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"My view of the world is that people are best served when they find their passion early on, because we tend to be good at things we're passionate about. I think we also need to find people whom we admire and try to emulate them." Chesley Sullenberger, the Captain who successfully guided US Airways flight 1549 in the Hudson River on January 15, 2009 (From ***Air & Space Magazine***, May 2009, p. 11)

During the last twelve months, I have been working with several authors on a book that demonstrates the importance of using role models to inspire and motivate gifted students. There are many excellent books for designing a differentiated curriculum, teaching challenging subjects, and improving gifted students' social-emotional development, but there are few that can function as an inspirational guide for motivating them to develop specific interests and abilities. **Heroes of Giftedness** (2009, Gifted Education Press) contains the biographies and inspirational stories of sixty-five highly gifted individuals from the sciences, technology and invention areas, medicine and biology, literature and poetry, music, art and the media. These are the personal heroes of twelve GEP authors who are from different areas of gifted education and have various professional careers, i.e., teachers, artists, curriculum specialists, professors, coordinators, environmental engineers, and educational psychologists. They are Eugene and Diana Avergon, Ross Butchart, Daniel Gonshorek, Jason Helfer, Carol Horn, Dorothy Massalski, Harry Roman, Stephen Schroth, Joan Smutny, Michael Walters, and myself.

These authors and I believe that biographical essays provide both teachers and students with a fascinating opportunity to study *giftedness in action.* Our primary assumption is that reading and studying about outstanding achievers will inspire, motivate and strengthen gifted students' desire to excel in their specific areas of interest. This is particularly important for gifted minority children who may not have enough home and personal support to pursue their academic interests.

The book can be used by teachers to discuss the lives and achievements of such individuals as Wynton Marsalis in music, Eleanor Baum in engineering, Annie Dillard in nature writing and literature, and Ken Burns in documentary film production. By learning about these and many other outstanding people, gifted students can improve their understanding of different types of careers. They might then focus upon specific career areas for additional research and study. Some of the other highly gifted individuals discussed in **Heroes of Giftedness** are Neil Armstrong, Bill Gates, Derek Cabrera, Ben Carson, Jane Goodall, Rita Dove, Joshua Bell, Plácido Domingo, Deborah Butterfield and Gustavo Dudamel.

Professors Stephen Schroth and Jason Helfer of Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois have written many previous articles on humanities and the arts. They are joined by Professor Diana L. Beck, Katherine M. Latshaw (student) and Zachary A. Bahr (student) in discussing their recent visit to China to study gifted education programs, and to provide guidance and advice for improving gifted education in this nation. The next article is an interesting survey of how school districts in Ohio work with parents of gifted students. Kai Brunkalla is an associate professor of mathematics at Walsh University in North Canton, Ohio, and Dawn Brunkalla has recently completed her masters degree in education at this university. They emphasize that parents need to receive more information about educating their gifted children in the home, including enrichment and mentoring opportunities. Dorothy Massalski is completing her doctorate at the University of Arizona-Tucson. Her essay about N. Scott Momaday originally appeared in the **Heroes** book. Michael Walters concludes by again visiting with his old friend and mentor, Charles Dickens.

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

Gifted Education in China: A Transition toward Student-Centered Instruction

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As early as the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC), the Chinese have administered examinations, known as the *Tong Zi Ke* (the Child Examination), to identify gifted children (Shu & Zha, 2000; Yang, 1994). Since at least the eighteenth century, China has provided gifted children with differentiated educational services (Shi & Zha, 2000; Yang, 1994). Systematic and formal programs for gifted children, however, began only in 1978, as part of the modernization process that the People's Republic of China undertook at that time (Shi & Zha, 2000; Wu, Cho & Munandar, 2000). This modernization, which focused on bringing China's agricultural, industrial, technological, and trade practices into alignment with the rest of the world, also caused a momentous shift in gifted education practices. A greater prominence was placed on two key aspects with regard to the education of gifted children. First, improved and more methodical ways of identifying gifted children were put into place, especially children from rural backgrounds (Shi & Xu, 1999). Second, special programming for gifted children was established to assist and nurture their development (Zha, 1985, 1993). Although these reforms were significant, China's emphasis on building its science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) capacity, as well as the test-driven nature of its schools, meant that, for most of the next thirty years, acceleration and tracking were the major program adjustments resulting from this initiative (Shi & Zha, 2000). As China has become increasingly prosperous, this emphasis began to change. As English-language instruction increased in popularity and significance within the curriculum, Western pedagogical approaches became more accepted and emulated, changes that affected gifted education as well.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, Chinese educators began to explore more student-centered approaches (Rao, 2002). This accelerated during the 1990s, as China became more integrated in the global economy, and English acquisition developed into a national priority (Penner, 1995; Shi & Zha, 2000). These changes played a significant role in altering perceptions of how best to educate gifted children. This history also impacted and influenced Anhui Normal University's leaders' desire for a relationship with an American college with expertise in gifted education.

The Educational Studies Department at Knox College is fortunate to have been asked to work with the students, post-graduates, and faculty of Anhui Normal University to work on ways to develop more student-centered, literature-based instructional methods in the classroom. This relationship, which is ongoing, began in 2007, and involves the exchange of ideas, students, and faculty. As part of this charge, Knox College students and faculty spent over a month in China, working directly with students at the elementary, middle school, and university level. This paper shall examine the similarities and differences between gifted education in China and the United States, explore some of the changes the Chinese seek to make with regard to gifted education and instructional strategies, and describe some of the experiences that occurred as a result of this process.

