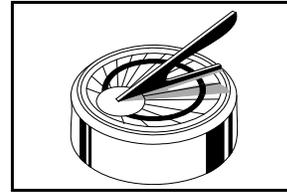


# ***GIFTED EDUCATION PRESS QUARTERLY***

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**SPRING 2007**  
**VOLUME TWENTY-ONE, NUMBER TWO**  
www.giftedpress.com

**Twentieth Anniversary Issue**

I am happy to announce that this issue marks the twentieth anniversary of publishing *GEPO*. The first issue appeared in April 1987 and was sent to a few educators and parents. I would like to thank subscribers, authors, members of the advisory panel, and my wife Eugenia for their continued support. During the last three years, the number of subscribers has increased tremendously, mainly because of the Internet. I am confident that this solid base of subscribers who are primarily educators and parents will continue to grow, and look forward to another decade of publishing articles by knowledgeable and creative authors. With the understanding that prognosticating has many pitfalls, I humbly offer the following ideas on future developments in the gifted field: (1) Research in Brain-Mind Science will impact the identification and teaching of gifted students primarily through the use of PET and MRI scans. I highly recommend Professor Nancy C. Andreasen's book, **The Creating Brain: The Neuroscience of Genius** (2005, Dana Press), as an excellent resource on research in this field; (2) Minority representation will increase in gifted programs as the result of new initiatives in early childhood education and in identification and teaching of children from different minority groups. Professor Donna Ford, her colleagues and school district GT staff will lead this important initiative; (3) Increased computer power will enhance accelerated and differentiated teaching and learning, the integration of the humanities and science, and challenging mind stimulating activities; and (4) a new national gifted education organization will arise that is

more representative of school personnel, parents and academics in leadership positions.

• For the third article in our series on assessing minority students for gifted education programs, Professors Tarek Grantham (University of Georgia) and Donna Ford (Peabody College, Vanderbilt University) discuss the Talent Assessment Profile (F-TAP). This profile was developed by Professor Mary Frasier of the University of Georgia who was instrumental in designing many innovative approaches to identifying and teaching gifted minority students. • The article by Dr. Stephen Schroth of Knox College addresses the issue of educating gifted students whose primary language is not English. His innovative approach draws extensively upon the scholarly literature in gifted education and curriculum theory with primary emphasis on art education and constructivism. • Franny McAleer is on the faculty of the Department of Professional Studies in Education at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She discusses improving the thinking skills of gifted students by using Edward de Bono's Six Hats® method. • The article by Alison Micheletti, a sophomore at Immaculata University (Pennsylvania), is based upon her perceptions of the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act on her high school education. She wrote this article to increase awareness of how NCLB was negatively affecting gifted students. • Dr. Michael Walters, a "marathoner" who has written an article for almost every issue of *GEPO*, discusses the letters and life of E. B. White.

**Maurice D. Fisher, Ph.D. Publisher**



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# Continuing the Search for Equity and Excellence: An Overview of Frasier's Talent Assessment Profile (F-TAP)

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In the previous issue of *Gifted Education Press Quarterly*, we highlighted the work of NAGC in honoring Dr. Mary Frasier at the 2006 annual conference. We can think of no other person who is worthy of having a scholarship in her name that focuses on teacher training as one way to increase access to gifted education for culturally diverse and low-income students. The teacher scholar initiative honors more than 30 years of work and dedication in gifted education relative to increasing equity without sacrificing excellence. In this article, we continue this discussion of ways to increase the representation of culturally diverse and low-income students in gifted education by highlighting specifically the Frasier Talent Assessment Profile (F-TAP, 1994).

Before describing the F-TAP, we believe that several points need to be highlighted. We acknowledge the challenges of identifying giftedness among students who come from economically challenged backgrounds. Too often, these children do not have access to rigorous learning experiences at home and at school (Barton, 2003), which contributes to both underrepresentation and underachievement. Students who do not perform well academically are less likely to be identified as gifted. However, as our federal definition (U.S. Department of Education, 1993) stresses, and as a recent initiative suggests (see VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006), we must also look for potential among all students and seek to develop their gifts and talents.

This search for talent is not just for the students; it is for us all. In other words, all of society benefits from a more educated and enlightened population. As teachers, administrators, counselors, etc., our quality of life also improves when students in our schools and communities do well. Ultimately, we suffer when students fail; we succeed when they succeed. Dr. Frasier recognized this collective or interdependent idea and sought ways to address any and all barriers that hinder the development of talent among students. She cared about *all* children, but focused additional attention on those who, through no fault of their own (e.g., low income, culturally diverse, linguistically diverse, and so forth), confront historically pervasive barriers and challenges in American schools.

Previously, it has been stressed that testing and assessment must be culturally fair (Ford & Whiting, 2006; Whiting & Ford, 2006); recommendations for culturally responsive testing and assessment were shared. In the sections that follow, we focus on a specific assessment tool, the *F-TAP*. Like Dr. Frasier, our goal is important yet simple – we seek to increase access to gifted education for all students. In the sections that follow, we describe the Frasier Talent Assessment Profile and related traits,

aptitudes and behaviors as Dr. Frasier described them. In writing this article, our goal is two-fold: (1) first and foremost to recruit and retain more culturally diverse students in gifted education and; (2) to honor Dr. Frasier.

**The Frasier Talent Assessment Profile (F-TAP).** The *F-TAP* is a multidimensional talent identification and educational development system that facilitates the collection and display of data from multiple test and non-test sources so that teams of educators, parent and advocates have information easily available to make recommendations about a student's needs for gifted education services. Persistent problems associated with the assessment of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) and low-income students have been framed by Frasier's *Four As*—Access, Assessment, Accommodation, and Attitude. **Access** refers to ways in which CLD students enter into consideration for gifted program placement. **Assessment** refers to the entire process of appraising, estimating, or evaluating the presence of giftedness and to what degree. Frasier and Passow (1994) outlined other major critiques of the assessment practices in gifted education that helped to guide the field toward a new paradigm of identifying talent potential (see Table 1). **Accommodation** refers to program design and curricular experiences to support the needs and interests of CLD students. **Attitude** refers to a mental position, feeling or emotion towards CLD students. Several key assumptions undergird the *F-TAP*, and all encourage educators to proactively overcome barriers emerging from lack of attention to Frasier's *Four As*:

- Methods to locate gifted children from diverse cultural, economic, and language backgrounds can be developed without requiring excessive expenditures of time in data collection and analysis, and without eroding quality in the resulting program.
- A profile, rather than cut-off scores or weighting systems, provides the most effective and efficient way to display data for interpretation from test and non-test sources.
- Results from identification procedures should always be used to design programs and develop curricula for gifted students. The ultimate goal is to display a sufficient knowledge base—using information collected from multiple sources, including information generated by students—so that appropriate placement and programming decisions can be made.

A critical component of the *F-TAP* system involves the observation and referral of students for gifted education programs. Ten traits, aptitudes, and behaviors (*TABs*, see Table 2) that represent the core attributes of the giftedness construct are used to guide nominations or referrals for gifted education screening. According to Frasier, a **trait** is a relatively persistent and consistent behavior pattern. **Aptitude** represents the capacity to perform in the future or some future ability.

