

GIFTED EDUCATION PRESS

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NEWSLETTER
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JULY--SEPTEMBER 1988

The first article in this issue explains the history of gifted education through the writings of an educator who helped to develop this field. The inspiring and informative article by Dr. Mary Meeker describes the development of gifted education in California and proposes what its future emphasis should be in the nation. Her discussion is based upon a speech she gave to the **California Association for Gifted** (February 1987) upon being honored by this organization. Her pioneering work in using the Structure of Intellect model to identify and teach the gifted demonstrates the best features of humanitarian concern and scientific practice. Programs for the gifted were started in California in the 1950's and 1960's to serve the best educational interests of these children. This initial motivation has led to programs in this state which today include more than 200,000 gifted students. Now, as Dr. Meeker argues in the second half of her article, it is time to conduct rigorous scientific studies of gifted programs in order to identify the most effective ones.

Her illustrious and productive accomplishments include the development of 32 California Plans for Gifted Education, Secretary and Board Member of the National Association for Gifted Children, national and international lecturer on the gifted, and recipient of the first annual award from the Educational Press Association of America ("Brain Research: The Necessity for Separating Sites, Actions and Functions," GCT, Nov.-Dec. 1986). As professionals with extensive experiences and accomplishments retire from active participation in the field of gifted education, who will replace them? Do universities, state departments of education and local school districts have individuals with the vision, determination, talent and training to use the original work of "pioneers" such as Mary Meeker and Virgil Ward to make further progress in this field?

The article by James LoGiudice discusses his search for the best elements of a secondary curriculum for the gifted. The primary question which he addresses is: How can the learning and problem-solving characteristics of highly able students be used as a basis for developing such a curriculum? As an experienced educator, he analyzes those qualities of the gifted learner which he has observed in teaching such topics as philosophy, history, literature and drama.

The last article by Michael Walters gives specific examples of a highly gifted individual's mind in action. His discussion of the writer Edmund Wilson's life and work demonstrates how an interdisciplinary curriculum can help to develop the type of thinker exemplified by Wilson. Dr. Walters is primarily concerned with improving gifted students' understanding of American literature and letters through the study of our greatest writers and literary critics.

We hope your summer is both restful and productive! Please use the articles by Meeker, LoGiudice and Walters to stimulate your thinking about new program ideas and innovations for use in the fall of 1988.

Maurice D. Fisher, Publisher

PUBLISHER OF BOOKS ON DIFFERENTIAL EDUCATION FOR THE GIFTED

THE NEXT CHALLENGE IN GIFTED EDUCATION
 BY MARY MEEKER, Ed.D.
 PRESIDENT, SOI SYSTEMS
 VIDA, OREGON

We in California have the knowledge, we have the experience, we have in our state among the best of the country's experts, and collectively, we have over 20 years of statistical data. So who is better qualified to take the next challenge facing educators of the gifted? The challenge I offer is this: to develop a science of gifted education. And this is what I propose.

Although California has led the way in gifted education, we cannot rest on our laurels. We can initiate the next quantum leap in the gifted education movement.

The renaissance of gifted education did not begin until after World War II. Before that, the dark ages were lighted by a few pioneers such as Terman, Davis and Hollingworth who helped us discover that giftedness (called genius during the twenties and thirties) was a real phenomenon and worthy of study. Although they hoped to remove some of the shrouds of mystery of "genius," they were only isolated voices in the dark ages of mass education.

The renaissance began when the nation was awakened to the appreciation of intelligence as a national resource. Perhaps we have Sputnik to thank for that awakening; perhaps it was a more general resurgence of national spirit, but whatever the root causes, resources were made available for us to turn a focus on intelligence-in-the-extreme and how it could be educated.

This notion ushered in the renaissance of the gifted movement -- a spirit unleashed, a value affirmed -- an opportunity to explore areas in education never before charted. And explore we did! We wrote manifestos (we called them frameworks); we drew and redrew boundaries, sometimes too narrowly and sometimes too expansively; we tried hundreds of different programs with thousands of differing degrees of success (for that matter, we were still attempting to define success); our pendulums swung between the extremes of quantitative and qualitative definitions of giftedness -- we were, in short, exploring. And as with any renaissance, we had our excesses which had to be allowed as we grew and just as surely had to be reigned in.

It was a heady period in our history. Fortunately, there were two steadying influences: one in the form of administrative giftedness, and the other in the form of a collective personality of the various professional experts involved.