Background

Knox College is a highly-selective, national liberal arts college, founded in Galesburg, Illinois in 1837. The College's 1,350 students are drawn from 46 states and 44 nations, and the College's mission statement describes a "community of individuals from diverse backgrounds challenging each other to explore, understand and improve ourselves, our society and our world" (Knox College, 2007, p. 3). Anhui Normal University, located in Wuhu, Anhui Province of the People's Republic of China, was founded in 1928. Currently, it serves over 35,000 students on three campuses located in and around Wuhu and focuses on the University's themes of *quality*, *efficiency*, and *harmony*. Pursuant to an invitation from the Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in Chicago, Knox College and Anhui Normal University entered into an articulation agreement that featured an ongoing exchange of students, faculty, and ideas between the two institutions. The first stage of this agreement was for a delegation of three Knox College faculty and fifteen students to travel to Auhui Normal University in the fall of 2008 to work with undergraduates, post-graduates, and faculty members on a variety of topics related to curriculum and instruction. At the request of the Chinese, the areas of emphasis were: (a) gifted education and talent development; (b) differentiated instruction; (c) Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) theory and methods; (d) reading in the elementary schools; and (e) assessment strategies. The fifteen Knox College students were selected from a pool of over 100 applicants and took a course before going to China, while the three faculty members were chosen on the basis of their expertise in these topics. In total, the Knox College delegation delivered over 180 hours of instruction to the Chinese while also visiting Chinese schools and cultural institutions, such as libraries, research centers, and art studios which support education.

Chinese and American Educational Systems

Educational experiences for children in China and the United States bear some striking similarities and differences. While China has a centrally-controlled system of education, with national mandates, curriculum, and assessments, American schools are chiefly under local control (Reese, 2005; Su, 1999). For the purposes of comparing and contrasting features of the two systems, Table 1 includes some of the major similarities and differences of each, focusing on the duration of each experience, the age of students involved, and whether education at a particular level is compulsory. It is important to note that, in China, the major "sorting" of students takes place at the middle school level, with competition keen for spots in those schools perceived as "feeders" into high schools (Li & Sze, 1997; Su, 1999). Admission to the next level of schooling, be it middle school, high school, or university, is determined on the basis of test scores (Li & Sze, 1997; Su, 1999). The percentage of students continuing to university studies is quite small, with only about one percent of Chinese students attaining this level of education (Shi & Zha, 2000; Su, 1999). The scarcity of education is one of the chief reasons that the Chinese are so interested in providing an appropriate educational challenge to gifted learners. The Chinese government believes that continued economic growth hinges on optimizing the talents of the most able students.

Table 1

Chinese and American Educational Systems

	China	United States
Preschool	Public Up to 5 years provided Students 2-5 years old	Public and private Up to 5 years provided Students 2-6 years old
Kindergarten	Almost nonexistent	Compulsory Public and private Students 5-6 years old
Elementary	Compulsory Provided for 6 years Students 6-12 years old	Compulsory Provided for 5 years Students 6-11 years old
Middle School	Compulsory Provided for 3 years Students 12-14 years old	Compulsory Provided for 3 years Students 11-13 years old
High School	Non-Compulsory Provided for 3 years Students 14-17 years old	Compulsory Provided for 4 years Students 13-17 years old
Higher Education	National entrance exams Age limitations Undergraduate (4-5 years) Masters degree (3 years) Doctoral degree (3 years)	No national entrance exams No age limitations Undergraduate (4 years) Masters degree (1-2 years) Doctoral degree (3-10 years)

Gifted Services in China

The Chinese schools provide a variety of services to gifted children. These services include (a) early admission to school; (b) grade skipping; (c) special classes; (d) special schools; (e) special activities within the school setting; (f) Saturday or summer programs; and (g) individualized instruction (Shi & Zha, 2000; Su, 1999). These services are beneficial, as gifted children who receive *any* type of gifted education services demonstrate significantly greater gains than do their gifted peers who receive no such services (Feldhusen & Moon, 1992; Schroth, 2007a; Schroth & Helfer, in press; Vaughan, Feldhusen & Asher, 1991). The services provided by Chinese schools closely resemble those offered to American students. The setting in which they are provided, however, is very different. Unlike American schools, the student/teacher ratio in Chinese schools is often 80:1. The classrooms that serve Chinese students are, if anything, slightly smaller than those in America. Amenities that Americans take for granted, such as heating during the winter, are often absent in Chinese schools, forcing teachers and students to wear coats, hats, and gloves during instruction. Since admission to the next level of education, such as the transition from elementary to middle school or from middle to high school, is based upon examination scores, much of Chinese instruction is test-driven.

The Chinese national government, under the leadership of President Hu Jintao, has stressed that Chinese schools must seek to become more student-centered, better at developing student creativity, and more constructivist in their teaching strategies (Lee & Ho, 2005; Zweig, 2006). The physical and systemic constraints extant, however, result in serious limitations on what it is possible for teachers to do in the Chinese classroom. Using instructional strategies that American teachers take for granted, such as learning centers, cooperative grouping, technology, and manipulatives, is often impractical or impossible. Chinese teachers, who seek to nurture and identify alternative forms of intelligence, often feel stymied by a system that demands they use rote memorization and drill-and-recitation as the primary method of instruction.