**Behavior** is any response made by a person. With these *TABs* (traits, aptitudes, and behaviors), Frasier believed that educators and parents/caregivers must have a dynamic and broad view of the ways in which *TABs* are expressed among different individuals in different contexts. Frasier understood that the manifestation of *TABs* associated with the gifted construct may appear different in different environments. Water (H<sub>2</sub>O) appears and acts differently when placed in situations with extremely hot or cold temperatures. But it does not cease to be water.

The *TABs Referral Form* (also called the *Panning for Gold Observation Form*) is one of the most effective tools in helping teachers to recognize gifted potential in all children and in helping CLD students have an opportunity to qualify for gifted program placement (Frasier & Passow, 1994). More specifically, Frasier's *TABs Referral Form* provides a foundation for making

inferences about an individual's giftedness among diverse populations and gives observers, who tend to be teachers, a framework that allows for the appearance or expression of traits, aptitudes and behaviors associated with the gifted construct to be contextualized and recognized.

**A Final Thought.** The field of gifted education is riddled with challenges that must be addressed in the areas of access and equity. We must, as Dr. Frasier emphasized, find ways to open doors to students who have often been denied access to gifted education classes. Like Mary Frasier, we recognize the tragic loss of human potential when gifted students are not identified and served. We also know that all of society is affected by this loss of potential and talent. As we plan for another school year, we must not repeat past mistakes; instead, we should seek to make changes that will benefit us all. Our search for both excellence and equity must never stop.

**Table 1. Assumptions Underlying the Critique of Traditional Identification Procedures (Frasier and Passow, 1994)**

1. There exists no single accepted "theory of giftedness."
2. Academic achievement is an important indicator of giftedness, but cannot be the sole determinant in identification procedures.
3. Cultures may differ in terms of those talents recognized and rewarded; no culture or population has a monopoly on any talent potential, whatever its nature.
4. The aptitudes, attributes, and characteristics that are associated with talent potential are culturally imbedded.
5. The talents of minority and economically disadvantaged students are not of a different order nor of a lower standard.
6. The purpose of identification is to locate students who can then be provided with appropriately differentiated educational opportunities.
7. Screening, identification, and the consequent cultivation of talent potential can only be improved and enhanced if insights into the nature of talent potential and the contexts in which it is nurtured are understood.
8. The concept of "disadvantaged" has meaning only if it is understood, not in terms of deficiencies, but rather as differences.
9. The problems of under-representation of minority and economically disadvantaged gifted students are intrinsically related to the more general problems of education and schooling of these populations—the fact that these students are more likely to be in schools and classes that are segregated or racially imbalanced and that have poorer facilities, fewer instructional resources, larger classes, fewer programs for the gifted, more inexperienced teachers, and other factors that contribute to limited or unequal educational opportunities.
10. Since decisions about giftedness in children are never more than predictions, wide nets should be thrown in the early stages of selection to increase the power of those predictions.
11. The concept that talent potential is culturally imbedded and impacted by environmental factors applies to all populations. Focusing on improving talent identification and development in a particular target population could well lead to better insights about talent identification and its nature more generally.
12. Valid assessment procedures and strategies that would more effectively identify talent potential of minority disadvantaged populations must deal with both the actual and perceived problems of traditional methods. They must encourage and support the efforts of various minority groups to examine the concept of giftedness within their own cultural and environmental contexts and provide the basis for recognizing talents, without apologies for difference, where these exist, in their expression and performance.

**Table 2. Frasier’s Traits, Aptitudes, and Behaviors (TABs) (Frasier, 1992)**

<b>TABs</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Description</b>
Motivation	Evidence of desire to learn.	Forces that initiate direct and sustain individual or group behavior in order to satisfy a need or attain a goal.
Interests	A feeling of intentness, passion, concern or curiosity about something.	Activities, avocations, objects, etc., that have special worth or significance and are given special attention.
Communication Skills	Highly expressive and effective use of words, numbers, symbols.	Transmission and reception of signal or meanings through a system of symbols (codes, gestures, language, numbers).
Problem-Solving Ability	Effective, often inventive, strategies for recognizing and solving problems.	Process of determining a correct sequence of alternatives leading to a desired goal or to successful completion or performance of a task.
Memory	Large storehouse of information on school or non-school topics.	Exceptional ability to retain and retrieve information.
Inquiry	Questions, experiments, explores	Method or process of seeking knowledge, understanding of information.
Insight	Quickly grasps new concepts and makes connections; senses deeper meanings.	Sudden discovery of the correct solution following incorrect attempts based primarily on trial and error.
Reasoning	Logical approaches to figuring out solutions.	Highly conscious, directed, controlled, active, intentional, forward-looking, goal oriented thought.
Imagination/ Creativity	Produces many ideas; highly original	Process of forming mental images of objects, qualities, situations or relationships, which aren’t immediately apparent to the senses. Problem-solving through non-traditional patterns of thinking.
Humor	Brings two heretofore unrelated ideas or planes of thought together in a recognized relationship	Ability to synthesize key ideas or problems in complex situations in a humorous way; exceptional sense of timing in words and gestures.

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# Gifted English Language Learners: Developing Talent while Supporting English Language Acquisition

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## *Introduction*

Gifted students who come to school also in need of English language acquisition are often ignored, treated only for their English language learner needs, and underserved by gifted education programs. Many teachers, including those specializing in gifted education, feel they lack the training or experience to effectively work with English language learners (ELLs). Such an outlook is unfortunate, since many practices common in gifted education programs would deeply benefit gifted ELLs. In particular, gifted education's traditional emphases upon rich discipline-based curriculum, a student-centered approach, and a variety of constructivist instructional methods makes the gifted teacher the ideal person to work with gifted ELLs. Failure for gifted education programs, and gifted education specialists, to get involved in the education of gifted ELLs often will result in these students being treated as primary-language speakers with low levels of ability despite their cognitive gifts. This paradox, affecting those who depend the most on school to offer deliverance to better economic horizons, stifles and hinders many students' development.

Teachers in gifted education programs must envision a better world where gifted ELLs are recognized for their strengths, a world that can be obtained through better teaching. Maxine Greene believes that, "in many respects, teaching and learning are matters of breaking through barriers—of expectations, of boredom, of predefinition. To teach, at least in one dimension, is to provide persons with the knacks and know-how they need in order to teach themselves" (Greene, 1995, p. 14). Using a combination of sources from general, multicultural, gifted, and bilingual education, a remedy can be fashioned that combines exemplary instruction with social justice for gifted ELL students. Specifically, curriculum for these students must be concept-based, rich in discussion, and ratchet upward to allow for students' ascending levels of intellectual demand. Ideally, such curriculum will also allow inclusive exploration of *both* the students' own culture and those of others present in their community through projects that emulate those of the disciplines studied. Finally, instruction must empower students, and assist them to notice, perceive, and address society's "obstacles to becoming" (Greene, 1988, p.13). This paper shall set forth the underlying principles necessary for such instruction, with particular emphasis on curriculum, inclusiveness, and instruction.

