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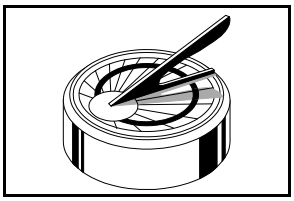

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We continue to monitor the impact of the "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) Act on gifted education. Since our initial criticisms (***GEPQ***, Spring 2001 issue), we have been collecting statements and articles that reveal this federal legislation's negative effects upon gifted students. For example, the Honorable Phil Bredesen, Governor of Tennessee, said: "I don't think our nation was made great by a whole bunch of people who made adequate progress. It was made great by some young people who made extraordinary progress. (NCLB) is a kind of a punitive program in that it does little to encourage excellence in the schools." (From: TENNESSEAN.com – Friday, 10/31/03). Ironically, the Nashville, Tennessee School District implemented a policy in January 2004 to prohibit the public display of honor rolls in school buildings because students not on these rolls might feel humiliated. This type of thinking is influenced and reinforced by the current emphasis on minimum performance standards perpetuated by NCLB. Why worry about honor roll students when it is more important to improve low performers?

The children who will suffer the most from this faulty legislation are those in poor and ghetto school districts. "I believe we could do away with affirmative action [in college admissions] if the needs of these young, bright minority children are met at an early age," says Susan Rhodes, gifted-education coordinator in Springfield [Illinois]. "But No Child Left Behind leaves them behind, because it doesn't let us spend money on children already meeting the standards." (From an article by Daniel Golden, The Wall Street Journal - December 29, 2003). In a second article, Golden interviewed many Ohio educators who indicated that high performing gifted students are bargaining chips in the battle to maintain high test score averages. (The Wall Street Journal - February 4, 2004). Federal bureaucrats in the U.S. Department of Education seem to be oblivious to these problems. It is time for Congress to assure that No More Gifted Children Are Left Behind in our nation's public schools.

The excellent article by Barbara Chambers discusses the history, development and demise of one of the premier programs for the gifted, the Major Work Program. She was administrator of Major Work from 1986 until her retirement in 1995, and is a graduate of Mercyhurst College (BA), John Carroll University (MS) and the University of Maryland (Ed D). Also contained in this issue are four responses to Professor John Feldhusen's article entitled, **Do The Gifted Need Gifted Education?** (Winter 2004 issue). Insightful responses were written separately by Joan Smutny, Mary Fonstad, Joan Freeman and Susan Grammer. In Michael Walters' essay, he discusses Ernest Hemingway's book, **A Moveable Feast** (Scribner's, 1964). Your comments regarding this issue are welcomed.

Maurice D. Fisher, Publisher

ANOTHER LOOK AT CLEVELAND'S MAJOR WORK PROGRAM

If you accept the premise that "Our nation's greatest untapped natural resources are the minds of gifted urban youth," then it is essential to reexamine Cleveland's MAJOR WORK Program.

By Barbara A. Chambers Mentor, Ohio

No student of the history of gifted education will search very deeply into the literature without finding mention of the Major Work program in the Cleveland Public Schools. Founded nearly 85 years ago, Major Work was an innovative program that began a movement in America's public schools to recognize the special needs of intellectually gifted students. The concept was initiated by Roberta Holden Bole, a civic leader who professed the bold courage to recognize the need to identify and nurture the intellectual potential of our nation's brightest young people. Her determination resulted in the establishment of the first Major Work class in Cleveland. As a pilot project, it was made up of fourth, fifth and sixth grade students at Denison Elementary School. With support from Cleveland Women's City Club, a civic organization with a special interest in the education of gifted children, Major Work was officially designated as the district's gifted program in 1922. Revolutionary in concept for its time, Major Work became the nation's first organized plan for the education of intellectually gifted elementary children. It went on to be called by some educators the"greatest experiment in American education."

At this time in America's history, with the nation's large cities struggling to educate our urban youth, it is important to retell how Cleveland recognized and addressed the needs of its most able students and established a classic quality educational program for the ages. The story of Major Work must not be forgotten.

My introduction to Major Work came about forty years ago. I came to Cleveland, Ohio in 1963 to teach in the public schools after short stints as an industrial chemist, teacher in a private school and chemistry instructor in a small college. I began my Cleveland teaching career at Collinwood, a large comprehensive school serving nearly 4200 students in grades 7 through 12. It is at Collinwood where I first became aware of the Major Work program. At first hearing the unique name, I thought that perhaps it was a class for vocational education students. To my surprise I learned that Major Work was the district's program for gifted children, and not just any ordinary program for the gifted, but a very revered one that had been in the district for years. When the second semester began, to my even greater surprise, I found myself assigned to teach two junior high Major Work math classes. Thus, this teaching experience began my long and varied association with Major Work spanning 32 years until my retirement in 1995.

It is from my career vantage point as a Major Work math and chemistry teacher, later an educational researcher, and lastly the administrator of the program from 1986 to 1995 that I wish to share with you my knowledge and memories of Major Work.

Program Refinement. From that one seed class in 1921 Major Work grew to include ever more classes in additional elementary schools and eventually was expanded into the junior and senior high levels. As it grew, the clearly identifiable features of the program were defined and refined. Dorothy E. Norris, a classic educator with innovative ideas, must be given credit for this steady, creative growth and development of Major Work throughout the time of her association with the program. Starting as a Major Work teacher in 1924, she retired as Directing Supervisor of the Major Work Department in 1965. Under her leadership the courses of study, process for identifying intellectually gifted students, program philosophy, criteria for selecting teachers, as well as a description of the furniture, equipment, materials and layout of an elementary Major Work classroom evolved to become firmly in place.