Building Student-Centered Instruction

Faced with these systemic constraints, Knox College students and faculty worked with the Chinese to develop instructional strategies that would be effective in meeting their national goals—student centered instruction, developing creative thinkers, and using constructivist instructional strategies—while also being responsive to the practical and logistical constraints under which the typical Chinese teacher toils. After reflecting upon the goals of the Chinese, and the conditions of Chinese classrooms, Knox College students and teachers focused on three major areas that could be addressed: *conceptions of intelligence*, *instructional strategies*, and *assessment*. Each of these shall be discussed in turn.

Conceptions of Intelligence

Chinese schools have used very traditional conceptions of *intelligence* almost exclusively (Shi & Xu, 1999). As a result, Chinese gifted programs have served chiefly those students who demonstrate strong levels of proficiency in general mental ability factor, sometimes called *g* (Gottfredson, 2003). While understanding that students who demonstrate strong levels of *g* merit gifted education services, the Chinese are anxious to broaden the scope of such offerings to include more students, especially those with different talents. As one would expect, the Chinese teachers' prior experiences influenced and constrained their conceptions of giftedness. Building upon the Chinese teachers' existing knowledge of intelligence, however, was helpful in assisting them to understand other theories of intelligence. Once they understood that Sternberg and Grigorenko (2007) defined *analytical* intelligence in a way that was similar to *g*, and that these were comparable to Renzulli and Reis's (2008) *above-average* intelligence, and that both of these corresponded with Gardner's (1993) *verbal/linguistic* and *logical/mathematical* intelligences, it was straightforward to segue them to discussions of other types of intelligence.

Intelligence, which has bedeviled educators for generations, is not a unitary concept and new models have been developed to explain this complicated notion (Renzulli & Reis, 2008; Schroth & Helfer, 2008). Sternberg (1984) developed the *triarchic* theory of intelligence consisting of three main types of giftedness: analytic, synthetic, and practical abilities. Gardner (1993) suggested seven distinctive categories of intelligent behavior that he categorized as: verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal, as well as the more recently added naturalistic intelligence. Finally, the Three-Ringed conception of giftedness emphasized *giftedness* as being the amalgamation of above-average ability, creativity, and task commitment (Renzulli & Reis, 2008; Schroth & Helfer, 2008). Each of these theories has its strengths—what was significant to the Chinese was not adopting any of the definitions *per se*, but rather exposure that broadened their conceptions of giftedness to include student behaviors beyond those evidenced by test scores.

Instructional Strategies

Chinese classrooms concentrate on teacher-directed, whole group instruction, even during English language instruction. Since language is acquired best when used in authentic settings, this drill and recitation practice is problematic (Passow, 1992; Valdes, 1998). Cognizant that using research-based approaches in the classroom leads to better student achievement, Knox College students and faculty sought solutions that would be both practicable and possible (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2007). One of the American education system's great achievements is nurturing student creativity and resiliency (Renzulli & Reis, 2008; Smutny & von Fremd, 2009). This ability to develop creative thinking, and the capacity to serve diverse learners, is much envied in Asian nations (Renzulli & Reis, 2008). American conceptions of effective teaching consider curricular goals, inclusiveness, and instructional methods to reach and support students (Perkins, 1996; Schroth, 2007b; Ward, 1980). Optimally, teaching captures and enlightens interaction between the child and society (Dewey, 1900/1990). To that end, instruction is perceived as best taking root when children investigate real-life problems that touch upon and affect their world (Schroth, 2007b). Open-ended problems, with open-ended solutions, spur a child's best efforts and most complete their engagement because of the high level of interest to the child (Schroth, 2007b).

Constraints facing teachers in Chinese classrooms, including the student/teacher ratio, scarcity of resources, and a test-driven culture, caused us to limit the options presented to Chinese teachers. Options remained, however, that could provide a more child-centered

approach and that would allow children more autonomy with regard to their education (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). These options included using primary resources and children's literature, encouraging student autonomy by asking open-ended questions, getting elaboration of student answers through extension activities such as art or writing, and promoting reflection and interaction amongst students (Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Renzulli & Reis, 2008; Schroth, 2007a; Smutny & von Fremd, 2009; Tomlinson, 2003). When promoting change of teaching practices, of course, sometimes incremental change is more effective than wholesale transformation (Fullan, 2001; Tomlinson, 2003; Tomlinson, Brimijoin & Narvaez, 2008).

Assessment

The scarcity of resources for gifted education in China has made its assessment chiefly test-based and highly competitive (Shi & Zha, 2000). Student test scores determine entrance into middle school, high school, and university programs (Lee & Ho, 2005; Li & Sze, 1997; Wu, Cho, & Munandar, 2000). Although such formal assessments provide a wealth of information for teachers and parents, additional information gathered by informal, performance-based assessments is equally valuable in documenting student performance and adjusting instruction to maximize learning (Renzulli & Reis, 2008; Smutny & von Fremd, 2009; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2007). Consequently, portfolios were introduced to the Chinese teachers as a way of augmenting test performance. Portfolios are useful to teachers of gifted students for several reasons. First, they encourage gifted students participation in a broad range of activities in and across their interest areas (Renzulli & Reis, 2008). Second, portfolios allow teachers to observe, and document enthusiasm for, reflection about, and selection of student performance (Renzulli & Reis, 2008; Smutny & von Fremd, 2009; Tomlinson, 2003). Third and last, portfolios allow teachers and students to make determinations about subsequent instruction and activities that build upon positive reactions to previous experiences (Renzulli & Reis, 2008).