## *Curriculum for Gifted English Language Learners*

Curriculum for gifted English language learners needs to address several issues. First, the curriculum has to facilitate student understanding of the key concepts and principles of a discipline (Tomlinson, Kaplan, Renzulli, Purcell, Leppien, & Burns, 2002).

Second, the curriculum needs to provide an *ascending level of intellectual demand* (AILD), so that more able learners will be able to perform work that is adjusted in depth, breadth, abstraction, pace, complexity, sophistication, and resources to better meet their learning needs (Tomlinson et al., 2002; Passow, 1982; Ward, 1980). Third, the curriculum must address the students' sometimes diverging needs to learn the importance of their own culture while also honoring their almost palpable desire to be seen as Americans (Banks, 1999; Nieto, 1999). Fourth, the curriculum needs to support the students' acquisition of English that may vary and arise at unexpected moments (Brisk, 2006; Passow, 1982). Fifth and last, the curriculum has to provide students with the mental models necessary for future success (Brisk, 2006; Perkins, 1996).

## *English language acquisition*

Specifically, the three goals of English-language learning involve (a) using English to communicate in social settings, (b) using English to achieve academically in all content areas, and (c) using English in socially and culturally appropriate ways (Brisk, 2006; Brisk & Harrington, 2007; Valdes, 1998). Great diversity exists among the people commonly called *Latino* (Lossey, 1995; Passow, 1982). Some speak Spanish before learning English, some do not speak Spanish at all, and others learn the two languages more or less simultaneously (Brisk, 2006; Lossey, 1995). Some have parents literate in Spanish, while some do not. Some have attended school only in the United States, some have gone to school in Mexico as well, and some have never formally attended school (Brisk & Harrington, 2007; Lossey, 1995). Language and cultural issues combine to create a situation that sometimes confuses teachers. For example, one study found that Latino kindergartners in mainstream classrooms "did not respond to teacher questions approximately 50% of the time whereas Anglo American kindergartners failed to respond only 15% of the time, even though teachers asked nearly the same number of questions of their Latino students as they did of their Anglo American students" (Lossey, p. 293). When older, Latino students may embrace their newly acquired English skills in ways that disconcert classroom teachers, who expect students to have adopted a more sophisticated demeanor by later grades (Laosa, 1977). Teachers must be able to assess student language levels and needs and adjust accordingly.

Many teachers view language-minority students as simply low-performing native-English speakers (Kameenui & Carmine, 1998). As a result, the materials English language learners deal with are often diluted, and these students must contend with information well below their comprehension level (Kameenui & Carmine, 1998; Passow, 1982). This decision to adulterate materials prevents English language learners from grappling with

abstraction and complexity in the manner of experts (Passow, 1982; Tomlinson, et al., 2002). Such a determination is especially damaging to gifted learners, since it precludes them from engaging in the “more elaborate, more complex, and in-depth study of major ideas, problems, and themes that integrate knowledge with and across systems of thought” (Passow, 1982, p. 6). The ability to interact with rich and complex materials, and the chance to discuss and grapple with their sophistication, is especially important for gifted learners from non-English speaking homes.

### **Art Education**

One teaches to address many rationales. Greene (1995) observed that, “to teach, at least in one dimension, is to provide persons with the knacks and know-how they need in order to teach themselves” (p. 14). Teachers must strive to enable their disciples to “put into practice in their own fashion what they need to join a game, shape a sonnet, or devise a chemical test” (Greene, 1995, p. 14). When designing curriculum, teachers should appreciate that basic structures in thought match intrinsic structures of knowledge in a discipline (Bruner, 1960; Renzulli & Reis, 1997; Ward, 1980). Fundamental concepts taught should be those with the greatest generalizability across fields of inquiry (Bruner, 1960; Ward, 1980). Art, focused as it is on the quest for meaning, inquiry, and life-centered problems, can be “organized in terms of concepts drawn from practice, art history, and art criticism” (Burton, 1993, p. 23). The goals of this sort of art education, commonly known as discipline-based arts education (DBAE), are that: (a) students acquire the rudiments of artistic practice, (b) students are engaged in viewing and discussing works of art, and (c) the process of viewing and discussion opens up connections of a broader scope that flow into other curricular areas such as language or social studies (Burton, 1993). This focus provides learners with the mental models *and* the expert orientation so vital to future success (Perkins, 1999; Tomlinson, et al., 2002).

In practice, works of art are realized in experience (Greene, 2001). This consciousness of qualities is awakened through dialogue with others about works of art (Greene, 2001). Qualities one may become cognizant of include texture, force, quickness, and buoyancy—aspects in a work of art that we relate to our own experience (Greene, 2001). Awareness of art is thus both a collective *and* an individual understanding. The ideas and thoughts of others may assist the individual to achieve a greater level of comprehension, yet the ultimate insight remains his or her personal epiphany. Much of the work deals with the association of language with certain human concepts, conceptions, and constructs. To explore art is to explore language. As such, teachers dealing with second-language learners must use tools, methods, and strategies that will awaken awareness of language and its interconnections with the world of the mind.

### **Discussion**

In all too many classrooms, a *discussion* resembles a pop quiz delivered orally, a free-ranging “rap” session, or an exercise students engage in alone. A true academic discussion is none of

these things. In their truest sense, Socratic discussions are a “conversation, conducted in an orderly manner by the teacher who acts as leader or moderator of the discussion” (Adler, 1984, p. 17). Since a seminar is an ideal way for a teacher to assess student knowledge and understanding, Adler (1984) suggested that under ideal conditions, the seminar would have *two* trained, adult leaders, one to lead the discussion and the other to listen. Questions should be asked in an open-ended manner about ideas and issues raised by good books and works of art (Adler, 1984; Ward, 1980). Students should sit around a table or in a grouping where all can face each other and hear and see the discussion taking place (Adler, 1984). A leader should *not* merely seek to reveal his or her superior knowledge of the particular work, as this is a merely didactic teacher pretending to be a seminar leader (Adler, 1984). Such a disclosure can occur without the time and organization necessary for a discussion.

Discussions, when conducted in an effective manner, allow, “access to empowering forms of knowledge that enable creative life and thought, and access to a social dialogue that enables democratic communication and participation” (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 85). These are requirements for democratic life (Adler, 1984; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Passow, 1982; Ward, 1980). Imagination enables us to realize that there is always more in a student’s experience than we can predict (Greene, 1995). Discussions are concerned not with endings, but with beginnings (Greene, 1995). Similarly, schools must focus on actions, not behaviors, action that “signifies moving into a future seen from the vantage point of the actor or agent” (Greene, 1995, p. 15). Discussions allow students, even the very young ones, to examine, ponder, and play with ideas. Such activities are vitally important to both the student’s development and that of our nation.