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The administrative geniuses in California are epitomized by Paul Plowman, Dave Hermanson, Ruth Martinson, Eleanor Schmadel, Joe Rice, Bob Swain, Marcella Bonsall, Bob Bell, Dick Sholseth, early leaders who, with their colleagues at the county, district and state department levels, had to ride herd on the renaissance movement. It is our legacy that they allowed districts the freedom to inquire into the writings and works of James Gallagher, John Gowan, Bloom & Krathwohl and Guilford. Districts were allowed to explore, but these leaders, knowledgeable in the literature of giftedness, were also there to supervise and reign in at the proper times, demanding enough accountability to satisfy the "exchequer" but not so much as to stifle the spirit of this infant movement.

The gifted movement in America may never know these names, but all new leaders will forever be indebted to their guidance. For gifted programs in California alone have grown from zero in 1960 to include 220,000 gifted children today. The other steadying influence was (and still is) the collective personality of administrators, coordinators and teachers of the gifted. I know of no other group in education as dedicated, caring and open-minded as are educators of the gifted. Many of them carried programs on sheer determination when funding lapsed; many of them carried children who did not meet numerical criteria though they were obviously gifted; and many of them paid their own ways to conferences because they knew it would help them improve the quality of their teaching of gifted children. They fended off the barbs of "elitism" when in truth, it is the traditional curriculum which is elitist, and they knew this. They were eager to undertake, understand and carry the special responsibilities of their special children.

They helped validate gifted programs no matter what it took because they were who they were. But, most of all, they were the change agents of education — people who were neither afraid of change nor of the discomfort it brings. Every state has since, unknowingly, profited from their findings.

These are the people who brought us through this renaissance period to where we are now; and, while no period in any history is easily demarcated at the time, I believe we are now passing from one period to another, and that this is a fitting time of celebration to mark that transition.

My vision into gifted education of the future is partially shaped by their work. But it is equally shaped by my work as a specialist, a psychologist whose career has been concerned with individual differences and with the application of a theory of intelligence to educational practices.

Thus, I think the time has come to leave this exploratory period — not to leave exploration, but to leave the period given over to exploration -- in favor

of making a consolidation of what we have learned...to make a science of gifted education. After the renaissance comes the science; and that time has come.

The Challenge for Educators of the Gifted

I issue the challenge to you to become scientific, knowing that it is a challenge which may not be popular because the word science has all the connotations of regimented, antiseptic determinism -- almost the antithesis of the renaissance spirit. That, of course, is sometimes the sterile side of science. But the other side of science is as exploratory in its own way as was the exploration of the renaissance. It is after all, science that is leading us today on the greatest physical explorations of all -- the technical exploration of biochemistry and space and the human condition; but however it is done, it will be guided by science. And scientists who lead these explorations are gifted adults who, more than ever before, must possess to an even higher degree than happenstance qualities of divergent thinking abilities, and evaluation thinking abilities which are well developed all the way from relational thinking through implications thinking. It is in this spirit that I offer the challenge to bring science to the gifted movement; not to determine where we are going or how we are going to get there, but to introduce a new degree of order in the explorations that we make.

Why? Because we do have documented results and results lead to general rules. The rules for guiding a program scientifically are simple: 1) have a well delineated program, 2) with generalizable implementation procedures, 3) with measureable objectives which are to be measured and tracked, 4) with means of reporting documented results and enforced recognition of this reporting by all people engaged in the public education of our gifted, 5) with the earliest identification of differentiated intellectual abilities followed up with a uniquely matched curriculum to further develop the intellectual giftedness.

Each of these five prerequisites has been well established and practiced. They offer us a platform from which to begin. These guidelines are simple but not easy. But unless we are objective, unless we sacrifice provincial egos, we cannot progress beyond our current stage of growth -- we will be left to continue re-inventing the wheel and reorganizing the holes for the spokes. We are at the end of our adolescence in gifted education in California -- I add "in California", because as I travel the States and other countries, I see educators just entering their adolescent growing period and I think that it is too bad that they do not benefit from our experiences here. Yet I realize that because the responsibility for education lies in the local board of education, public education dictates that each district, even each state, has its own adolescent

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period to live through. Anyway, we in California are at the end of our adolescent growth and now it is time for maturity...planning our futures. Part of that future is a realistic re-appraisal of the impact of gifted programs on students who have participated. They should be re-tested on the same instrument used for placement in order to assess whether the gifted program did in fact keep them gifted and improve their giftedness. They need to tell us what they have accomplished. Are they happy? What would they contribute in information to us?