Although keeping track of student work appealed to the Chinese teachers, they had some trouble with the portfolio's mandate to focus on student strengths rather than deficiencies. All too often, we as teachers focus on what students cannot do, or cannot do as well as we would like. Portfolios ask that teachers and students concentrate instead on the identification of the most positive aspects of each student's learning (Renzulli & Reis, 2008; Tomlinson, 2003). Portfolios are a marvelous way of documenting students' preferred learning styles, leadership strengths, motivation, and creativity *as well as* their academic strengths (Renzulli & Reis, 2008). Students should play the major role in selecting the materials the portfolio includes for them to be most effective as an assessment tool (Smutny & von Fremd, 2009). Based upon their prior training, student selection of portfolio content was also a difficult concept for the Chinese teachers to accept, although some embraced this as a way to empower students.

Chinese Perceptions of American Education

Significant differences in teaching styles and attitudes about schooling exist between American and Chinese schools and students. The Chinese students' enthusiasm, positive attitudes, and work ethics were remarkable. When Knox College students and faculty arrived for the first time at Anhui Normal University, for example, hundreds of Chinese students were there holding signs and applauding their arrival. This passion was generated in an environment where the students had few material resources. For example, Chinese students wore the same clothes to class daily, and lived four to an 8' by 12' unheated dorm room, for which they paid ¥800 (approximately $120) for a calendar year, which included full board. Although many Chinese students relied on relatives taking second or third jobs to come up with this amount, they were determined to share what they had with Knox College students and faculty, insisting, for instance, on paying ¥30 for a roll or soft drink for their guests. Despite, or perhaps because of, their extreme paucity of resources, Chinese students demonstrated intense dedication to their studies and devotion to their teachers. This dedication ameliorated the learning process, especially when new methods were introduced. The Chinese students with whom Knox College students and faculty interacted were more familiar with the listen-and-learn method instead of a more interactive environment that promotes participation. The Chinese students demonstrated an impressive understanding and production of written English, often better than that of students in American classrooms. First-year Chinese undergraduates also demonstrated an amazing familiarity with the English literary canon, having read and understood such authors as William Shakespeare, Thomas Hardy, Jane Austen, James Joyce, and Mark Twain. Based upon these achievements, their system certainly has undeniable merits.

Since the teaching strategies Knox College students and faculty introduced required great amounts of movement, enthusiasm, and class discussion, it took a while for the Chinese students to feel comfortable expressing their opinions, to teachers as well as their peers. Creating a positive learning environment was a difficult task at first, but after the Chinese students saw growth in their communication skills, they soon trusted the methods introduced. Chinese students, for example, found conducting a class outdoors in the sun an unbelievable difference to the practices to which they had previously encountered. The Chinese students possessed an insatiable desire to understand, discuss, and embrace many of these differences, specifically regarding the educational experience. The most common questions that arose with regard to American culture were centered on this educational experience, and classroom

discussions regularly converted to lengthy personal discussions outside of the classroom. Students often commented on Knox College students' liberal use of small group discussions, skits, children's stories, and role playing, comparing and contrasting these generally common American educational practices to their usual lecture and occasional question/answer based format. After sustained exposure to these methods, the Chinese began to enjoy the interactive activities. The faculty of Anhui Normal University commented upon the joyous expressions on their students' faces and indicated that the Chinese students were learning and retaining important information at a much faster rate than before as indicated by assessments of the students' progress.

Conclusion

By the end of the journey, the Knox College students and faculty felt privileged to have been a part of the Chinese students' learning experiences. The consistently gracious, kind, and intellectually curious Chinese students made working with them easy, enjoyable, and energizing. Administrators at Anhui Normal University had hoped the trip would bring more student-centered practices to teacher candidates who would shortly be working with gifted students in the classroom. To that end, Knox College students and faculty were also proud to see the improvements that the Chinese students made. The Chinese students' oral communication became much more comprehensible and their reading and writing gains were astounding, especially since the work was in their second language. The dedication of the Chinese students was palpable, as was their sense of accomplishment from learning something new. As the relationship between Knox College and Anhui Normal University continues and grows, both institutions and their respective members will benefit from the exchange of ideas and perspectives.

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Parent/School Communication in Gifted Education

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Since gifted education is optional in Ohio's schools, there needs to be good communication between the school and parents of gifted children to effectively supplement the school's offerings. The best place to start this communication is during the notification that parents receive about testing and identifying students as gifted individuals. In this study, we examine how initial communication takes place, and what other forms of communication are offered by the schools.

Notifying parents about identification procedures is important because, in essence, what the school district is saying to a parent is that your child is in some way different from about 95% of the other children. Children who have been identified as being gifted are not typical learners, and they may require more advanced educational services than can be found in a regular classroom.