### **Inclusiveness**

Society’s conceptualization of its schools largely determines their purpose. Are schools chiefly concerned with the inculcation of a certain set of skills? Should schools prepare the next generation of workers for their posts? Do schools have an obligation to address equitable issues affecting society as a whole? Adler writes that schools must create “trained intelligence, in followers as well as leaders . . . Human resources are the nation’s greatest potential riches. To squander them is to impoverish our future” (Adler, 1982, pp. 78-79). Almost all schools take seriously their charge to assist all learners. Different philosophies, however, cause this assistance to be conceived and implemented in manifestly different ways. Many states, in response to a federal effort to address issues of equity, have instituted programs of testing to assure accountability of schools and students (Linn, 2000). Such accountability programs often have dire consequences for poorly prepared students. In Florida, for example, twenty years of high school competency tests resulted in first-time Latino pass rates that lagged behind those of Caucasian students by ten percentiles in the years when those pass rates were the most closely aligned (Linn, 2000). More recent developments in schools include “(a) an emphasis on the development and use of ambitious content standards as the basis of assessment and accountability, (b) the dual emphasis on setting demanding performance standards and

on the inclusion of all students, and (c) the attachment of high-stakes accountability mechanisms for schools, teachers, and, sometimes, students” (Linn, 2000, p. 8).

Positive feelings that teachers care about students as individuals can make them feel more inclined towards participating in extracurricular activities crucial to academic success (Hughes, 2003; Pollard-Durodola, 2003; Podsiadlo & Philliber, 2003). When teachers provide evidence that they care deeply about students and student learning, students begin to see themselves as part of an inclusive community that is meaningful in their lives (Farkas, 2003; Jeffries & Singer, 2003; Kroeger et al., 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Unfortunately, standardized tests challenge teachers who seek to equip all students to surpass, transcend, and be free of societal norms and restrictions (Greene, 1988). One of the silent victims of accountability is “the rebellious teacher, the ‘reflective practitioner,’ [who] is asked to tamp down dissonant conceptions of what education might be and perhaps ought to be in a chaotic, uncertain time” (Greene, 1988, p. 14). Unfortunately, the rebellious teacher is often the only type of practitioner who can “arouse young persons to go in search of their own” freedom (Greene, 1988, p. 14). All students, especially those from culturally diverse backgrounds, need teachers who ensure that students see their cultures represented in the classroom to validate their worth within the system (Banks, 1999). The rebellious teacher often concludes that the current emphasis on accountability debilitates diverse learners insofar that it denies them the opportunity to study the writings and actions of those who are of the same ethnic group as the students themselves (Banks, 1999). This repudiation of their culture diminishes motivation and diminishes self-esteem (Kameenui & Carmine, 1998). Gifted ELL students, even those redesignated as fluent English producers, are still acquiring English. Students who do not speak the societal language face many difficulties in schools (Lossey, 1995; Valdes, 1998). Indeed, English is one of the “most powerful means of inclusion into or exclusion from further education, employment or social position” (Valdes, 1998, p. 15). The rebellious teacher requires a means to both adhere to state and district standards while also addressing the needs of his or her students.

As a subject matter, art, even as defined by content standards, allows rebellious teachers and their charges the possibility of transformation (Greene, 1988). Art allows the learner to “envisage things as if they could be otherwise [and posits] alternatives to mere passivity” (Greene, 1988, p. 16). A curriculum can be crafted that explores art in a manner that is appropriate for learner needs while also being true to the discipline’s finer tenets. The curriculum must balance assessment with assignments and tasks that are appropriate and designed to build student performance. Students learn best when they are provided with a moderate challenge (Tomlinson, 1999). When tasks are too difficult for a learner, that learner feels threatened and will not persist with thinking or problem solving as a self-protection mechanism (Tomlinson, 1999). Conversely, tasks that are too simple also suppress a learner’s thinking and problem solving; rather than learning, such a student drifts through school unchallenged by and indifferent to the learning process (Tomlinson, 1999). The learning

process must be studied, and understood, to maximize educational opportunities.

### ***Instruction***

Constructivism, the belief that, “each of us makes sense of our world by synthesizing new experiences into what we have previously come to understand,” has become increasingly popular as a model that schools use to structure educational experiences (Brooks & Brooks, 1999, p. 4). Such an approach has a certain meretricious appeal to anyone, especially an experienced learner. Constructivism basically maintains that a learner approaches new information, sorts through it, compares it with what he or she has learned before, and ultimately adjusts this new insight so that it fits in with his or her world view. Without doubt, many constructivist practices, such as an emphasis on using primary resources, encouraging student autonomy, using open-ended questions, and getting elaboration of student answers, are valuable strategies that all teachers should employ (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). Instructional styles that favor constructivist practices have become the preferred method in many districts and some states. At times this preference favors style over results. Some question the necessity, and indeed the value, of having learners work through all, or even most, ideas with a good measure of autonomy to achieve understanding (Perkins, 1992). Time is a scarce resource in education; its use must be marshaled efficiently to achieve the optimal outcome.

Perkins suggests that schools must stop worrying about the styles used and instead concentrate on achieving *retention*, *understanding*, and *active use of knowledge* among their students (Perkins, 1992). Retention involves the acquisition of organized knowledge in the mind and the ability to recall that knowledge. Understanding affects the development of intellectual skills and processes, a means of using the knowledge learned or accessed. Active use of knowledge establishes enlarged understanding of ideas and values. Focusing on these goals rather than arguing about learning styles will better assure student progress (Perkins, 1992).

The attainment of such goals will occur only in a situation where all players—including students, teachers, and administrators—see “conspicuous gains” at “minimally increased costs” (Perkins, 1999, p. 164). In other words, schools need to see lots of achievement bang for their instructional bucks. Perkins deems this arrangement one of recognizing *cognitive economy*, that is, making use of any and all effective teaching strategies to create an environment of excitement, passion, and motivation (Perkins, 1999). Such a philosophy is mirrored in beliefs central to gifted education. Gifted education is premised upon the belief that, “the education of the gifted child and youth should emphasize enduring methods and sources of learning, as opposed to a terminal emphasis upon present states of knowledge” (Ward, 1980, p. 156). Rather than emphasizing the memorization of facts then, effective gifted education programs focus upon acquiring data pertinent to problem situations as they arise (Perkins, 1996; Ward, 1980). Gifted ELLs thus must be provided rich and authentic problems and challenges that require the using and manipulating of

knowledge to forge a solution (Brisk & Harrington, 2007; Perkins, 1996; Ward, 1980).

### ***Guided Investigations***

Several implications for the instruction of gifted ELLs must be considered when instruction is prepared. Effective teaching will consider curricular goals, inclusiveness, and instructional methods to reach and support gifted ELLs. Teachers must devise the most cogent and compelling manner possible to relay information to students (Perkins, 1996; Ward, 1980). Mental models should be introduced that allow students to organize and segregate information learned (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Brisk, 2006). Material deemed important must be reviewed on a timely basis, to circumvent memory loss that occurs over time (Smyth, Collins, Morris & Levy, 1994/2000). Problems investigated must touch upon the child's world (Bruner, 1960; Dewey, 1900/1990). Finally, teachers must assess and address student misconceptions about material learned, both to provide a safe environment in which mistakes can be made but also to prevent misinformation from interfering with the learning process (Smyth et al., 1994/2000; Tomlinson, 1999). Such steps would ensure that gains made in cognitive studies are incorporated into the classroom. In doing so, administrators may have to address certain teacher misconceptions about learning. The goal must focus on continual improvement and use of all relevant information that will improve student learning. The interaction between child and society is crucial. As Dewey (1900/1990) observed,

“Things hardly come within the child's experience unless they touch, intimately and obviously, his own well being, or that of his family and friends. His world is a world of persons with their personal interests, rather than a realm of facts and laws. Not truth, in the sense of conformity to external fact, but affection and sympathy, is its keynote” (p. 183).