Course of Study. Each Major Work class followed the usual academic curriculum for a particular grade as all students in the district did. At no time did the class work at a particular grade in a Major Work class encroach upon the work of the next grade. Instead, the Major Work approach to delivering the standard curriculum of the district was greatly expanded horizontally at each level. French classes, generally conversational up to the fourth grade, were added to the curriculum for every elementary student.

Identification and Placement of Students. Students were initially identified for entrance into the program based on results obtained from district-wide paper and pencil ability tests given each year at specific grades. These tests yielded what was called a "Probable Learning Rate" or PLR. Students with a PLR of 125 or above were then referred for an Individual Binet Test. An Intelligence Quotient of 125 or higher on the Binet qualified a student for entrance to Major Work classes.

Children accepted into the Major Work classes were assigned to a school housing the program. At this time the school district did not make any provisions for transportation. Students living too far to walk took the city bus to their school, often transferring one or more times. I have been told by several Major Work students from the 1940's and 1950's that the

excitement of being in stimulating classes with students of similar ability made the trip worthwhile.

Multi Grade Levels were Typically in Major Work Classes. Until the mid 1970's the district had midyear promotion and graduation. Therefore, a Major Work class of students in grades 4, 5 and 6 could have been made up of students in six different levels, first and second semester grade 4, first and second semester grade 5, and first and second semester grade 6. Class size, however, was limited to 25 students.

Some years ago I examined a box of records for Major Work students of the 1930's. The cumulative student record form was printed on a white file folder which provided space for insertion of anecdotal records, certificates of merit and other such items. Standard information such as name, address, grade, classroom marks, ability and achievement test scores, extracurricular activities and the like were hand written in the appropriate spaces. Additional information, quite standard for the time though certainly not found on today's student records, included the families' religion, parents' occupation and nationality. Interestingly, of the approximately 20 to 30 records I reviewed, many of the students were immigrants or first generation Americans from Europe and the British Isles; fathers' occupations ranged from shoe repairmen or laborers to professors and physicians. Mothers may have been seamstresses or clerks, but usually were homemakers.

Major Work Philosophy. The aim of Major Work was to provide an exemplary educational program for high ability students, through a new and unique individualized approach to teaching and learning. The Major Work philosophy was directed at:

- Conserving our greatest human resources.
- Providing opportunities for the development of abilities of individual pupils.
- Training for leadership in a democracy.
- Developing individual potentialities for service to society.

In its early years Major Work classes began for students in second grade, with the identification process beginning in the first grade. Believing that gifted children would flourish best with a full day program, Major Work classes were self-contained. That is, the classes were entirely made up of students who had met the entrance criteria. Major Work students continued to be in contact with all students in the school through clubs, chorus, orchestra and gym classes. By 1940 there were nearly 1700 students in the program. A decision was made in the mid 1940's to extend the Major Work approach to learning to an additional segment of the student population. Called the Enrichment Program, it served elementary students with IQ's of 115 to 125. The program was again expanded in 1988 to include first grade students.

At the junior and senior high levels, where classes were departmentalized, the program took a different approach. In addition to an enriched curriculum for core subjects, seventh and eighth grade mathematics and science were compacted into the seventh grade courses of study, with algebra and ninth grade science taught in the eighth grade. Honors and Advanced Placement classes were offered in the high schools, with the program name (Major Work) usually dropped at this level. Weighted grades with an A = 5.0 were given in the secondary classes.

Characteristics of a Major Work Teacher. Dorothy Norris had a clear notion of the characteristics a Major Work teacher should possess, both professionally and personally. In a time before the state required certificate validation or a license in gifted education, or before unionism had entered the picture, Mrs. Norris developed a set of rigorous guidelines for choosing teachers for Major Work classes. They were:

- Experience -- two years or more years of successful classroom teaching of average students.
- Faith in the superior ability of some children; in training for leadership; in challenging potentialities; and in fostering ideals of democracy.
- Training in child development; educational psychology; psychology of individual differences; counseling; and teaching methods.
- Characteristics - Personality of the teacher: Sense of humor, warmth of personality, professional modesty, self confidence, open-mindedness, experimental attitudes, freedom from jealousy, joyous attitude toward life, ingeniousness and resourcefulness, and fairness and firmness. - Attitudes Toward Teaching: Interest in children, willingness to accept children's ideas, interest in acquiring breadth of information, recognition and acceptance of some children's superior intelligence, and satisfaction in children's achievement.
- Physical Attributes -- good physical and mental health.

Dorothy Norris was a frequent visitor to Major Work classes. I suspect her visits served several purposes: to ensure that the selected teachers were living up to her expectations, to encourage and support the teachers and students, and make her presence felt as a mentor and role model. A veteran teacher with nearly 40 years of teaching experience in the program shared with me her remembrances of a typical classroom visit. Mrs. Norris would enter the classroom and ceremoniously take off her hat and gloves. With a nod to the teacher to step aside, she would then take over the class and proceed to model a lesson in one of the classic Major Work teaching approaches. The rather complex process of instructing students in how to set up their literature notebooks was the topic of one of Mrs. Norris's first visits to this teacher's class. The model lesson was not soon forgotten by the teacher or the students.

There always was a special spirit of camaraderie among the Major Work teachers. They would greet each other at Mrs. Norris' beginning of the year meeting and others held during

the year, meet at the "bookroom" -- a centrally located site where class sets of literature books were housed, share ideas and materials with each other in their school or across grade levels in other schools, mentor teachers new to the program to master the Major Work approach, and enjoy an end of year dinner together. Most Major Work teachers felt privileged to be in the program.