Our schools need to educate parents about raising a gifted child. There are many resources and organizations that can be helpful to a parent. Since some districts have gifted programs and others do not, parents need to know what giftedness means regarding their child, and they need to know that some type of enrichment or mentoring is merited for their child. Parental knowledge, education and intervention are vital to meeting a child's needs no matter what services the schools provide. A school may or may not have a suitable gifted program, but that does not change the fact that parents need to be empowered and encouraged to provide a challenging and nurturing environment for their child.

This study looks at the method and degree of communication used by school districts in Ohio to inform parents that their child is gifted, and the educational offerings provided to both students and parents. This information is important because it can be the cornerstone in a bridge of communication between the school and parent. School funding and government programs cannot replace the positive impact that an empowered and informed parent can have upon meeting the needs of a child who has been identified as gifted. According to the book, ***Genius Denied*** (2005) by Jan and Bob Davidson, founders of the Davidson Institute for Talent Development, "Parents play a more important role in a child's development than do schools." Everybody wins when schools and parents work together to help meet the needs of a gifted child.

Overview

Nancy Padak and Timothy Rasinski's article, "Home-School Partnership in Literacy Education," stressed the importance of parents and teachers working together. They were specifically looking at a reading program called Fast Start; however, they were advocating parental involvement in a child's education. Given the constraints of school based instruction, the opportunity to expand instruction is welcomed and a natural place for this expansion is the home (Padak & Rasinski, 2006). Children thrive when their parents are involved in providing an enriching environment. The theory supports the idea that including parents in their children's education is deep and compelling (Padak & Rasinski, 2006).

In an even more recent paper published in January 2007, William Jeyes from California State University concluded in his meta analysis that home environment and parental programs have substantial positive effects (Jeyes, 2007). His meta analysis included 52 studies to determine the influences of parental involvement on the educational outcomes of urban secondary school children. Parental involvement has positive effects for both white and minority children (Jeyes, 2007).

However, we did find one review of research that concluded that parental programs do not influence student educational outcomes. (Mattingly, Prislin, McKenzie, Rodriguez, and Kayzar, 2002). The Mattingly study did not contain a statistical analysis or a meta analysis. Also, it only looked at parent programs and not at other educational methods such as handouts, websites or other relevant information. The conclusions of this study are the minority view. Most agree that parental involvement is positive for the child.

If parents are aware of their child's giftedness and they are educated in what it means to be considered gifted, then they can also become more aware of the importance of home enrichment and groups, clubs, and lessons. Parental enrichment often plays a more pivotal role in talent development than school-based programs (Kubilius & Lee, 2004). If gifted program coordinators offered information on out-of-school enrichment options to the parents when they were first informed of their child's status, then the child would have a better chance to thrive and reach his/her potential. Many parents are not aware of gifted education and the gifted identification process. There are few gifted programs that have an education component for parents, and communication between parents and schools has been problematic (VanTassel-Baska, 2006). "Data across studies suggested that parents were dissatisfied with communication about the program. . . ." (VanTassel-Baska, 2006, p. 208)

Nancy Robinson, from the University of Washington, points out in her article that gifted children are a woefully underserved population. She challenged gifted educators to do a better job, and notes that they need to improve parental education (Robinson, 2006). Since parental contact has been found to be important, it becomes essential for gifted program coordinators to establish rapport with parents when they make their initial contact.

The purpose of the study was to examine how school districts in Ohio inform parents that their child has been identified as gifted. By looking at the way a school district communicates with parents that their child has been identified as gifted, we will have a glimpse into the school and parent relationship. When a school practices good initial communication with parents, it encourages parents to become involved. Parental involvement becomes even more important when a school does not have a gifted program. When no gifted program exists for a particular grade, parental enrichment and support become paramount. The time when a child is initially identified provides an opportunity to point the parents in the right direction, and to teach them about the necessity of enrichment opportunities.

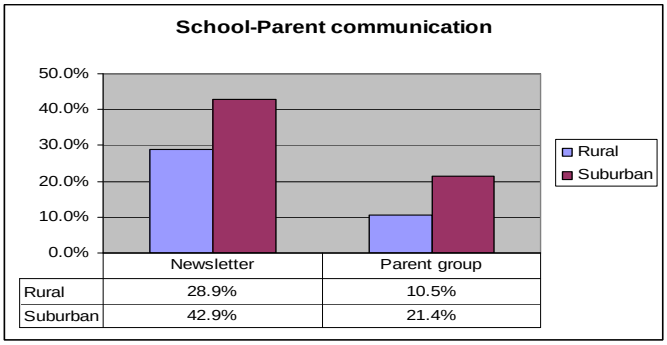
In this self-reporting study, conducted during the spring of 2007, we mailed anonymous surveys to 92 of 614 randomly selected school districts throughout the state of Ohio. The letters were addressed to the gifted program coordinator of each district, and were mailed to a particular district's education service center, the gifted education office at a school, or the school's administrative office. In order to generate a list of districts, we initially selected a random sample of 100 districts. Eight were not included in our final mailing for several reasons including: not being able to find the correct address for a gifted program coordinator, the school district was actually an online school run by an education service center, or it was a vocational school. This study looked at traditional brick and mortar districts only. The sample, using random numbers, was taken from a list of all school districts that were listed on the Ohio Department of Education's website in the spring of 2007. The sample was not stratified.