At a minimum the country needs several well-constructed examples of objectified programs with the attendant operations, measures and plans for evaluation. We need a clearinghouse for reporting outcomes -- not for making invidious comparisons -- but for sharing results. The science of computer technology makes this easy to accomplish. We must channel the spirit of the renaissance into the discipline of science.

It is important for us to meet this challenge because gifted education has led the way for general education for many years. It is important that we maintain that leadership and through it that we guide general education into a new era of its own. As we enter the next century, we need the gift of accumulated wisdom to plan an education of preparedness. And without apology, I say it is imperative that we begin the process for each and every child who enters school by assessing their individual abilities...that every teacher be trained in basic understanding of the nature of differentiated intellectual abilities so that every child's basic profile of intellectual abilities is addressed through curriculum experiences.

Teachers need to look upon the gifted as quarterbacks of the future; we must consider ourselves as their guards and tackles, because no matter what game in life they are to play, they will enter the game with some characteristics peculiarly theirs and they need armor for their own protection.

We have often given lip service to placing them in a protected environment, but we have not. There is knowledge today about their characteristics such that we could design a school to nurture them, to provide them with programs which instill the desire to work, to enhance their giftedness and which will give them courage to keep going by assuring them they have the abilities to succeed.

My contribution to the field of gifted education has been the understanding of differential intelligences. The piano offers us a ready analogy for understanding intelligence. Intelligence is a mental song. The piano has 88 keys; the Structure of Intellect (Guilford, 1966) has isolated over 90 kinds of intellectual products of the human brain. Every gifted child's mental "song" has its own melody. Like the piano which has discrete sounds for each note, the SOI

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factors are also discrete. Both the piano notes and the intellectual abilities can be combined in many ways on many levels (sounds). Some abilities match well with what successful school learning depends upon; others, in children just as bright, do not match so well. But those who come to school gifted in Memory will surely be noticed by the teacher and usually will get tested for inclusion in a gifted program.

We know there is a song called "Reading". It is made up of eleven notes (abilities). The song cannot be complete if one or more "notes" is missing. there is also a song called arithmetic; it is made up of nine "notes" (abilities). There is a song called mathematics; it requires all the notes in arithmetic and some of the notes in reading. We know that gifted girls do so poorly on two spatial abilities (CFS and CFT) that not only do they steer clear of mathematics and science in high school, their self images are damaged to the extent that they stay out of science, engineering and architecture. We know that boys are much better at auditory learning than are girls who are more visual. Thus, boys do better in arithmetic naturally and girls do better in early reading. First and foremost, every child needs a profile of his or her learning strengths and weaknesses. This information is part of the platform from which to build a curriculum to address their needs.

Secondly, they all need, in return, a gift from us -- love and enlightenment. We are their mentors as well as their guards and tackles. Mentors do not lead the way. Instead, they open the door to unknown places, to send their proteges into dark rooms. A mentor turns on a light, hands it to them, pushes them in, and steps back, closing the door. Why? Because a mentor knows that the eyes only see when there is light, but the soul sees when there is darkness. And mentors know that their job is to give illumination. With illumination -- with illuminated minds, all else follows.

The science of gifted education awaits.¶¶

The most important function of education at any level is to develop the personality of the individual and the significance of his life to himself and to others. This is the basic architecture of a life; the rest is ornamentation and decoration of the structure. **Grayson Kirk, President, Columbia University**

Respect for intellectual excellence, the restoration of vigor and discipline to our ideas of study, curricula which aim at strengthening intellectual fiber and stretching the power of young minds, personal commitment and responsibility -- these are the preconditions of educational recovery in America today; and, I believe, they have always been the preconditions of happiness and sanity for the human race. **Adlai E. Stevenson**

MORE THAN MORE FOR SECONDARY GIFTED STUDENTS
BY JAMES LOGIUDICE, SUPERVISOR
PROGRAMS FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS
BUCKS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA INTERMEDIATE UNIT 22

Gifted students at the secondary level need challenges and programs that are academically rigorous, yet open-ended enough to meet a wide range of individual interests and abilities. Too often, a school's response to gifted students is to simply assign more work, then insist it be done in half the time. The quality of gifted programs or curriculum should not be synonymous with mastering large amounts of information or measured by the quantity of assignments given. It is possible for the gifted to easily know a number of facts, produce projects that are impressive, even read an overwhelming amount of assigned books, yet never recognize the significance of or connections threaded through the content.