For instruction to take root, the child must thus investigate real-life problems that touch upon and affect his or her world. Such problems, with open-ended solutions, will intrigue and interest the child, spurring the best efforts and most complete engagement possible.

Equally vital is the understanding that the teacher plays an active role in guiding the child's progress. Often administrators and other school leaders act pursuant to the mistaken belief that gifted students can be left to pursue autonomous pursuits after some perfunctory preparation. This view is wrong. Gifted ELLs should investigate matters that affect them, their families, and their communities. Central to a guided investigation is the gifted ELLs' teacher. Those teachers best able to guide the investigations of gifted ELLs are possessed of, “the drive toward understanding ... and related higher mental processes” (Ward, 1980, p. 109). Gifted ELLs require superb teachers because they demonstrate areas of immature thinking and language acquisition needs that demand careful guidance (Adler, 1984; Brisk, 2006; Ward, 1980). An expert teacher will be able to balance issues and disciplines and language to assure maximum learning (Adler, 1984; Ward, 1980).

The guided investigations model for gifted ELLs fits nicely with classic concepts of learning theory, such as Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). The ZPD is the distance between a child's independent problem-solving level and that same child's level of potential development at problem solving under an adult's guidance (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). Under the guided investigations model, teachers ascertain what a student's independent English language development (ELD) level is, and then provide that student with the supports and structures necessary for him or her to work at the next level. For example, a student working on a problem must expect to do most of the work but, because of their ELD level, may need assistance that a native-English speaker would not (Brisk, 2006; Perkins, 1992). Expert teachers do not help a great deal, instead hanging back, allowing the student to manage as much as possible (Brisk & Harrington, 2007; Perkins, 1992). When a student's attempts go askew, expert teachers raise questions rather than helping the student directly (Adler, 1982/1998; Perkins, 1992; Ward, 1980). The expert teacher will ask the student to explain how they progressed through a particular step of a problem, how they might best describe what happened, how an answer was arrived at, or how one answer deviates from another attempt (Brisk, 2006; Hughes, 2003; Perkins, 1992). The truly exemplary practitioner even manages to use this situation to transition the student from an extrinsic to an intrinsic motivational source. Rather than praise the student for getting the correct solution *after* it is solved, the expert teacher discusses how difficult the problem is *before* it is tackled (Adler, 1984; Perkins, 1992). All of this assists gifted ELL students to bolster their English while also attending to their giftedness.

### ***Conclusion***

All students, especially those from diverse backgrounds, have learning needs that can be met through curriculum that both challenges and supports them directly. Gifted education programs must serve gifted ELLs in order to assure equity and to develop these students' talents to their highest level. Art and problems affecting the community in which the child lives, with their intensely personal character and inherently abstract nature are ideally suited to guided investigations that develop conceptual underpinnings and present problems requiring complex reasoning. Assessment of student performance must be continual and used to modify instruction to fully support student needs for both support and challenge. Teachers must play an active role in guiding each student's learning, acting as a coach, mentor, tutor, and guide. Guided investigations allow a more fluid, appropriate, and challenging means of instruction for gifted ELLs. By attending to both gifted ELLs' language acquisition needs and giftedness, teachers can assure that the best use is made of instructional time.

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# A Thinking Strategy for Tomorrow's Gifted Leaders: Six Thinking Hats<sup>1</sup>

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“PUT ON YOUR THINKING HAT!” conveys the idea that thinking improves when a THINKING HAT is worn. While Dr. Benjamin Bloom’s Taxonomy has been the mainstay in higher level thinking, Dr. Edward de Bono reinvented the traditional cap in Six Thinking Hats. He combines the hat metaphor with six colors to create a powerful thinking strategy. Paul Chance in *Psychology Today* (July 1986) commented on Six Hats saying, “. . .we owe de Bono a debt for constantly reminding us that thinking is a skill and can be improved. . . .” When we put on our thinking hats, we have not one but six. Thinking is the foundation for listening, speaking, reading and writing. Teachers have developed classrooms that are alive with critical and creative thinking depicted by the image of Six Hats.

## Six Thinking Hats

Six Thinking Hats is an internationally recognized tool to teach thinking in all content areas. SIX HATS enables us to SEE OUR THINKING, focus, change, and improve it. Each colored hat represents a different mode of thinking. When teachers and administrators analyze questioning strategies in the classroom, many recognize that few require wait time. Six Hats questions demand wait time and present opportunities for wonder and thought. A community of dynamic, sophisticated thinkers emerges as the HATS integrate content, transforming classrooms as they did in this school.

“The teachers and students were captivated and involved with the Six Hats. The students were eager and focused, something the students and teachers will remember and use throughout their educational years.” Teresa Davis, Coordinator of Gifted Services, Peoria Unified School District, Phoenix, AZ

The impact of Six Hats and stories from teachers and educational leaders who use them will be the focus of this article.

## THE THINKING BEHIND THE SIX HATS WITH CONNECTIONS TO BLOOM’S TAXONOMY

The Six Hats are described in this section and provide a basis for learning and applying them to your gifted curriculum. As you read the descriptors, think of questions and student tasks connecting your content with the HATS processes. To add depth, the HATS are applied on four dimensions, the: (1) text, (2) student’s life, (3) community, and (4) world.



The **WHITE HAT** **FACTS, INFORMATION, DATA, RESEARCH NEEDED.** (Bloom’s **KNOWLEDGE**)

What are the facts about \_\_\_? What do you need or want to know about \_\_\_?



The **RED HAT** **FEELINGS, HUNCHES, EMOTIONS, INTUITION.** (Bloom’s **EVALUATION**)

What are your feelings about \_\_\_? What prejudices exist? What is your gut feeling about \_\_\_? What does your intuition tell you?



The **BLACK HAT** **CAUTION, RISKS, JUDGMENT.** (Bloom’s **ANALYSIS and EVALUATION**)

What should you be cautious of \_\_\_? What are the consequences of \_\_\_? What words of wisdom might come from this? What were the difficulties of \_\_\_? What did you dislike about \_\_\_? What are the risks of \_\_\_?



The **YELLOW HAT** **BENEFITS, GOOD, VALUE, STRENGTHS.** (Bloom’s **ANALYSIS and EVALUATION**)

What are the benefits of \_\_\_? What is good about \_\_\_? What is the value of \_\_\_? What did you like about \_\_\_?



The **GREEN HAT** **CREATIVITY, NEW IDEAS, BRAINSTORMING, PREDICTING,** (Bloom’s **SYNTHESIS**)

What if \_\_\_? Can you create other ways? How would you solve the problem? What other possibilities are there for \_\_\_?



