

GIFTED EDUCATION NEWS-PAGE

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GIFTED EDUCATION: PROMISING PRACTICES (2003) BY JOAN FRANKLIN SMUTNY. PHI DELTA KAPPA EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION. BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA.

As director of National-Louis University's Center for Gifted, the author supervises teachers and students enrolled in gifted programs in the Chicago metropolitan area. Her extensive knowledge of and experience with gifted children is clearly reflected in her latest book, which is a comprehensive resource based on Smutny's years of practical experience in managing this highly successful enrichment and differential education program.

Phi Delta Kappa has published Smutny's book in an effort to provide educators with discussions of: (1) major issues in this field; and (2) successful approaches to educating gifted children. She has written a very informative and interesting work for both teachers and parents. It covers important areas concerned with the history of measuring human abilities, flexible procedures for identifying gifted children, program options for young gifted children, and for elementary and secondary level students. The book also has separate chapters that address the needs of special groups such as the creatively gifted, gifted girls, culturally disadvantaged children, and gifted underachievers. The final chapters present excellent discussions of program planning and evaluation. The appendices contain useful information about gifted organizations, journals and magazines, publishers and suppliers, additional websites, and testing.

The chapters on program options and planning are particularly useful since they help to widen the perspective of educational institutions that are building programs for gifted students. For example, Chapter Four, *Program Options for Elementary and Secondary Students*, covers a wide range of topics including acceleration, compacting the curriculum, enrichment, differentiated curriculum, and "casting a wider net" based on June Cox's Pyramid Project (1985). One of the most interesting chapters is Chapter 5, *Understanding and Serving Creatively Gifted Students*. Smutny engages in a fascinating discussion of theories of creativity and how teachers can encourage creative ideas in the arts and literature. Her "Concluding Thoughts" are as follows:

"Students with creative and artistic abilities struggle in classrooms where the dominant way to learn is to receive, record, and reproduce information. To some extent, all gifted children are creative. But some students think so divergently that they may not appear gifted at all. Most of them feel, at one time or another, that their creative being is somehow wrong, inconvenient, irritating to others, and something to suppress in order to get along in school. At the same time, their creative gifts constantly urge them to try the unbeaten path, to synthesize information in original ways, to invent alternative solutions, and to imagine worlds beyond 'the known.'

"A fourth-grader once said, 'Most of the time, I just try to figure out what the teacher wants and do it. After school, I can be myself again.' Creative students should not have to wait until after school to be themselves. A great many models exist that can guide these students to do creative work in the context of almost any subject. Integrating the arts into the curriculum also gives them the freedom to use their unique talents and learning styles to think, perceive, reason, compare, synthesize, and discover. Gifted students crave this freedom to create. Providing them with tools that enhance creative thinking and opportunities to use creative media will prepare our most imaginative and innovative minds for a lifetime of contribution." (pp. 88-89).

It is unfortunate that highly creative children are being ignored and penalized in this era of frenzied high stakes testing. The chapters on creativity and others in **Gifted Education: Promising Practices** will remind teachers and parents that there is a more enlightened and positive side to educating the gifted than the currently popular state-mandated, lock-step curriculum and testing. We highly recommend Joan Smutny's new book for its upbeat approach to educating and nurturing American education's stepchildren, gifted students.

BECOMING AN INVITATIONAL LEADER: A NEW APPROACH TO PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL SUCCESS (2003) BY WILLIAM W. PURKEY AND BETTY L. SIEGEL. HUMANICS TRADE GROUP PUBLICATIONS. ATLANTA, GEORGIA.

Educators and parents of gifted students will benefit greatly from reading this book and learning about the background for its concepts – the International Alliance for Invitational Education. Purkey is a founder of this leadership organization and a Professor at The University of North Carolina - Greensboro. He has written numerous books and articles on Invitational Education. Siegel is also a founder of the Alliance and President of Kennesaw State University in Cobb County, Georgia. She has lectured on leadership at more than 100 colleges and universities across the world.

The authors' ideas are very adaptable to problems and issues in gifted education. In addition, they can be used by leaders who work with teachers and parents of the gifted. Teachers should consider applying the principles discussed by Purkey and Siegel to educating gifted children and interacting with their parents. This well-organized and positive leadership model is designed to produce effective and

respected leaders. It shuns the “top down” approach to leadership which usually results in disastrous consequences in education, politics and business. This negative, anti-human method has produced many contemporary disasters in our society including the decline of public school systems, the looting of major corporations (and the resulting traumatic effects on investors’ lives), workplace violence, and the deterioration of our nation’s intellectual icons such as The New York Times.