Results

Out of the 92 surveys that were sent out to Ohio school districts, 59 were completed and returned (64% response rate). Of the 59 we received, 55 or 95% indicated that their district did have a gifted program. Three rural and one unidentified district did not have a gifted program. Comparing rural and suburban districts, we found that 100% of suburban districts reported having a gifted program

compared to 92.1% of rural districts. This is a high percentage of districts, but there are several things to keep in mind; the question only asked if they have a program, and then they were supposed to indicate in which grades from kindergarten through 12th grade. A school district may only have a program in one or two grades. Furthermore, there is a question of whether there would be a lower return rate from districts without a gifted program. Such districts might not have completed the survey.

When it comes to notifying parents of test results that identify a child's giftedness, districts are doing an excellent job. They seem to be following the minimum standard required by state law. All but 2 or 96.6% indicated that their district always notifies parents. 100% of those indicated that they notify parents with a letter. However, when it came to methods that might involve more one-on-one communication directly with the parent, the districts did not fare as well. Only 3.4% indicated that, along with a letter, they also include a meeting in their notification process, 1.7% indicated that they also notify via telephone, and 1.7% with email. 89.7% reported using written education plans. One wonders to what extent parents are participating in the process of creating such a plan.



	Newsletter	Parent group
Rural	28.9%	10.5%
Suburban	42.9%	21.4%

Percent of Districts that Send a Gifted Newsletter or have Gifted Parent Groups

The survey also attempted to measure methods of ongoing parent/gifted education communication beyond the initial identification. We found that 33.9% of the districts send gifted newsletters to parents and 15.3% of all districts reported having gifted parent groups. Suburban districts have more newsletters and gifted parent groups than rural districts. A gifted newsletter is sent to parents in 42.9% of suburban districts and 28.9% of rural districts. Parent groups exist in 21.4% of suburban districts and 10.5% of rural districts.

The designation of urban, rural or suburban was reported by districts on the survey. Four districts either did not indicate whether they were urban, rural or suburban or they were inconclusive. There were three responses from urban districts, and all three indicated they had a gifted program. However, a sample of three is too small to be used in a statistical analysis. It is interesting to note that one of the three urban districts sent a gifted newsletter to the home, and two out of the three indicated that they have a gifted parent group.

There seem to be slight differences in the services provided by rural and suburban districts. A t-test (confidence level of 0.05) showed that these differences were not statistically significant. Therefore, in most cases, services such as parent groups and newsletters provided by some districts are not dependent on the type of district. We did not test for significant differences between the urban and other districts since their number in the sample was too small.

71.2% reported that they send parents general information about giftedness, while 76.3% send out gifted information that relates to their district programs. However, when it comes to sending parents information about outside resources that can be used in a home setting, only 47.5% indicated that they send out such information. 86.4% are aware of the Ohio Association of Gifted Children's parent handbook, and 75.0% thought that it would be helpful to parents.

For districts that do not have a gifted program or for those that do not have a complete gifted program from grades K through 12, students may need enrichment from home activities. Improved communication and information from the school might help parents to reach those students who are not receiving gifted services or enrichment at school. If it is not being done at school, then it is imperative that it occur in the home. We need to foster home enrichment opportunities. If not, then we as a society run the risk of having failed the gifted student.

What does Ohio's gifted education look like? Of those districts that do have a gifted program, 81.8% have pull-outs, 36.4% have enrichment, 56.4% use differential instruction, 7.3% use a mentor program, 9.1% utilize on-line supplements and 61.8% use acceleration. 32.7% use other methods which could mean self-contained gifted classrooms.

Gifted programs in Ohio are most prevalent in the 4th and 5th grades, and are the least prevalent in kindergarten. Clearly, there are gaps in gifted services. In high school, this is probably due to the fact that many high schools now offer advanced placement (AP) courses where students can earn college credit, or post secondary educational opportunity (PSEO) programs where they attend a college campus. These programs are important and can be valuable, but they were not a topic of this study.

Conclusion

Overall, Ohio gifted program coordinators seem to be doing a good job of notifying parents of children who have been identified as gifted. Some districts are reaching out to parents via gifted newsletters and parent groups. However, not all of Ohio's gifted children are receiving gifted programming in the same manner or in the same grade levels. Ohio's gifted education is diverse and unbalanced in its structure.

One way to ensure that our gifted children's needs are met is for the schools and gifted program coordinators to actively promote enrichment that can take place in the home. This type of enrichment will help to fill the gaps in the grades where no gifted program exists or function as a supplement to existing gifted programming. Currently, less than half of the districts surveyed indicated that they provided parents with outside information or resources to be used in a home setting. We contend that more can be done to inform parents about gifted education and enrichment opportunities.

Communication is a key component in reaching out to parents. When a student is identified, along with the required letter, it might be helpful for teachers of the gifted or coordinators to explore the possibility of having a face-to-face meeting with the parents. A meeting would provide the opportunity for parents and teachers of the gifted or coordinators to talk about the unique needs of that particular child, and the possible limitations of the school's gifted education program. Such a meeting might also produce a more meaningful and useful written education plan. Parents and schools need to work together to ensure that the needs of Ohio's gifted students are met.

Since this survey was based upon self-reports and anonymous, there was no mechanism for checking for errors or gross misunderstandings. Terms such as "gifted education," "gifted program," "written education plan" and "gifted parent group" were not purposely defined or qualified because it was assumed that, in the field of gifted education, there is enough common understanding of these terms so that further definitions were unnecessary. Some gifted program coordinators serve several school districts while others serve only one. It is possible that some of them may have a more informed view of parent communication methods used in a district than others who completed the survey. This could also be the case for teachers of the gifted who may or may not have more of an administrative role.

