Issue Focus:

**Professional Development**

Fall 2004  Volume 17, Issue 1

Open Space Communications
P.O. Box 18268, Boulder, Colorado 80308
303 444-7020 - 800 494-6178 / Fax 303 545-6505
dorothy@openspacecomm.com
Professional Development

Features

Professional Development Through Summer Programs and Gifted Education Endorsements...3
- Teacher education through the dynamic model of professional development
  Laurie Croft

Motivations of Teachers Who Differentiate Instruction...6
- Interviews and questionnaires reveal why some teachers differentiate and why some do not
  Taylor Thompson

Professional Development in Texas for Gifted and Talented Teachers...9
- One state’s successful plan for professional development
  Judy O'Neal

Gifted Academy Serves Dual Purpose...11
- Providing a meaningful summer experience for both teachers and students
  Josie McCamish

Can Gifted Education Fit in the World of the Pre-service Teacher?...13
- Providing teachers an opportunity to learn about and work with gifted students
  Nancy J. Bangel & Eric C. Calvert

Keys to Successful Districtwide Differentiation: Training, Time, Practice, and Sharing...17
- Structuring effective staff development
  Carolyn Coil

Columns

Musings: The Five Key Questions in Teacher Professional Development...21
- Moving from gifted to talented
  Miraca U.M. Gross

The Affective Side: Differentiating for the Differentiators...25
- Creating more effective staff development
  Jean Strop

Surfing the Net: Lesson Plans and More...27
- Using the Internet to develop lessons
  Sandra Berger

Book Bag: Patriotic Books for Gifted Readers...30
- Gaining inspiration through books
  Jerry Flack
I believe in teachers. I believe they are among the most dedicated individuals in any profession. I believe they are fully committed to children. I believe their primary goal is to provide kids with the tools needed to live in an unknown future. I also believe that new teachers do not usually enter the profession with the necessary skills for working with students of high ability.

Schools and districts frequently do not offer the necessary support for gifted programming. We know that education funding cuts often begin with gifted/talented services. We are aware that teachers spend their own money on professional development—conferences and workshops, as well as subscriptions to educational publications, and even classroom materials. In addition, teachers use their free time to exchange methods and ideas with colleagues, to learn about children’s needs, and to confer with their students’ parents. Somehow, they work to successfully serve children without the frills of high budgets.

Articles in this issue include ideas for providing professional development, ways to motivate classroom teachers to provide for the gifted, and philosophical strategies to consider for districtwide differentiation. Let us know what your schools are doing for teacher training in gifted education—and what parents are doing to encourage continuing G/T staff development. Contact editor Carol Fertig cfertig@earthlink.net.
Each week, at least one educator contacts me: I was just hired as the talented and gifted teacher at a local school district—I want to learn more about gifted kids, and I need to get my TAG endorsement. I am wondering how to get started. As an administrator at the Connie Belin & Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development, I work with some of the most motivated, committed, and interesting educators in the profession. As a part of the University of Iowa College of Education, the Belin-Blank Center sponsors graduate-level workshops and courses throughout the academic year and provides a wide array of summer programs that allow teachers to strengthen their understanding of the needs of gifted children—and the ways to meet those needs.

Early Commitment to Professional Development

The Belin-Blank Center is a “full-service” center in the field of gifted education, offering assessment and counseling services for students and their families, talent search opportunities for high-ability students, and exciting academic-year and summer programs for students eager to experience authentic challenges in multiple areas of talent development.

The Center’s first efforts, nearly 25 years ago, focused directly on teachers. In 1980, when asked by concerned parents how he might best serve gifted students, Nicholas Colangelo, a new University of Iowa professor, proposed an educational opportunity for classroom teachers. Colangelo believes that every teacher who understands the complex social-emotional and academic needs of gifted students can have a positive impact on hundreds of children during his career.

Iowa law has supplemented the Center’s early focus on the professional development of teachers assigned to work with gifted students. Educators dedicated to ensuring appropriate services for these students organized and lobbied through the Iowa Talented and Gifted Association (ITAG) to guarantee that schools in Iowa identify gifted students, provide services once they are identified, and require endorsements to the educational licensure of teachers working with the gifted.

A coordinated effort to prepare educators to meet the needs of their gifted students makes sense. Those educators who are not well prepared may demonstrate less effective strategies as they interact with gifted students. Their lesson plans may not reflect the complexity or sophistication necessary for effective differentiation, and they may rely extensively on heterogeneous cooperative learning. They may try to have their students with above-level abilities tutor those at risk of being “left behind” on basic skills. Teachers who lack appropriate educational preparation for meeting the unique challenges of above-
average students may not know how to identify or differentiate curriculum for them; and inappropriate educational environments can discourage gifted students, who may become unhappy, uncooperative, or underachievers.

Successful teachers of the gifted have empathy for their students and are committed to the importance of nurturing their widely divergent interests. Teachers who have participated in professional development programs in the field of gifted education focus on differentiated content and strategies that match affective and academic needs. They seek ways to help children develop their areas of passion and excellence, both in school and in the larger community. The effective teacher of the gifted understands how to serve as a catalyst to facilitate the development of a novice learner’s abilities.

National Standards for Professional Development in Gifted Education

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) states that “gifted learners are entitled to be served by professionals who have specialized preparation in gifted education, expertise in appropriate differentiated content and instructional methods, involvement in ongoing professional development, and who possess exemplary personal and professional traits” (1998). NAGC has both minimum and exemplary standards that encourage educators to understand both psychological and programming concerns associated with gifted students. The exemplary professional development standards advocate that:

- all specialist teachers in gifted education should possess a certification/specialization or degree in gifted education.
- only teachers with advanced expertise in gifted education should have primary responsibility for the education of gifted learners.
- all personnel working with gifted learners should participate in regular staff development programs.
- all teachers of gifted learners should continue to be actively engaged in the study of gifted education through staff development or graduate degree programs.
- all school staff should be provided ongoing staff development in the nature and needs of gifted learners, and appropriate instructional strategies.