Checklists abound describing the characteristics of the gifted, exhaustively listing what types of learning make the most sense in teaching these students. For the most part, these checklists are given perfunctory attention; hidden, unheeded, and unused when developing high school programs. Many junior and senior high gifted programs are designed with little or no relationship to what is already known and well-documented about how gifted students think and learn.

In order to build a sensible, encompassing high school gifted program, the first step is to assure an understanding of the key characteristics which clearly describe the gifted. Also important, is agreement on what other parts of the 'portrait' are needed in order to complete the picture. From this comprehensive sketch, the curriculum and programs should follow. If it is assumed that gifted students learn differently because they have exceptional abilities, then it is logical to construct special education programs based on these characteristics.

What characterizes gifted students other than high intelligence as measured on a specific I.Q. test? They have the unique ability to observe more intensely and develop keener insights. Simply put, they can absorb what is going on around them from a different perspective. These are the students who are able to study a subject in-depth, calling on what they have observed, then pursuing several angles of a topic. Insight and conclusions of significance should be the final products of their independent, beyond the surface, investigations.

Secondary gifted students have the ability to see relationships and connections. It is this dimension which allows a very bright person to see across and beyond the specific and circumscribed case. The academically gifted

are able to recognize how a variety of issues, content areas, and skills are related to each other. If challenged and motivated intellectually, this capacity for seeing cause and effect relations, for breaking out of constrained boundaries, will flourish. The gifted can deal with connections bridging time, place, and sources of information. Hobbies, casual reading, and school subjects are only part of the framework they use to develop inter-relationships. They can also make use of all they have learned to see with more depth, wider vision, and a new insight.

Seeing 'grey' is perhaps the most defining trait of the gifted. To see grey means awareness of nuance and subtlety, sensitivity to variations of meaning and implication, and recognition of complexity. To see grey instead of black and white is a mixed blessing. In a school world where the student's learning for most of the day is organized into neat compartmentalized boxes, a viewpoint that takes in shadows, shades, and blends may be unsettling to oneself and others. Yet, it is this quality of 'greyiness' that allows the gifted to deal with paradox and ambivalence without being overwhelmed by the unsureness of prescribed answers. It is this greyiness that should bring to the bright students a desire to break out of one-dimensional school work, to examine matters in their full context, and to realize that there are few easy answers or simplistic solutions.

Gifted students are able to see implications, make informed predictions, and understand the relationships of cause and effect. It is necessary for them to go beyond answering difficult questions. More important, is knowing what questions to ask them, and how to address the implications, problems, and possibilities. The gifted are able to pull together facts, data, and information, and build thoughtful hypotheses and conclusions.

An eye for aesthetic appreciation and understanding is another aspect of the portrait of the gifted. Aesthetic ability implies that one understands the underlying principles of beauty and of order. One must look beneath the obvious in this search for what is appealing, pleasing, and right or wrong. Encouraging the gifted to include the arts and humanities in their learning is more than developing a sensibility to the fine arts. Rather, it is insisting on the student's examination of how man has defined beauty and order through the study of history, science, mathematics, literature, philosophy, and the arts. Gifted students are able to use aesthetic awareness to recognize universal truths, patterns, and interdisciplinary themes.

What clearly emerges from this profile is the need for programming that is different from simply giving gifted students more work in less time. The issue revolves around quality versus quantity. Edmund Fuller, addressing a group of

graduating high school seniors, speaks of the same issue:

It is possible that you may become the best informed generation in history -- quantitatively. It is also frighteningly possible that you could turn out to be one of the worst educated generations -- qualitatively. You could be cursed with information without wisdom, with data without direction. Modern man knows more and can do more than our ancestors. But we are not wiser, or more spiritually perceptive, or more artistically creative than the people of either the far or distant past.

(The Uses of an Education. The Wall Street Journal, May 25, 1979.)

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LITERARY CRITIC AND GENERALIST EXTRAORDINAIRE: EDMUND WILSON
 BY MICHAEL E. WALTERS
 NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate giftedness in action by discussing the work of a great American literary critic and social philosopher Edmund Wilson (1895-1972). Throughout American history and cultural life individuals who analyze and evaluate literary works have also been keen observers of varied aspects of our national character and social thought. Among the practitioners of this "great tradition" in American writing are: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Van Wyck Brooks and H. L. Mencken. Edmund Wilson is another important example of this type of intellectual response to American

life and letters. The term "letters" refers specifically to writing that encompasses both the literary and social analyst roles of intellectuals such as Edmund Wilson. Gifted students can be stimulated by his writings and methods of social analysis. This article advocates a curriculum representative of what literary critics and social thinkers such as Edmund Wilson described as "the republic of letters."