Classroom Arrangement. Early pictures of Major Work classes, taken in the late 1920's, show a racially diverse group of elementary grade students working at tables arranged in a rectangular configuration as opposed to the then typical arrangement of desks fixed to the floor in parallel rows. This workshop arrangement, perhaps giving credence to the name Major Work, allowed for group or individual work at tables and permitted the free movement of students and the teacher in the room. Other necessary elements of a Major Work classroom were a discussion table, preferably round with chairs, a cupboard for children's supplies and open bookshelves for sets of reference and literature books, an easel and workbenches. Charts outlining the evaluation process for student presentations, key elements of the model literature program and other features of the program were prominently displayed in each classroom. The arrangement of the desks, the specified materials and supplies and the wall displays were all essential to the curricular and delivery methods found in every Major Work class.

Program Strengths. It is my opinion that the greatest strengths of the Major Work program were the quality and uniqueness of the delivery model used in the elementary classes and the innovative program features that enriched the curriculum.

The role of the teacher in the Major Work program was vastly different from the approach typical in a traditional classroom. Rather than merely teaching "more of the same thing" to exceptional students, the Major Work model of learning was designed to increase the breadth and depth of students' educational experiences. It allowed teachers to expand the regular course of study, enrich learning through the study of the arts, music and foreign language, employ problem-solving and discussion as standard classroom methods, direct students to develop skills in finding information through observing, research, interviewing and the like, and select units of work based on the interests of the children. The model facilitated individualized learning where students became stake holders in the learning process, with the opportunity to make choices and voice opinion. This new and unique role, where the teacher became a coach or resource person rather than a dispenser of information, was particularly evident in the execution of the two hallmark features of Major Work:

Literature Club and Daily Talks. Literature Club was an organized teacher-guided student led discussion group focusing on appropriately selected quality, chapter books. It was designed to increase students' reading comprehension and to provide them with exposure to a variety of quality reading material. Students were expected to demonstrate mastery of basic reading skills, express independent thought, support ideas with evidence and make evaluations based on clearly defined criteria. Literature Club also encouraged students to respect the ideas of others and assume leadership roles through interaction with classmates.

Literature Club met once a week for approximately 45 minutes for each reading group of 7 or 8 students. Students were assigned to read 2 or 3 chapters of a book outside of class and were expected to be ready for discussion. Literature Club meetings were conducted by a student leader, a role that rotated among the group throughout the year. Students sat at a circular table at the head of the classroom. The teacher typically did not sit in the circle of students, instead to the side as a reference person.

In preparation, students maintained a Literature Club notebook in which they wrote responses to 3 or 4 teacher-prepared, open-ended questions. The teacher-prepared questions were developed to be thought provoking: student responses, though different from student to student, were to be documented with page and passage sited. Additionally, students were to record 10 comments gleaned from the reading. A comment was a word which described a character, event or a personal feeling of the reader toward a character or event. Students used a dictionary or thesaurus to identify a synonym and antonym for each word and then compose a sentence using the word.

To begin, the leader introduced the first discussion question. Rather than raising hands to speak, students interjected their response into the discussion by using a "bridging phrase." (A "bridging phrase" might be: That was a very good point, but may I add ...., I disagree with you, proof is on page ....., Did you notice?....., etc.) Discussion of the questions was followed by presentation and discussion of the comments students had recorded. The leader concluded the meeting by giving a resume of the events of the session.

Immediately following a Literature Club meeting, students self-evaluated their preparation and participation. Included among the evaluative questions were: Was I prepared? Did I listen to others? Was I courteous? Did I contribute? Was my written work neat?

I will always recall my first visit as the newly appointed administrator of the program to an elementary Major Work classroom in 1986. The initial amazement for this "old" chemistry teacher at seeing a group of enthusiastic third graders engaged in a lively student-led discussion of **Charlotte's Web**, is one I will never forget. Subsequent visits to many other Major Work classrooms reinforced this memorable occasion. Colorful wall charts with "bridging phrases" and the evaluation criteria used in the Literature Club were prominently displayed in every classroom. The outline for Daily Talks was always in clear view.

Daily Talks were research reports prepared and presented by elementary level Major Work students. The preparation of Daily Talks provided students with the opportunity to develop and use research skills appropriate for their ability level. These skills included gathering information, note taking, organizing, sequencing and developing appropriate visuals to reinforce the topic. Poise and delivery were also developed through Daily Talks. Students generally were expected to prepare and deliver four Daily Talks during a school year as assigned by the teacher.

Academics in a typical Major Work class day generally began with a Daily Talk presentation by one of the students. Because of this time slot, students often called their presentations Morning Talks rather than Daily Talks. In later years they were aptly referred to as Research Talks. Occasionally, as a variation, three or four students may have given their talks in an interview version, like the TODAY show on TV.

To prepare students for Daily Talks, much time was directed toward teaching outlining skills. Once this skill was mastered, students we redirected to select a topic from a general category designated by the teacher and then guided to limit the subject for the purpose of their study. Categories selected by the teacher were ones appropriate for the maturity level of the students in the class and parallel with the curriculum. For primary level students the general categories may have been plants or animals; for upper elementary students it may have been historical events, types of music or presidents' lives. Students then made a working outline as a guide to their presentation, assembled information from at least three sources, and recorded references in correct form. Directions for the preliminary note-taking process were very precise:

- You may use notebook paper or cards.
- Each new fact goes on a new line.
- Write in your own words.
- Use only important words.
- Write neatly so that you can read them easily.
- Classify notes according to the topic on the working outline.
- After all notes are taken, find sub-topics and details.
- Hand notes to teacher one week before the talk.