The **BLUE HAT** **THINKING ABOUT THINKING, METACOGNITION, SUMMARIZING,** (Bloom’s **COMPREHENSION AND APPLICATION**)

Explain how you got your answer. Tell the order of events in your reading. Paraphrase. Conclusions. Summarize. What is the big idea, main idea? You will be learning \_\_\_?

## QUESTIONING AND SIX HATS

## *Caution —*

With these key words and questioning stems in mind, application to a content area is crucial. Six Hats increases reading comprehension by providing a schema that gifted students can apply across disciplines. As an example, let's consider a few HATS questions based on the fable, The Hare and the Tortoise. They apply to the: (1) text, (2) student's life, (3) community, and (4) world. Add your own questions to these.

1. White Hat - Who were the main characters? Who was the judge? Where did the story take place?
2. Red Hat - How do you feel at the beginning of the race? How do you feel at the end of the race?
3. Black Hat - What might the hare have been cautious of during the race? What might the tortoise have been cautious of during the race? What should you be careful of when you are in a competitive situation?
4. Yellow Hat - What were the benefits of the hare losing the race? What were the benefits of the tortoise winning the race? What are some benefits of being in a competitive situation?
5. Blue Hat - Develop a one sentence summary of your thoughts about the race. Which character in the fable you are most like and why? What is the moral of the fable? How does the moral relate to your life?
6. Green Hat - What new titles could you create for the fable? What if the race were run in other places? What if another character joined in the race? What other endings could you create for the fable? What if you were in a competition? Invent a scenario with you as the main character. What slogan could you write to impact the global community to learn from this fable?

## **SIX HATS — BENEFITS, CAUTION**

### *Benefits—*

1. The colors and hats provide a visual image that is easy to learn, remember and use.
2. Thinking is visible, focused, in depth, and at higher levels of critical and creative thinking.
3. The strategy can be used on a simple, concrete level or abstract, sophisticated level.
4. Listening, speaking, reading and writing improve with a strategy for focus.
5. Interdisciplinary connections integrate the curriculum.
6. Problem solving, decision making, leadership and independence are developed.
7. Students ask quality questions.
8. Student led discussions and projects are focused and in depth.
9. Self-evaluation is systematic.
10. Students develop confidence.
11. Cooperative groups and teamwork are effective and organized.

12. The Six Hats is one approach to teaching thinking, and teachers should be cautious of excluding others.

## READING AND METACOGNITION

A reader's awareness of the thought processes used in reading is metacognition. The blue hat ensures that the reader is making sense of the text. In his keynote to the Western Pennsylvania Association for Curriculum and Supervision in April, 2000, Dr. Roger C. Farr, Senior Author of Harcourt Language emphasized the importance of metacognition in improving reading comprehension. He challenged teachers to ask students to read a paragraph or two, cover the text, and paraphrase what they have read. This blue hat task is simple and produces results.

## LITERACY AND SIX HATS

The process of becoming literate reflects both family and school values. It is rooted in schema theory. Children use what they already know to give meaning to new experiences by activating prior knowledge and making connections to construct meaning. Once a schema for questioning or thinking is learned, readers are able to elaborate on the material they read. This process engages the reader in a cognitive activity involving critical and creative thinking, judgment, evaluation, prediction, and metacognition.

Six Hats provides a literacy tool that helps everyone become independent, life long learners. In all stages of literacy development gifted children use Six Hats when comprehending and composing. The Commission on Adolescent Literacy (1999) emphasized the differences between the needs of beginning and adolescent readers. It presented the importance of thinking in adolescent literacy. Adolescents require advanced literacy levels and need to learn to use higher level thinking. They need to learn strategies to help them question themselves about what they read. Explicit instruction moves the reader from literal understandings to higher order thinking that promotes reading comprehension.

## READING COMPREHENSION

The Six Hats improves reading comprehension and provides gifted readers with a tool to interact with the author, thereby promoting a conversation between the reader and the author. Cognitive and metacognitive strategies promote the conversation, so the reader can question the author.

Nolte and Singer's "phase-in, phase-out" strategy shifts the responsibility for asking questions from the teacher to the students. Teachers show students how to generate questions for a story (Vacca, 2006). Six Hats supports this shift of questioning responsibility. A high school teacher reports:

"My Applied Communications class LOVED them. We have had nothing but success with the HATS. With the HATS the Journalism class is attacking the school magazine. The Applied class designed an independent novel unit. My Honors Speech and Debate class implemented a new peer comment format. My Honors III class is exploring The Red Badge of Courage. After one day, my Applied students were refocusing a discussion with a green hat.." *Renee Sorensen, Teacher at Tunkhannock High School.*

Increased comprehension and responsiveness is reported by two teachers:

"I found Six Hats easy to simplify and adapt to the proficiency levels of my ESL students, and they responded with enthusiasm to the visual and tactile presentation of the hats. Six Hats provides a multisensory learning environment, giving students a greater chance for success." *Karen Lau, ESL Teacher, Luzerne Intermediate Unit, PA*

A teacher of autistic students reported, "My students ask to use the Hats everyday." *Nicole Gamrat, Woodland Hills School District, PA*

#### **PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMIC STANDARD (1.1), LEARNING TO READ INDEPENDENTLY**

Pennsylvania Academic Standard 1.1, "Learning to Read Independently," states that students need to, "read text using self-monitoring comprehension strategies." Teachers attest to the effectiveness of Six Hats as an independent reading tool. The blue hat of metacognition particularly connects with this standard. In reading, metacognition refers to "self-monitoring – the ability of students to monitor reading by keeping track of how well they are comprehending" (Vacca, 2006). The reader actively interacts with the text to make sense of it, setting up a purpose for reading, planning for reading and evaluating the understandings. A teacher who used the Six Hats as a self-monitoring comprehension strategy states:

"I am using the SIX HATS daily. I refer to them to get the children thinking in a certain direction. It gives the students a direction to think towards by the questions on the hats. In the primary grades especially, the students need to develop specific thinking areas. This is the first program I have used that starts students in the direction of thinking critically. They loved the activities especially the green hat. I use this with PSSA (state assessment) preparation." *Debbie Miller, Wilkes Barre School District, PA*

#### **PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMIC STANDARD (1.4), TYPES OF WRITING**

The Pennsylvania Academic writing standards and Six Hats were the motivation for a research project conducted by Jacque Goodburn, a seventh grade English teacher in Burgettstown Area School District in Pennsylvania. She enjoyed using the Six Hats but wanted to determine the effect on the writing achievement of her students. Her research project included three heterogeneous classes, 60 students, 10 of whom needed learning support. The comparison group was comprised of three heterogeneous classes, 63 students, 10 of whom needed learning support. The prompts were PSSA writing assessment released prompts—informational, narrative, and persuasive. Microsoft Word was used in

conjunction with the Flesch-Kincaid Readability Scale to determine writing quality. Although readability formulas cannot capture all aspects of quality writing, they can be used to evaluate the length of sentences and the number of syllables in the words used. These data in combination with teacher observations have given us an objective baseline for the research.