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N. Scott Momaday: Native American Creative Writer, Artist and Activist[1]

Dorothy Clare Massalski University of Arizona Tucson, Arizona

I wish to introduce to you N. Scott Momaday, Kiowa Indian poet, author, painter, and American Indian cultural activist from America's Great Plains, and my teacher and friend. This biographical sketch is presented through the literary technique that Momaday is credited as creating, a unique history/memoir that he developed in his book **The Way to Rainy Mountain** (1969, University of New Mexico Press). I do not pretend to know all of N. Scott Momaday – he has written his childhood autobiography in **The Names: A Memoir** (1976, Harper & Row) and is currently at work writing his adult autobiography. No doubt the adult biography will include information about his Pulitzer Prize in 1967 for **House Made of Dawn** (1968, The New American Library), his many books of poetry, his work with Ken Burns on the PBS special, *The West*, his pioneering work for all American Indians in securing legislation that required the return of American Indian sacred artifacts from museums and private holdings to their ancestral homes, and the establishment of the National Museum of the American Indian on the Mall in Washington, D.C. in 2004.

My association with N. Scott Momaday began as a graduate student at the University of Arizona where Momaday was a Regents Scholar in Oral Tradition scholarship. I remained his student until his retirement and we continue to celebrate our friendship. My last writing for Dr. Momaday was a "creative interpretation" of his seminal innovative book, **The Way to Rainy Mountain** (1969, University of New Mexico Press), a revolving telling of myth, history, memoir and return of the cycle of myth, history and memoir. He encouraged me to attempt this interpretation of his creative storytelling technique because he thought that this would be a valuable writing technique for creative writing students in exploring the inner truths of stories. I submit this experiment to you as a way to become acquainted with N. Scott Momaday; a biographical mirror through his personal lens, unique to this creative writer's creativity.

I offer excerpts from ***Homage and Home***, my interpretation of Momaday's memoir form. The excerpts illustrate the creative Momaday memoir form and in doing this, reveal Momaday's biographical reality as a keeper of the Oral Tradition among the Kiowas, and, as an interpreter of Oral Traditions to a universal audience.

Prelude

Kiowa Oral Tradition is centered at Rainy Mountain in Oklahoma in the short grass prairie of America's Great Plains near the Wichita Mountains. This is a sacred place to the Kiowa. Here is where the Kiowa meet each summer to celebrate their relationship to the sun, the earth and to each other. Momaday describes Rainy Mountain in his *Introduction* to his Oral Traditions Memoir, **The Way to Rainy Mountain** (1969, University of New Mexico Press):

> "A single knoll rises out of the plain in Oklahoma, north and west of the Wichita Range. For my people, the Kiowas, it is an old landmark, and they gave it the name Rainy Mountains. The hardest weather in the world is there. . . . Loneliness is an aspect of the land. All things in the plain are isolate; there is no confusion of objects in the eye, but *one* hill or *one* tree or *one* man. To look upon that landscape in the early morning, with the sun at your back, is to lose the sense of proportion. Your imagination comes to life, and this, you think, is where Creation was begun."

[1] Selection from **Heroes of Giftedness** (2009). Gifted Education Press: Manassas, VA.

I shall begin this biographical sketch of N. Scott Momaday with the introduction of ***Home and Homage*** written for Dr. Momaday in his Oral Traditions class at the University of Arizona, Tucson, spring 2005.

My Way to Homage and Home

In the spring of 2001, I came across a written remark in my Oral Traditions class notebook about a conversation I had with Dr. Momaday concerning my idea of writing in the style of **The Way to Rainy Mountain** (1969). This marking in my notebook led me to attempt a creative interpretation of Oral Traditions that would follow the cycles of myth, history, memoir and myth (class notes, May 2001).

First in Momaday's formula of spiraling history/memoir in the Oral Tradition, there is myth (sometimes private). This is followed by the historical account and memoir, the private introspective evaluation of myth and history upon the person. Then, in consequence of the evolution of the three elements acting upon each other – myth, history, memoir – the possibility of prophesy is expressed in the coding of myth into the dynamic Oral Tradition. The creative writing exercise that I embarked upon endeavors to illustrate, imitate, and create writing and stories in this Momaday memoir/oral tradition. Through this unique presentation of biography, I have described not only the creative writer, but also the art form that emanated from the elements of stories in his life as a member of a dynamic Oral Traditions community.

I begin this "biography" with "Dressed in Beauty." The myth, history, memoir spiral format introduces the reader to N. Scott Momaday through his creative Oral Traditions form as he first expressed it in **The Way to Rainy Mountain** (1969).