Three to four visuals, usually in the form of large charts, were then creatively developed by the students to illustrate their presentation. The plan for the visuals was to be turned-in three days before the presentation. Again, charts were expected to meet specific guidelines. They were:

- Charts must have a title.
- Lettering must be visible from the back of the room.
- Measurement must be carefully made for exact placement of lettering and graphics.

A penciled version of the final outline of the presentation was due to the teacher one week before the date the student selected to present the talk. After approval by the teacher, the outline was put on index cards for reference only during the talk. Finally, the oral presentation was made to attentive and questioning classmates by the student "expert."

Students in the classroom evaluated the presenter's Daily Talk according to the following criteria:

- **Presentation**
  - Speech
  - Visuals
  - English
  - Poise
  - Posture
  - Presentation
- **Preparation**
  - Topic
  - Facts
  - Organization
  - Introduction
  - Conclusion

In the pilot phase of expanding Major Work to include first grade students, an expert in gifted education from a local university was asked to review the process and prepare a report. I will always recall the sincere comment made by the evaluator after observing a nearly 20 minute Daily Talk on "Gold Fish" by a first grade Major Work student. This young lady's enthusiastic presentation included many colorful visuals and the revealing information that the gold fish's habitat may sometimes be a "Pet Shop!" The evaluator's comment was, "If only my university students could do as well at keeping the interest and attention of their peers with such well prepared presentations."

Several other essential features of Major Work were designed to develop students as participating citizens in their community, nation and the world. Among them were the Opening Exercises, Citizenship Club and, as mentioned before, French classes for elementary students.

Teaching Citizenship. Major Work began the day with Opening Exercises. Rotating student leaders, serving from three days to two weeks, conducted the exercises. The Class Leader would call on the preappointed student leaders to present pertinent announcements to the class. The Song Leader would lead the class in a song, the Weather Reporter would give the daily weather forecast, the T. D. Scout would offer the Thought for the Day which may have come from a poem, saying or quotation. Table Captains reported attendance for their tables. Table Captains also had the responsibility of reminding students at their table of classroom rules when it became necessary, and to report once a week at the class meeting positive contributions of table members. There also were clearly defined responsibilities for the class members. They were expected to present and explain daily news clippings, share announcements about classroom or personal events and participate in discussions.

Class Meetings of the Citizenship Club were held weekly. Well-orchestrated campaigns, often with candidate debates, were conducted to select the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. During meetings students were expected to follow basic rules of parliamentary procedure. The Program Chairman, with help from the teacher, planned an overall program to

establish a theme for the class. Such a theme may have been "Symbols of our Democracy," "Signers of the Declaration of Independence," or the like. Student volunteers were then called upon to give reports on the theme. Chairmen of other standing committees, such as health or safety, gave short lessons on a pertinent topic. As in the Opening Exercises, Club Members had specific rules. They were expected to participate willingly, stand to be recognized, address the president as, "Mr. or Miss President," use correct procedures for making a motion, observe rules established by the members and think for themselves when voting. Respect for others was ever the rule.

Thus, in keeping with its philosophy of not encroaching on the work of the next grade, Major Work delivered an enriched, individualized curriculum to intellectually gifted children in Cleveland.

Program Support and Recognition. Over its many years of existence, Major Work became embedded in the district and was universally accepted as an integral part of the district's total educational program. It flourished with the support of Superintendents and other top-level administrators who took great pride in the accomplishments of students in the program. School principals acknowledged its value for individual students and willingly nominated children from their schools for inclusion, even if it meant the child left for another school where the program was housed. Parents recognized and greatly appreciated the value of the program for their children and vigorously supported it.

At the state and national level Major Work was also well recognized. It was the subject of a number of dissertations, most notably that of Walter B. Barbe (1953, Northwestern University) and at least one book, Theodore Hall's **Gifted Children: The Cleveland Story** (1956). Additionally, reference to Major Work is included in a great number of educational text books and professional articles. School districts in suburban Cleveland and central Ohio patterned their gifted education programs after Major Work. The Ohio Association for Gifted Children can trace its roots to an organization begun by Major Work advocates.

I took great pleasure during my tenure as administrator of Major Work in personally discovering what a significant impact the program had made on the lives of the people it served. It was not unusual to attend a session at annual National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) meeting and find a presenter explaining that their district's reading program was modeled after Cleveland's Literature Club. Or to have a proud mother call my office to tell me that her son or daughter, a former Major Work student, had attained a significant achievement, such as one mother telling me her son just had a fifth book published. Or to receive a call from a former student, like one I received from a New York City editor, telling me that a group of former Major Work students living in the city regularly meets as a discussion group. Or to browse in an educational materials store and find a "how to do it" book describing a whole-book approach to teaching reading that paralleled the Major Work Literature Club in as near an exact fashion as one could ever imagine. Or to discover that a fellow owner in my condominium association, my financial advisor, a Cleveland mayoralty candidate, a popular prime time TV comedian, and a member of President Clinton's Cabinet were all students in Cleveland's Major Work. Most gratifying, however, is the knowledge that Major Work is beloved by the thousands of teachers who taught in the program and the tens-of-thousands of Cleveland students who benefitted from its pioneering design.

EPILOGUE

Several events occurred in the mid 1970's to mid 1980's which altered the course of Major Work. Chief among them were the district's ongoing financial problems, and the federal court's decision in Reed vs. Rhodes, the desegregation case in the Cleveland Public Schools.

To alleviate the budget crisis the school district enacted a number of decisions in the late 1970's. Among them was a reorganization plan for the central offices which resulted in the abrupt transfer of the two able program administrators who had followed Dorothy Norris -- Charles Jordan and Jean Thom. This move left Major Work virtually leaderless for several years. During this time, a rather large number of families with great loyalty to Major Work and fearing its demise, either moved out of the district or enrolled their children in private schools. And, as might be expected, the student identification process and adherence to delivery of the program model suffered.