Teachers of the gifted should study the methods discussed in **Becoming an Invitational Leader** to determine how they can be applied to differential education programs. Clearly, these methods can be used in teaching gifted children, but more important, they should be used to transform these students into Invitational Leaders. The authors define Invitational Leadership as “. . . a generous and genuine turning toward others in empathy and respect, with the ultimate goal of collaborating with them on projects of mutual benefit. The emphasis shifts from command and control to cooperation and communication, from manipulation to cordial summons, from exclusiveness to inclusiveness, from *subordinates* to *associates*.” (p. 4). The first chapter discusses how respect, trust, optimism and intentionality are crucial components of this type of leadership. In regard to respect, Purkey and Siegel say, “The Invitational Leader is always aware that his or her success depends upon other people, and for this reason respecting others is a crucial element of leadership. The question for the Invitational Leader is not ‘How can others make me a success?’ but rather ‘How can I summon my colleagues to reach their full potential?’ . . .” (p. 9). They also say, “To act intentionally, with purpose, to act with an aim, is the very essence of Invitational Leadership. The more intentionality we have as leaders, the more accurate our judgments, the more disciplined commitment to action, and the more decisive our behavior. The leader’s energy, vitality, and commitment are directly linked to his or her intentionality.” (p. 20).

In their chapter on ***Levels of Functioning*** (Chapter 3), they argue that the best type of leadership is ***Level Four: Intentionally Inviting: The Door Is Opened Wide***. “. . . By analogy, leaders who function at the intentionally inviting level are like pilots of large jet airliners. Thanks to their specialized knowledge they can ‘fly on instruments’ around and over dangerous weather fronts. This ability to chart and maintain a dependable flight pattern spells the difference between their success and failure in reaching their destinations in a safe and desirable manner.” (p. 67). It should be noted that one of the best examples of the intentionally inviting leader is Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart Corporation (**Made in America: My Story**, Bantam Books, 1992). His entire leadership style was to invite participation in his business by family, friends, management and associates. His practical and humanitarian approach to leadership exemplifies the extraordinary level of success that one can achieve by using the principles described by Purkey and Siegel. The chapters in Part II present a detailed discussion of how an individual can develop the skills to be professionally and personally inviting with oneself and others. The ideas presented in this section are closely related to a successful life.

The authors’ writing style is clear and interesting. They are knowledgeable and constantly demonstrate their wisdom concerning leadership. We were particularly impressed with their references throughout the book to great thinkers and intellectuals such as Thomas Jefferson, John Dewey, Walter Bennis, General George Patton, Carl Sandburg, Erich Fromm, Ken Kesey, Shakespeare, Louis Pasteur, Albert Ellis, Saul Bellow, C.P. Cavafy, Abraham Maslow, A.A. Milne, Walker Percy, and L.S. Vygotsky. For the educator of the gifted and curious mind, this is a wonderful book for starting the voyage to becoming an Invitational Leader.

LEARNING FROM HISTORY: 1941, STRUGGLE FOR VICTORY
BY MICHAEL E. WALTERS
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“The Greek guard who stood watch on the Acropolis was ordered to raise the swastika banner next to the Greek flag as a tribute to the Fuehrer. The soldier refused the German command, and then threw himself off the wall, falling five-hundred feet to his death.” (From **1941: Our Lives In A World On The Edge** by William K. Klingaman, p. 210).

One of the attributes of giftedness is a sensibility for history. To gifted students, history is not merely a collection of facts but the drama of the human condition. They understand that the past can teach lessons on how to respond to contemporary problems. The year 1941 was a crucial time. During that year it appeared that the dark side of humanity was going to predominate. However, the year displayed a sunny side as well through humanity’s ability to endure and combat the evil powers of the Nazis. William K. Klingaman’s book, **1941: Our Lives In A World On The Edge** (Perennial Library, 1989), is a narrative chronicle of that year. It includes the cultural, sports, and entertainment events as well as political occurrences. His writing style is almost novelistic – he makes the reader experience the year as if he was there personally. This style entertains, instructs and inspires. It is not enough to be aware of the frailties of the human condition but to also be conscience of the ability to transcend them. The struggle of the British, Serbs, Greeks and Russians against Nazi brutality is an important lesson for the present. In 1941, the best that the anti-Nazis could achieve was to struggle and survive. This was not enough although it was the first step to victory. This saga of history is both mental and spiritual food-for-thought. The author has written many other books on the cultural history of the twentieth century. It would be worthwhile for gifted students to read **1941** and his other excellent works such as **The Year Of The Great Crash, 1929** (HarperCollins, 1991). These books provide them with a political, economic and social background for understanding the tumultuous events of the last century and present era.