For the informational and the narrative prompts, the students using the Six Hats were writing an average of a half-year ahead of the comparison group students. For the persuasive prompt, the students using the Six Hats were writing almost a year ahead of the comparison group. Jacque concluded that the benefits are:

#### **Benefits for the teacher**

1. Writing process discussions and workshops are consistent.
2. Grading is objective.
3. Students organize their ideas and see what they are thinking before writing.
4. Students see what is missing and correct their omissions independently.
5. The teacher is an effective facilitator.

#### **Benefits to students**

6. Students understand what is a well-developed piece.
7. Students revise drafts with less teacher intervention.
8. Students prewrite and see where detail is needed.
9. Students value this life long learning and communication tool.

#### **Benefits to both**

10. The writing process is focused.
11. It is specific and less confrontational.
12. Constructive criticism focuses on the Hats rather than addressing the writer.

#### **LEADERSHIP AND SIX HATS**

Six Hats provides a leadership tool for gifted students that many can use in corporate careers. As a communication tool, the mental wearing and switching of hats separates thinking into six modes for analyzing matters objectively and comprehensively. When individuals and teams separate emotion from fact, the benefits from the possible problems, the critical from creative thinking, the results include shorter meetings, thorough assessment of alternatives before making decisions, better communication and easier problem resolution. All sides of a topic/issue are addressed. Individuals and teams work together to think clearly, objectively, systematically and creatively! As gifted students move from school into careers, Six Hats provides them with a leadership, thinking edge over those who have not used this strategy.

#### **THE IMPACT OF DISTRICT-WIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS**

Berwick Area School District's professional staff was introduced

to Six Hats several years ago, providing them with a specific way to approach thinking and decision making for themselves and with their students. Thinking is an act that can be somewhat overwhelming because we try to make decisions with various elements pulling at us. Our creative side argues with our practical side, our pros argue with our cons, and our emotions argue with our brains.

"The toolbox of the Six Thinking Hats provides our staff and students with a concrete way to approach decision making in the classroom. One student claims that this technique broadened her way of thinking; she now approaches her assignments in a whole new light, especially with cooperative learning activities and group projects. This thinking technique works both in the boardroom and in the classroom." *Holly Morrison, Director of Curriculum, K-12, Berwick School District, PA*

### **DECISION MAKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING**

Decision making and problem solving are essential skills for adults and children. HATS IN SEQUENCES provide a colorful seven step structure to solve problems and make decisions. In a physics classroom, problem solving is facilitated by Six Hats:

"The HATS were introduced in a unit on the use of petroleum in the United States and alternate energy forms. The students became familiar with what I expect for each HAT process. We now use the HATS for problem solving. They answer questions using the HATS in greater depth without me prompting them to go deeper." *Dean Brewer, Physics Teacher, Southern Columbia High School, PA*

Six Hats problem solving has benefited students in Odyssey of the Mind, Destination Imagination, and Invent America. It promotes communication among team members, improves creative production, provides the next steps, and resolves team problems effectively:

"My students revel in the metacognitive strategies. They love thinking about thinking! Students purposefully examine all approaches to solving a problem. Plus it's just plain FUN!" *Judy Micheletti, Odyssey of the Mind Coordinator, Berwick School District, PA*

### **MULTICULTURAL DIVERSITY HATS TRAINING CREATES A SAFER SCHOOL**

As a conflict resolution tool, Six Hats has been helping to create

a safer school climate in Berwick High School. A multicultural diversity group uses Six Hats as their leadership and problem solving tool in handling conflict and change. Scenarios related to diversity challenge the students and the Hats. Role playing with problems being analyzed and resolved connects problem solving to their lives, which is shown in this paraphrased statement:

*The Six Hats helps multiculturally diverse students SEE how they react in difficult situations. The concreteness of the Hats helps them identify their reactions to situations, analyze them, and create real life change, the primary goal of diversity groups. Conflict resolution and a more positive school climate result from student problem solving with Six Hats. Paraphrased - Sally Meyer, Teacher and Diversity Group Coordinator, Berwick HS, PA*

### **TEACH, LEARN, LEAD**

In summary, Six Hats is a tool that can promote quality thinking and communication for gifted students, teachers, and educational and corporate leaders. As the HATS activate the brain with color, they create a delightful and meaningful experience for those using them to teach, learn and lead. Testimonials from around the globe applaud the Six Hats for their power to focus thinking and communication, provide a self-monitoring strategy, enhance reading comprehension, offer a process for problem solving and decision making, and foster independence, leadership, and teamwork.

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<sup>1</sup>Six Thinking Hats and Six Hats are trademarks of Dr. de Bono.

## **Gifted Students Left Behind: A Student's Perspective**

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Because the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) focuses on proficiency levels as opposed to excellence, it unfairly leaves behind more talented students by shifting the primary focus onto

those students who are performing poorly in school. The No Child Left Behind Act does not develop and nurture the abilities of more intelligent students who can perform on levels much

higher than basic proficiency. Americans must have an education system that fosters the very best students so that they can lead America and the entire International Community.

President George W. Bush signed NCLB into law on January 8, 2002. It is ironically purported by its supporters to raise the bar in education for all students. Though focusing on the students that are not doing well in school is a noble effort, NCLB is a blunt tool for a focused effort on raising proficiency rates among a specific population of students.

This federal law is not only inefficient, but also serves as an injustice to those students recognized as gifted and talented who are already capable of obtaining a high level of proficiency. The NCLB defines the term 'gifted and talented' as follows: "The term 'gifted and talented,' when used with respect to students, children, or youth, means students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities." (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 Title IX, Part A, Section 9101 (22))

The NCLB places highly intelligent students under regulations that handicap their true abilities. In the times of some of the most influential intellectuals such as Socrates, Da Vinci, and Shakespeare, the ancient Greek and Renaissance educators emphasized individual instruction with specific focus on teaching to students' abilities and advancing mastery. They need programs designed to meet their individual needs, not the "one size fits all" general curriculum required by NCLB. In today's society, education programs are not designed to nurture geniuses, but instead, designed to educate the masses (Davidson, 2005).

Not only does NCLB deny America's most intelligent students an appropriate education, but it also assures many years of adverse effects. America is preventing their most intelligent students from becoming the next Albert Einstein or Galileo. America is content with students having identical levels of intelligence, all the while encouraging mediocrity and disregarding and hindering true excellence with both students and teachers. Many educators are beginning to teach for and from the test, thus inhibiting teachers from being creative within the classroom and encouraging true excellence. Now (an all too common attitude), if it is not on the test, it is not worth knowing.

Lilia Olivas, a teacher of a fifth grade bilingual class in Tucson, Arizona, explained to NEA (National Education Association) Today reporters that before the origin of NCLB, she would turn a Valentine's Day party into a small math lesson: "If each student gives every other student a valentine, how many is that?" Olivas continued to explain that since the creation and implementation of NCLB, it has become more difficult to shape out time for creative lessons because she is required to cover so many topics for the "all-important test." In addition, Olivas explained that even if the children do know how to find an answer to a test question, they are unaware of how to apply what they have learned to real life because they do not truly comprehend the concept in the first place (Jehlen, 2006).