Implementation of the Remedial Order in Reed vs. Rhodes brought about several significant changes in Major Work: program administration was reestablished, program assignment patterns were developed within the context of the total district student assignment plan, a junior high school made up entirely of Major Work students was established, and the entrance criteria were expanded to be more inclusive. The expanded entrance criteria were developed to address the "Testing and Tracking" component of the Remedial Order. In addition to increasing the number of elements to be reviewed for program entrance, the Enrichment program component was merged with Major Work. Now the entrance criteria included documentation of demonstrated gifted characteristics, high classroom marks in academic subjects, teacher recommendation, high achievement test scores, and an IQ of 115 or above. The caveat being, failure to meet ONE of the criteria would not deny a student entrance into the program. Thus the program opened the door to serve additional urban gifted youth who may not have met a rigid entrance criterion (often a single test score).

At the time of my retirement in 1995 there were nearly 3,000 students in Major Work classes, honors or Advanced Placement. This was slightly more than 4% of the district enrollment. The racially diverse population of the classes mirrored nearly that of

the district, 70% African American, 5% Hispanic and 25% Caucasian and others. (Within the program, African American females and Caucasian males were the greatest in number.) The program had been expanded to include first grade. Teachers new to the program were committed to working on certificate validation, attended inservice sessions and benefitted from the shared knowledge of the program from veteran teachers, several of whom had begun their teaching under Dorothy Norris. Many students, after graduation from the eighth grade Major Work classes, were awarded scholarships to local and out of state prestigious private high schools. Whitney M. Young, the school with only Major Work students, went on to be named a National Blue Ribbon School. Many Major Work teachers gave presentations at professional meetings explaining successful strategies for working with urban gifted students. A class of third graders traveled to the annual National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) meeting in Cincinnati to give demonstrations of their Daily Talks and Literature Club. Major Work had adapted and changed in an effort to continue meeting the needs of Cleveland's gifted students, but in the process held fast to its essential, defining components.

A bitter pill for all who revered Major Work was dispensed a year or so before my retirement. The dearly loved, much respected program name, Major Work, was changed to Gifted and Talented. The superintendent at that time, perhaps not familiar with the history of Major Work, made the change with the belief that the original name did not communicate.

Personal Recommendations. It is from the knowledge I have gained through my long and varied career as a gifted educator that I firmly believe that gifted programs in big city districts must be vastly different from those typically found in small city or suburban districts. The goal of urban gifted education programs must be to establish a multi factored identification scheme that will include as many students as possible who show gifted potential rather than exclude them. Reliance on strictly defined entrance criteria will serve only to continue keeping traditionally underserved children with great untapped intellectual potential from receiving an appropriate education. To support my beliefs, I suggest that the program elements listed below be given serious consideration in developing programs to serve gifted urban youth:

- **Early Identification.** As is true with many gifted children, the personal "satellite dish" of urban gifted students often pulls in a cognitive signal vastly different from that which may be expected by the adults who work with them. As such, the very characteristics that typically define giftedness, when demonstrated by urban children, often are misinterpreted. Such an error in judgment may result in children being labeled as troublemakers rather than as gifted. Preschool, kindergarten and early elementary teachers need to be familiar with characteristics of gifted young urban children in order to make fair and accurate recommendations.

- **Less Reliance on Test Scores.** Urban children may not have exposure to the home-provided educational advantages found in many suburban homes such as travel, various lessons, vast array of books, computers, etc. For this reason, as well as validity issues associated with the tests, big city children may not score well enough to meet traditional test criteria.

- **Self-Contained Classes.** Gifted urban children need to be in classes with other gifted children. Why? There appears to be a phenomenon among urban school students that de-emphasizes high achievement in school. Whatever the reasons, at about the fourth grade, peer pressure to "NOT BE SMART" has great influence on many urban gifted students. In self-contained classes, or even better, magnet schools for gifted, the influencing peer group becomes one consisting of students with similar academic goals and values.

- **Special Emphasis on Identifying and Retaining African American Males.** For whatever reasons, this segment of the population is generally the least represented in gifted education classes. Early identification and the need for supportive peers, as mentioned above, in addition to appropriate mentoring, individualized education, exposure to academic role models, plus nurturing teachers, should help to increase their representative numbers.

- **Specially Trained Teachers.** Teachers of urban education classes need to possess the superb characteristics Dorothy Norris outlined. Additionally, they must be trusting, caring, relevant, understanding and able to demonstrate a strong "can do it" belief in their students. There is also a need for a well-developed curriculum with an appropriate delivery model for which teachers feel ownership. Regularly scheduled inservice sessions that allow for sharing of problems, solutions, successful teaching strategies, etc., need to be made available for encouragement and support.

- **Understanding Administrators.** Central office as well as school administrators must share a belief that urban gifted youth need to have an education congruent with their level of ability. This means that money must be budgeted, teachers trained, and appropriate facilities made available. Even with the current emphasis on school improvement, school administrators must be willing to have high ability students and their high test scores transfer to a school with special programs for the gifted if that is the BEST placement for the child.

Lots to ask, but .....

If we are willing to display the same courage Roberta Holden Bole professed nearly 85 years ago and recommit to developing the intellectual potential of our nation's urban gifted youth, the Major Work model of gifted education merits sincere re-examination. The defining characteristics of this model with early multi factored identification, self-contained classes, specially selected teachers, enriched individualized curriculum,

independent student research, focus on democracy, and early introduction to a foreign language all are essential ingredients of a plan that can counteract the disheartening omissions currently found in many big city education programs for gifted children.