The hallmark of the type of intellectual thinking represented by Edmund Wilson is generalism. He attempted to link all aspects of our environment, culture and social activity through using the Humanities as a foundation for intellectual activity. For example, if he wanted to learn about a medieval Gothic cathedral, he would have studied the following areas to obtain a comprehensive understanding of this structure: medieval history and architecture, theology, philosophy, anthropology, art, and sociology. Wilson as a literary critic understood his subject matter in this holistic manner. He sought to understand a specific writer's encounter with society and how that writer was influenced by those who preceded him. Moreover, Wilson examined the writer's psychological personality by determining how his ways of thinking about problems (intellectual framework) influenced his development as a creative artist.

Educators of the gifted should attempt to develop intellectual generalists who think like Edmund Wilson. First, by definition, the gifted student thinks like an intellectual generalist when he combines different areas of knowledge to solve problems. The gifted thinker synthesizes information and forges a range of intellectual interests involving the study of many subjects. (For example, a gifted student with high mathematical abilities might also be sensitive to the philosophical and aesthetic components of mathematical thought.) In comparison, the individual of average ability may not be able to see how the apparently disconnected parts of a problem can be combined into a solution because his range of knowledge is too narrow.

The study of generalists such as Edmund Wilson is an excellent way for gifted students to stimulate their cognitive powers and affective responses. In addition to being a social critic, Wilson excelled in the following areas: writer of travel books; social thinker concerned with the problems of society; student of linguistics, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, history and comparative religion; and writer of short stories. He was a modern representative of the Age of Enlightenment which was typified by such thinkers as Voltaire, Montaigne, Spinoza, and in our own nation by Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. He also represented a cosmopolitan world view, e.g., he was a student and defender of American Indian and Hatian cultures. The range of Edmund Wilson's interests was from the French symbolist poets, to the analysis of American popular culture, to the Dead Sea Scrolls, to the development of Marxism,

to Russian writers such as Boris Pasternak. This range of interests is a definition in itself of the concept of intellectual generalism found in the study of the Humanities.

The generalist, as represented by Edmund Wilson, demonstrates a sensibility which has as its major attribute the qualities of cosmopolitanism, awareness of the ethical consequences of analyzing the problems of society, and a morality based upon intensive intellectual inquiry. Edmund Wilson's generalist personality is the modern expression of Socrates' approach to solving problems by first understanding oneself. By studying the life and works of Wilson, we can see that selfhood is achieved by interacting with all realms of knowledge.

A generalist curriculum would be an effective antidote to the drift of many contemporary gifted students into the narrow confines of yuppiedom. These narrow cubicles of social thought lead gifted students to parochialism, ethical insensitivity, moral indifference, and narcissism. Wilson described two contending spirits of our time -- the spirit that studies and understands as contrasted with the spirit that acquires and consumes. Sound familiar?¶¶

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LETTERS AND COMMENTS

From William Donald Schaefer, Governor of Maryland -- Thank you very much for your efforts on behalf of the establishment of the Maryland School for Science and Mathematics. Best of luck with the **Gifted Education Press Newsletter**. From Dr. Bella Kranz of Brooklyn, New York -- It is with deep respect for your efforts to keep gifted education alive, vigorous, and critically evaluated in your splendid "underground journal" that I enclose the check you see. Please use it for another membership beyond my own or any way you see fit. Up to now, you've demonstrated creative and energizing literary efforts to put gifted education before a varied audience. Keep up the good work. We Thank Governor Schaefer, Dr. Kranz and the following individuals for their expressions

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Information of Current Interest

The 1988 Educational Opportunity Guide: A Directory of Programs for the Gifted is an excellent book (\$12.50) which can be ordered directly from: 1988 Guide; Talent Identification Program, Duke University, Box 40077, Durham, NC 27706-0077. Mss. Sidney Moon (Director of Gifted Education) and Sue Carr are seeking information (experiences, articles, programs, etc.) on the gifted/learning disabled. Their address and phone number are: TSC-GT Office, Tippecanoe School Corporation, 21 Elston Road, Lafayette, IN 47905; Phone (317) 474-2481.

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