likes of Henry Adams, Mortimer J. Adler, Aeschylus, Aristotle, James Boswell, Albert Camus, Lewis Carroll, Charles Dickens, Emily Dickinson, Isak Dinesen, Sigmund Freud, Robert Frost, Henry James, Thomas Jefferson, Mark Twain, E. B. White, and many others.

The Joy of Reading is contagious, but unfortunately, many curricula for the gifted seek to immunize students and teachers against intellectual content. The best medicine for this immunity is the warmth and love that is persistently expressed by Van Doren. This book is mental "chicken soup" for gifted education. Bon Appetit!>>

Michael E. Walters, Consultant on Gifted Education,
New York City Public Schools

When you read a classic you do not see in the book more than you did before. You see more in you than there was before.

CLIFTON FADIMAN

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Thanks To Our Readers

We would like to express our appreciation to Congressman Mario Biaggi of New York for his encouragement, and for the very complimentary statement he presented about our newsletter in a speech in the U. S. House of Representatives (Congressional Record, April 21, 1987).

We want to give special thanks to the following educators for their letters and statements of support:

1. Dr Ceil Frey, Coordinator of Gifted Education, Lower Merion School District, Ardmore, Pennsylvania
2. Dr. William W. Purkey, School of Education, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
3. T. Constance Coyne, Editor, **PRISM MAGAZINE — A Magazine By And For The Gifted And Talented**, Ft. Lauderdale, FL
4. Rosemary Gladieux, Gifted Education Writer, Fort Wayne, Indiana
5. Dr. Neil Postman, School of Education, New York University
6. Dr. Hans Jellen, Educational Administration and Higher Education, Southern Illinois University
7. Dr. A. Harry Passow, Teachers College, Columbia University
8. Dr. Virgil S. Ward, Emeritus Professor of Gifted Education, University of Virginia

Congratulations To

1. Sue Hovey, Coordinator of Programs for Gifted Students, Moscow, Idaho, and a member of NEA's Executive Committee
2. Margaret J. Lathlaen, Teacher of Gifted Children at Westwood Elementary School, Friendship, Texas

For their recent appointment to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, a project organized by the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy.>>

Please send us your comments about this newsletter. We are interested in receiving brief articles (no more than 2.5 pages) concerning how to improve the identification and education of gifted children. Remember to send us names and addresses of persons to be added to our mailing list.>>