Let's consider it!

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Response to Dr. John Feldhusen's Article Entitled: Do The Gifted Need Gifted Education? (Winter 2004)

By Joan Franklin Smutny Center for Gifted National Louis University Evanston, Illinois

Do we really know that gifted children need special programs or can they advance their abilities and interests on their own? Do we have evidence that gifted programming has resulted in more productive, more creative, higher achieving young people or do we *assume* these results? John Feldhusen's article challenges us to reconsider the intellectual and creative needs of gifted children and the extent to which current programs make measurable gains in growth and achievement.

As an individual who provides special programs for great numbers of gifted children in the Chicago area each year, I found myself responding in several ways. My first response was: "Of course gifted children need gifted programs!" Thousands of contacts with gifted children and their families have shown me that, without a doubt, such a need exists and this need is perhaps no greater than among underserved communities—multicultural, bilingual, highly gifted, girls, etc. Many families I know hold onto gifted programs and the people who create and manage them like a lone rope thrown out on the open seas. One teacher from an urban area stated it this way: "Teachers and parents in gifted education can be isolated here, partly because gifted students aren't supposed to exist in our district. So who's even going to look for them?"

John Feldhusen's article nevertheless raises important questions about the effectiveness of gifted programming. How do we know that what we provide for gifted students really meets their educational needs and produces actual results in terms of achievement and growth? Research on program evaluation has produced some findings on specific areas where gifted programs have proven weak. Key among them are (Van Tassel-Baska 2002, pg. 22):

- lack of attention to curriculum structure with the result that curriculum frameworks and scope and sequence elements are nonexistent
- lack of a strong curriculum base; also, insufficient differentiation and acceleration for gifted learners
- insufficient attention to assessment of student learning as a direct outcome of the gifted program
- lack of counseling and guidance to support the development of gifted learners over the K-12 years of schooling.

With findings such as these, gifted education has positioned itself to create more effective educational programming for high-ability children and provide clearer evidence of their growth and development.

There are several fronts where advances in the field of gifted education promise to serve *more* high-ability students *more* of the time. Gifted education has become more open today than ever before to the "twice exceptional" students—those who, in addition to being gifted, may also be bilingual, multicultural, have a learning disability or live in an impoverished environment. While school districts districts may still use identification methods that cause them to under-identify gifted students, signs of better times ahead for *all* gifted have shown

themselves in changed attitudes and more innovative programming.

Along with this movement, gifted educators have also focused more attention on parents and parent education as a way to enlarge the support network for gifted children. Services for underrepresented populations usually involve parents and community members as an integral dimension of programming. With more resources and support systems available nationally and locally, parents have become significantly more informed about gifted education and the options available to them than they were 10 years ago.

Finally, the impact of differentiated instruction has meant that regular classroom teachers are becoming more equipped to respond to the special needs of gifted students. Obviously, the practice of differentiating has not filtered down to all districts or schools and even where it has, the extent to which teachers can make curriculum modifications for those who perform above grade level varies from place to place. But the fact that more teachers are becoming skilled in making curriculum adjustments in pace, level and process gives hope to gifted students who would otherwise be twiddling their thumbs in class.

There is no doubt that we need to do better in ensuring that our most gifted students receive more than occasional "hits" of enrichment which may or may not be connected to their work in the regular classroom. Certainly the dearth of funding for gifted education and the general bias of our society against it have impeded significant progress in key areas. Gifted educators struggle under the constraints of limited time and resources and the constant misapprehension that the students they serve do not require any intervention.

Despite these difficulties, however, we cannot leave gifted students to fend for themselves. Ignorance and neglect too often characterize the response of adults to these promising children. Most of them enter their grade already knowing over half the curriculum for the year. As one child I know described his experience: "I just feel like I'm in a waiting room, and I'm waiting and waiting for something to happen." For thousands of students and families, even part-time solutions can help prevent the large, negative consequences of underachievement.

During a time of decreasing funds for gifted education, these children need advocates more than ever before—people who are committed to nurturing the growth of their abilities and talents wherever they may be. We in gifted education have the expertise and commitment to advocate for them in significant ways, empowering not only the children, but their teachers, parents, administrators, counselors, and coordinators. Gifted students deserve the finest of our assistance—our knowledge, vision and determination to create a new future for their lives.

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Dear Editors,

This is my eleventh year working as a GT Resource specialist in the School District of Waukesha, Wisconsin. Our program is curriculum based and classroom delivered. I work with and on behalf of 7th through 12th grade students. My job focuses on trying to meet the needs of identified GT students by raising the level of challenge within the classroom curriculum and by helping educators (teachers, counselors, and administrators) better understand gifted children. Another part of my job is to try to reach those identified students who are not successful in school.

After reading Dr. Feldhusen's article in the Winter 2004 issue of ***Gifted Education Press Quarterly***, I feel I must respond.

Is Dr. Feldhusen simply playing devil's advocate for the purpose of discussion? I hope he is not serious when he asks if programs for the gifted are indeed necessary.

In his article Dr. Feldhusen appears to describe only one type of the Betts & Neihart "Profiles of the Gifted and Talented" (Understanding Our Gifted, 1989) – the Autonomous Learner. What about the other five types who may not be working at a level that matches their ability? The Successful, the Challenging, the Underground, the Dropout, and the Double-labeled may not be doing well in school even if gifted education is available. It appears Dr. Feldhusen is centering only on what the student, "the truly gifted student" produces, rather than on the whole child.