Instead of encouraging creativity within the classroom, NCLB promotes routine and unimaginative simplicity. It obligates educators to teach to a test, eliminating further possibility of broadening students' intellect. Policymakers behind this Act believe that standardized tests, including objective multiple choice questions, are the best way to test students' intelligence levels. These types of questions leave no room for debate, opinion, or even full sentences (Karp, 2004). NCLB encourages pupils not to have an opinion. Sitting in a classroom with a number 2 pencil and properly filling in bubbles is not learning. But it assumes that this is the most effective method of teaching. Instead of nurturing creativity, America's schools must now mass produce thoughtless robots of knowledge.

The NCLB helps to support the asinine view of today's educational system that smart children can fend for themselves. According to Executive Producer/Host and President of Learning Matters, Inc., John Merrow, "The federal No Child Left Behind Act has put schools under pressure to help the lowest-performing students" (Merrow, 2004). This aspect of the legislation focuses an abundant amount of attention upon those students of lesser intelligence; therefore, it denies adequate awareness towards gifted students. According to a past President of the National Association of Gifted Children, Carol Ann Tomlinson, "...teachers are prone to ignore these, (gifted) students in favor of learners in academic difficulty" (Tomlinson, 2003), thus encouraging the belief that intelligent students can be left alone and intrinsically motivated with no encouragement from educators.

With the increasing amount of diminishing gifted and talented programs, the majority of the children that are being left behind because of NCLB are those classified as gifted and talented students. "...programs from the nation's 3 million academically gifted students are disappearing from schools throughout Illinois and the rest of the country. The National Association for Gifted Children reported that last year, 17 states had no money set aside for gifted education" (Merrow, 2004). The rationale behind the decrease in gifted programs is directly related to the regulations NCLB places on school districts. Superintendent Don Roberts of Effingham, Illinois states: "They're probably the most undeserved students that the districts have, because we spend so much time trying to bring the lower end up, that, you know, you tend to forget about the top" (Merrow). It is apparent that NCLB overlooks and even disregards the top level students, leaving gifted children behind.

By unashamedly excluding children who are considered intellectually beyond proficient, NCLB virtually tells these students that they are too smart. Gifted students are experiencing inequality within the classroom and feel uncomfortable inquiring for more difficult work. In an interview conducted by Merrow (2004) on the impact that NCLB has on the effects on school programs for gifted students, one student's response was that when she asked for harder work, she was ignored by the teacher, "like she's scared of me or something." This student's experience is, unfortunately, not alone. Having teachers who truly do not understand how to handle gifted students and their minds, or even teachers that view these exceptional individuals as a threat, is one of the main reasons that even though all of those students should rise to the top, there are many who will not.

Because of the absence of challenging curriculum for the gifted, many pretend not to be smart or conceal the fact that they are gifted because they do not feel they are benefitting from the classroom environment. Alex Kinney, a fourth grader, said in Merrow's interview that he pretends not to be smart because sometimes it is just so boring, and he does not see a point in answering questions because the material is just so simple. In correspondence with NCLB, and in defense of some educators, teachers are required to teach to the masses, not to nurture the exceptional.

The No Child Left Behind Act blatantly leaves behind children of higher genius. Although it intends to close the student achievement gap by the year 2014, it only attempts to raise low achievement scores while stagnating highly capable students. The government should extensively modify, or completely abolish the No Child Left Behind Act. The assessment procedures contained in this law record progress on one test, on a given day without taking into account other important aspects of broadening a student's education such as attendance rates, graduation rates, or the number taking Advanced Placement courses and exams. All children should be presented with opportunities that foster each individual's needs. This Act should be held accountable for the lack of developing and nurturing the abilities of more intelligent students, causing them to be the ones left behind.

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## **The "Meat" of Giftedness: The Letters of E. B. White (1899-1985) Michael E. Walters** **Center for the Study of the Humanities in the Schools**

"... We are having splendid weather and I am building a stone wall. I understand that all literary people, at one time or another, build a stone wall. It's because it is easier than writing." (from **Letters of E. B. White, Revised Edition** (HarperCollins, 2006), Letter to Harold Ross, p. 131)

It is necessary for educators of the gifted and their students to read letters by outstanding individuals in order to comprehend important ingredients such as sensibility, mentoring and the community of gifted individuals. By reading the revised edition of E. B. White's letters, one can understand that there is a constant linkage between creation and biography. In the above quote, we can see how his encounters as a participant in nature, and his residence on a farm in Maine were linked to his struggles as a writer.

E. B. White showed talents across different levels of creativity. He wrote essays for *The New Yorker* (Talk of the Town) and *Harper's* magazine (One Man's Meat). In both of these magazines, his intellectual interests were enormous, e.g., social satire, cultural experiences, environmental concerns, and political commentary. In July 1939 he wrote an essay for *Harper's* on Walden Pond where Henry David Thoreau lived and sought a model life based upon "human economy." Besides being a classic American work of prose, **Walden** (1854) was a major commentary on the transcendental movement in 19<sup>th</sup> century New England. White described how Thoreau's site had been turned into a tourist trap. In a letter to Joan Larkin (May 7, 1963), he wrote, "... I also love to think back on an earlier Walden Pond, before it had been taken over by civilization, and when its principal visitors were fishermen, trappers and philosophers." (p. 454). His love of nature was similar to Thoreau and both writers extended this appreciation into their social commentary.

White is now remembered for writing **Stuart Little** (1945), **Charlotte's Web** (1952), and **The Trumpet of the Swan** (1970). These books are not only beautifully written but they also express concern for the environment and our fellow creatures. His children's literature heightens one's appreciation for the unity that exists among nature, animals and humanity. When White attended Cornell University he had a unique English professor, William J. Strunk, Jr. Decades later he updated and revised Strunk's book entitled, **The Elements of Style** (1959, fourth edition published in 1999). This small book showed students how to construct grammatically correct sentences by using wit, grace and philosophy.

He was effectively mentored by his professors and editors. At Cornell, he was among those students invited to submit their writings to the "Manuscript Club" that met at a professor's house. At *The New Yorker* he was mentored by his editor, Harold Ross, and colleagues such as James Thurber, the humorist and cartoonist. The community of giftedness was a constant part of White's life. His wife Katharine was a literary advisor to *The New Yorker*; their relationship was an incredible merger of the creative and the personal. At *Harper's* magazine he was encouraged in his endeavors by his editors, Lee Hartman and Frederick Lewis Allen, and he interacted with Bernardo DeVoto who was a literary critic, social historian and expert on Mark Twain. In turn, White was a mentor to such writers as John Updike who wrote the Introduction to this recent collection of letters, and the satirist, Garrison Keillor.

As White pointed out, we can get to the "meat" of reality, human thought and creativity through reading, studying, thinking and interacting with intellectual peers. It is important for the gifted community to return to reading collections of letters by famous gifted individuals throughout history. These letters will enable us to perceive the gifted individual both as a unique person and as a member of a cultural and historical moment.

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