Dressed in Beauty

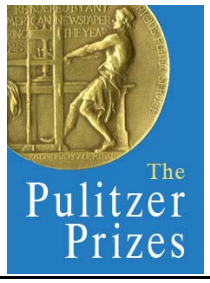
"East of my grandmother's house, south of the pecan grove, there is buried a woman in a beautiful dress." And so, I would wait every semester for this last entry in the **The Way to Rainy Mountain** (1969) to be discussed in class. I imagined Al Momaday (his father), telling him this story as a young man; two folk, a mature man and a maturing boy leaning over the porch railing gazing to the East. I imagined that there was a love beyond all words that encircled that woman buried under their gaze to the East in a beautiful dress. It would be a white buckskin dress, soft and glowing in its white luminosity decorated with elk teeth and elaborate beaded embroidery from the hands of someone like Momaday's grandmother. I imagined that it was a perfect idea protected in the Earth to be propagated anew from the Earth. And, one day in January, 2002, I stood on the Earth just at that vision's distance, not exactly on the Momaday porch but there on the prairie fire apron that surrounds the house and I gazed into the East and the South and I remembered the woman that Al Momaday spoke about to his young son. This woman, this Kiowa woman, I now imagined seeing her buried in a beautiful dress of the Kiowa tradition in a beautiful well-fashioned wooden box. And I imagined a father telling a son about this woman. This story of Al Momaday's, this story of a nameless but not forgotten woman buried in a beautiful dress, inspires the son Scott to write about her in his last entry of **The Way to Rainy Mountain** (1969). This last entry of myth, history, memoir, and an evolving myth prophesy in the Oral Tradition has become N. Scott Momaday's most quoted writing:

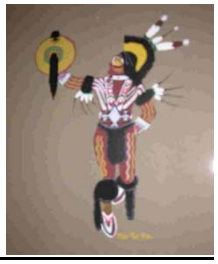
"East of my grandmother's house the sun rises out of the plain. Once in his life a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth, I believe. He ought to give himself up to a particular landscape in his experience, to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder about it, to dwell upon it. He ought to imagine that he touches it with his hands at every season and listens to the sounds that are made upon it. He ought to imagine the creatures there and all the faintest motions of the wind. He ought to recollect the glare of noon and all the colors of the dawn and dusk."

Conclusion

In this exercise of writing a biographical sketch of Kiowa poet N. Scott Momaday, I have endeavored to give you my personal history association with the poet in the style that he created, a regenerating myth memoir. As I remarked in the opening paragraph, it is a limited biography, but it is true and personal.

I commend this exercise in creative writing to gifted students and their teachers. It includes retrospection, introspection, historical research and imagination. The best references for this kind of writing are Momaday's books: **The Way to Rainy Mountain** (1969, University of New Mexico Press), the seminal book; **Names: A Memoir** (1976, Harper & Row), a childhood biography; and **The Man Made of Words** (1997, St. Martin's Griffin), a collection of essays.





Little Dorrit (1857): A Novel for Gifted Students

Michael E. Walters Center for the Study of the Humanities in the Schools

"Ah! Easily said. I am the son, Mr. Meagles, of a hard father and mother. I am the only child of parents who weighed, measured, and priced everything: for whom what could not be weighed, measured and priced, had no existence. . . ." from **Little Dorrit** by Charles Dickens

What is the reason for my continuously writing about and holding up Charles Dickens as an exemplar for gifted students? In answering this question, I will discuss the importance of his novels for these students. It is obvious, based on the involvement of television, theatre and cinema, that I am not the only one impressed by these novels. During the holiday season, **A Christmas Carol** is performed almost every day in New York City. In addition, PBS recently presented a five-part miniseries of **Little Dorrit**, and there are two current mystery novels based upon his life — **Drood** by Dan Simmons (2009, Little Brown) and **The Last Dickens** by Matthew Pearl (2009, Random House).

Little Dorrit describes the machinations, corruption and incompetency of bankers and stock brokers in the 1820s. There is also a good characterization of the impact these economic malignancies have on individuals and society. The main characters reside in a debtors' prison named Marshalsea. Two of the inmates, William Dorrit and his daughter, Amy "Little Dorrit," were actually innocent victims of legal chicanery. After twenty years, William was released from this prison when he claimed a large inheritance and repaid his debts. His daughter and two other children followed their father to freedom. It was difficult for their plight to be brought to the attention of public officials due to the inhumane bureaucracy in early Victorian England. In the novel, this bureaucracy was the "Circumlocution Office" which concentrated on limiting the number of records and documents available for public scrutiny. Dickens was painfully aware of Marshalsea because his father and family were residents there when he was a youngster. While being a spokesman for imprisoned debtors, he kept this biographical episode as his personal dark secret.

Dickens' social critique in **Little Dorrit** was rooted in a private, emotional and psychological wound. In spite of this, he was able to become both a public celebrity and one of the greatest writers in the English language. Gifted students will respond to the ability of an author who not only champions social justice, but who also creates literary works and enduring art. What gives Dickens such power and resonance is his wonderful ability to create characters representing a panorama of humanity.

Little Dorrit's story is related to the present economic crisis. By reading this book, gifted students will have a better understanding of the tragedy and suffering that can result from this type of crisis. Instead of being incarcerated in debtors' prisons, millions are now imprisoned by mortgage foreclosures, severe credit card debts and lost retirements funds. Charles Dickens was not a politician or economist; he was a creative genius and humanitarian. Within ten years of publishing **Little Dorrit** (1857), Karl Marx issued his polemic entitled **Das Kapital** (1867). However, George Bernard Shaw considered Dickens' book to be more "seditious" as a social critique than Marx's.

Among Dickens' later admirers were such British social critics and political philosophers as G. K. Chesterton and George Orwell. Gifted students will benefit by comparing the works of all three authors. They will also perceive **Little Dorrit** as a masterpiece that resonates with contemporary American society.

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