The article ended with several questions; after reading the article, I have several questions of my own. Does either subject or full grade level acceleration alone modify the complexity level of the learning, or is it just basic level thinking at a higher grade level? How long before the accelerated student catches up to his/her new classmates? The article seems to focus solely on the cognitive needs of gifted and talented students. What about the affective needs? How is asynchronous development addressed by educators who are not even familiar with the need? How does an educator deal with the resultant vulnerability and the overexcitabiities experienced by the gifted and talented student? Is the gifted student who struggles with such feelings

merely written off as overly sensitive?

Fortunately, many of my students are the ones who readily employ their cognitive skills both in and out of school. Some will even seek out a teacher when they feel the need to be challenged beyond what is being provided in the classroom. However, even the students who cooperate with their teachers and do the work face many pressures because they are so bright. Does the student attempting six Advanced Placement classes at the same time have realistic expectations for what he or she can accomplish? Is he or she misperceiving adult expectations to take on more and more responsibility both at school and in the community? How does a student say, "No" to a teacher who wants him/her to participate in debate or Academic Decathlon or any other team? Who helps the gifted student achieve balance in life – balance between academics and good grades, school and community activities, time for family and friends, AND time for self? Does he or she feel like an imposter for receiving high grades he or she knows were not worked for? With the potential to be or do most anything, how can the gifted and talented student determine which path is best? Can the gifted and talented students really handle all this on their own? Will they be just fine without support at school? I doubt it.

However, I seem to spend much of my time handling concerns about the gifted student who does not do the work. Does "not doing the work" make a student "not gifted?" Are such students simply to be written off as being lazy? Thanks to the work of so many professionals in the field of gifted education, I am able to help parents, teachers, administrators, and counselors move beyond laziness as the answer to the lack of work. Are there any academic gaps that prevent the gifted student from doing the work? Is there a hidden disability? Is the student work inhibited? Does the student fear failure? Does the student fear success? Does the student lack the ability to be independent? Is there peer pressure not to be smart (for either a boy or a girl)? Does the student already know the material? Does he or she see the material's relevance? Is there a power struggle? Is the student overbooked? While any of these questions might help explain any student's nonperformance at school, the gifted student facing such issues also experiences them with an intensity not experienced by other students. Can so many professionals be wasting their time trying to understand the gifted child if they do not need a gifted program at school?

While I do not have hard data to support my beliefs, there is more than enough anecdotal evidence to show that gifted and talented students do need someone who knows many of their characteristics and who can advocate for them in our schools. Gifted education is about a lot more than "receiving instruction at a level commensurate with their current achievement or readiness levels."

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Do the Gifted Need Gifted Education?

A Response to John Feldhusen by Joan Freeman Middlesex University London

It's a strange thing, but when a child is already doing well at school there is a great urge among educators to make that child do even better. It is as though mere excellence is not enough: the excellence has to be better and better. I entirely agree with John Feldhusen that there is a risk for a gifted child, who had been good and worthwhile in the regular school program, is then put at risk because of the earnest moves taken on behalf of those demonstrated gifts.

Of course, there are only so many hours in the day, and if a child is taken out of normal classes for special ones, the normal interactions of his/her place within that group are diminished. The child becomes more of an outsider, a special person, not quite the same as the others. So, socially, and sometimes in sport too, there is a risk of losing out on normal development. This happens, as I have discovered in my British in-depth 30-year study of gifted and non-gifted children (Freeman, 2001).

The label of gifted is not without effect; youngsters begin to think of themselves as different, and it can take many years before they feel entirely at peace with their fellows. But how each one reacts to that classification is also dependent on personality and home support. This was highlighted by a 37 year-old woman in my study, who told of the distress the label "gifted" had caused her, largely because of her unsupporting low socio-economic background. She felt she could never live up to the expectations of the image as she saw it, and had felt a failure until she had children: they did not know about the label, she said, and loved her for herself.

And who gets into the gifted programs? Winner (1996) writes that in the USA when girls start school they are identified in equal proportion to that of boys for gifted programs, but as they get older there is a striking decline in the proportion of girls selected for gifted education. Although girls make up half the gifted population in kindergarten, this proportion shrinks to less than 30% in junior high school, and even lower at high school.

But there is evidence that it is possible to affect the relative proportion of boys and girls in gifted programs. For example, an

experimental intervention program in Indiana provided teenage girls with "directed enrichment," after which they were able to reach much higher levels in a variety of talent areas (Moon, Feldhusen & Dillon, 1994). One might question the purpose, selection procedures, and effects of the gifted programs, particularly if they appear to be losing so many bright girls. The situation in Britain is entirely different in terms of gender gifted achievements (Freeman, 2003). It cannot be natural ability because our populations are not so different; it has more to do with style of education, expectations of gifted boys and girls, and how they are encouraged to fulfil their potential.

It is also interesting to look at countries where there are no gifted programs, such as all the Scandinavian ones (Freeman, 1998). In all international comparisons, Scandinavian students do better than those in most other countries, including the USA, but on a par with the Far East. And what do most gifted children get in their gifted programs? They get more and more of what they were doing so well at in the first place. Summer programs are excellent for the lucky few, but all too brief and inconsistent (Freeman, 2002).

My suggestion is to provide more enrichment and opportunity for those who have not yet shown what they can do. Simply selecting out a few to be "gifted" for special programs and regarding the remainder as unworthy of them is not only wasteful of human resources but inhumane too. The key is in provision for the majority, out of which some will take wings and fly. Without that basic opportunity, that is a good standard of educational provision for all, so many potentially gifted children are being lost to their and our detriment. I call it the Sports Approach; just as sport is freely available in all schools to whatever level a child can take it, make the same provision for chemistry or French or whatever. Specialist tuition within and outside school hours should be available for those who are keen learners. It is not expensive; the teachers and the equipment are already in place. With effort in the right direction, we could increase the proportion of children we now call gifted.

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It Depends: A Parent and Advocate for Excellence in Education Responds to Dr. John Feldhusen's Question

Dr. John Feldhusen posed a number of critical questions for the gifted education community in his recent article, *Do the Gifted Need Gifted Education?* (Feldhusen, GEPQ, Fall 2003) As the mother of two gifted children, and as a research scientist and science writer with an inkling of what this country will need tomorrow from the children being educated today, the short version of my answer to the question posed in Feldhusen's title is: *"It depends*."

It depends on the social and political climate of the culture in which a child lives. It depends on the attitudes and beliefs of a child's family and the policies and programs in place at his school, but even more importantly for each individual child, I think, it depends on the teachers who interact with him daily.

I would not have made the following statement four years ago, but more recently I have found out that, even in the absence of official programming for gifted students, a learning environment that strives to address the individual needs of each student can address the needs of gifted children as well, as long as they are placed with the right teacher. I now know that even a single caring, resourceful, and hardworking teacher can have a more dramatic effect on a previously unchallenged and unmotivated gifted child than a parent can. By acknowledging a child's academic strengths in the school environment, where academic strengths should be acknowledged, by teaching him to understand, accept and respect his own strengths and weaknesses as well as those of others, and by providing him with tools to learn with, rather than demanding that he be taught, one teacher can work miracles.

I am equally convinced, though, because I have seen it happen, that even in schools with outstanding pull-out gifted programs, a single teacher in a grade level classroom can destroy the motivation and drive to learn even in a gifted child who lives to attend his gifted class one day a week. Some teachers believe that all gifted children are alike, that all gifted children arrive at school with signs on their foreheads saying "I'm gifted," that all of them are highly motivated and get the best grades, that if a child does not know all of the answers he cannot be gifted, or that gifted children will be "just fine" filling a chair without learning anything new in the regular classroom. Some even

refuse to believe that there is such a thing as a gifted child and punish identified children by refusing to be flexible and scheduling tests or introducing new material while they are in their pull-out class.

I believe that the most important thing that parents and educators can do for gifted children -- for all children for that matter -- is to work together. When parents, teachers, gifted coordinators and administrators respect one another's role in educating a child, and truly keep the best interests of each individual child in mind while communicating, magical things can happen. But when the priorities of a single teacher, administrator or institution are not consistent with addressing the needs of all children, including academically gifted children, then those with the most potential to succeed will be left farthest behind.

In the current American educational milieu, misinformation about giftedness has led to cries of elitism and an often hostile environment, detrimental not only to the academic development of gifted children but also to their social and emotional welfare. Some claim that gifted programs increase such hostility, but in truth, hostility toward children with precocious cognitive abilities is often strong even before they enter school. Special programs that deliver an appropriately challenging curriculum to those students, allowing them to use their unique strengths in a more accepting environment for even a few hours a week might be the buffer that is critical to their academic success.

When special programs are available though, special care must be taken to make them more "inclusive" than "exclusive." Gifted children are as diverse a group as any group of children, and many "slip through the cracks" when identification procedures are not flexible. An unacknowledged gifted child alone in an unchallenged learning environment, while other similarly gifted children are next door receiving the education he craves, is a sorry sight. They know who they are even if they don't say so, and they know something is missing.

I would like to watch the evolution of a new "normal" educational environment where: (1) all children (and their parents and teachers) understand their individual strengths and weaknesses and those of others; (2) the individual needs of each child are determined based on research that defines the best practices for each; and (3) teams of teachers (with aides in every classroom) group their students differently for different activities in ways that enhance individual strengths and remediate individual weaknesses. In such an environment, I believe that the need for special programs for gifted children would give way to appropriate accommodations for all learners.

Based on research studies recently published in several fields, I believe this type of environment could evolve from the combined efforts of specialists in education, gifted education, educational psychology and the cognitive neurosciences. But before we can ask individual children to understand and accept their own strengths and weaknesses and work together to "raise the tides and lift all ships" to borrow a phrase from Dr. Joseph Renzulli, we will have to ask thousands of adult professionals in those fields to lead the way and teach about cooperation through their example.

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Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* and the Sensibility of Giftedness by Michael E. Walters
Center for the Study of the Humanities in the Schools

In 1964, several years after Hemingway's death, his memoir was published about the time he resided in Paris (1921-26). It was written as a collection of vignettes that expressed several modes. These were the lyrical (prose), symphonic (music) and the visual (art). After World War I, Paris became a community for many of the creative geniuses in art, music and literature. Hemingway intensely interacted with this community. Not only was he influenced by these individuals but he was one of the leading contributors to this cultural period.

Hemingway also discussed in his memoir how the sensibilities of these creative individuals helped to forge their art forms. In the field of literature he encountered Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, Ezra Pound and F. Scott Fitzgerald. He constantly met these writers in their homes and in cafes which served as important public spaces. Even if he did not share a certain writer's style (e.g., James Joyce), this writer's sensibility had a great impact on him. For example, Joyce believed that writers must express their own integrity, world view and consciousness. Hemingway also met artists such as Pablo Picasso. What he found in their sensibility was their perception of the world on multiple levels. In music this was the time of George Gershwin and Jazz. These vignettes give us insight into Hemingway's giftedness. The two most important places for the development of his giftedness were the cafes and the *Shakespeare and Company Bookstore*. Sylvia Beach, an American expatriate owned this bookstore and lending library. Hemingway was able to leisurely and inexpensively read the works of certain Russian writers that influenced his style such Turgenev, Gogol, Tolstoi and Chekhov. He wrote to a friend in 1950 about the continuous impact that Paris of the 1920's had on him. "If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast." (from the Title page).