The typical endorsement offered in the United States includes a balance of pedagogical theory and practice.

- historical and contemporary issues in gifted education
- the nature and assessment of intelligence
- counseling issues in gifted education
- understanding the continuum of essential services for diverse gifted students, including direct instruction, videos, individualized/independent learning, small-group discussions, field experiences, and peer coaching
- best practices for differentiating curricula to meet the needs of intellectually gifted learners
- advanced content in subject areas
- observations of gifted teachers facilitating the development of extraordinary abilities of gifted students

The Iowa Talented and Gifted Endorsement in Gifted Education

The Iowa Talented and Gifted (TAG) Endorsement is an example of the typical endorsement offered by various states. The State of Iowa requires 12 semester hours of coursework from an accredited institution of higher learning. Within these 12 hours, licensed educators must complete at least one credit hour in each of four strands: psychology of the gifted, programming for the gifted, administration and supervision of gifted programs, and the practicum experience in gifted programs. Since the spring of 2000, pre-service teachers have been permitted to complete the endorsement process while they are pursuing their undergraduate degrees.

Professional development opportunities in Iowa are available throughout the academic year and increasingly via distance-learning formats. For example, Psychology of Giftedness and Assessment of Giftedness and Academic Talent is offered during alternating fall semesters. Introduction to Gifted Education, on the other hand, is offered at any time as a web-based guided independent study. Curriculum Concepts for Gifted and Talented Students is offered during the spring semester. Various one-hour workshops are provided via the Iowa Communications Network, a statewide fiber-optics network that facilitates synchronous two-way interaction among participants. Most educators, however, take advantage of the wide array of workshops available during the summer.
**Practicum in Gifted Education**
The practicum experience combines a core of common readings with individual readings and research to help teachers achieve self-selected goals in the field. Participating teachers can demonstrate attainment of their goals through whatever products best reflect their learning: traditional essays; publishable articles; PowerPoint presentations; lists of resources for a proposed staff in-service about some area of gifted education; pamphlets or information sheets for students, parents, or colleagues. In other words, participants are encouraged to define appropriate products very broadly, modeling the same open attitude that is important for gifted children. The final component of practicum is to observe master teachers working with gifted students or to teach a new unit to gifted children.

The Belin-Blank Dynamic Model of Professional Development
In addition to the academic-year courses and summer workshops in gifted education, the Belin-Blank Center developed the Dynamic Model of Professional Development as a unique program that models key components of effective gifted education. Each summer, teachers assemble together as a residential community of scholars to experience the fast-paced, challenging environment that gifted learners love. Each cadre is homogeneous in two important ways: all participants are educators, professionals in a common domain; and all are committed to personal and professional growth in the field of gifted education. The summer program reconnects teachers with a passion for learning, providing readings and presentations, as well as opportunities for extensive discussions, small-group activities, and individual research and presentations. The Dynamic Model facilitates teacher exploration of personal attitudes toward high-ability students and gifted programs by allowing teachers to enlarge their understandings of the nature and needs of gifted students. The program familiarizes educators with the available resources in the field, and it both introduces and models best practices in gifted education. Pre-assessments of participants’ attitudes toward and knowledge about gifted education help shape each session. Post-assessments following the programs have demonstrated that participating teachers develop
- significantly more positive attitudes toward gifted education
- understanding that gifted education does not negatively impact other students
- realization that identification and special programming is not detrimental to the social and emotional development of gifted children
- awareness that gifted students do have unique needs and benefit from special programs with true peers

The Dynamic Model reflects what Sosniak (1999) has labeled “the second phase” of the development of talent in a specific field: formal, disciplined, and sophisticated learning; the dedication of time with a community of like-minded learners; and the mastery of deep understandings, in this case, in gifted education. Comments from participants include the following:
- This program honors us, celebrates our mission as teachers, and at the same time serves gifted children, present and future, in ways they have long deserved and only recently have begun to receive.
- You’ve provided us the chance to live with intellectual peers and find support groups. I will use this new knowledge in the classroom, with parents/teachers/administrators in my district, etc. My love for teaching has been reaffirmed!
- I have been enriched by this experience. It has been a journey of self-discovery. My students, all my students, can do nothing but benefit when I as a teacher have had such a wonderful educational experience. I cannot give what I do not have. I now have so much more to offer.

**References**
Motivations of Teachers Who Differentiate Instruction

Taylor Thompson

To some teachers, the term “differentiation” means to do different things for the students who need remediation or who have disabilities. To other teachers, differentiation refers to any provision for student differences, including for those students who are more capable than average. There are also many teachers who do not use differentiation at all. The reasons for not using it are familiar to us all: too many students, not enough time, and lack of know-how. I decided to investigate, through informal means, factors that encourage and enable those teachers who do differentiate.

Review of the Literature

Tomlinson (1995) recognized that teachers’ initial efforts at differentiation were more “reactive,” meaning that “minor modifications” were made only as student needs became evident. After appropriate professional development at the middle school where her study was conducted, the agreed-upon definition of differentiation became, “consistently using a variety of instructional approaches to modify content, process, and products in response to learning readiness and interest of academically diverse students.” Note the use of the term consistently and of modifying content as well as process and product.

The middle school teachers in Tomlinson’s study agreed that good differentiation requires flexible and block scheduling, where the daily schedule is organized into larger blocks of time to allow flexibility for a diversity of instructional activities. Tomlinson also concluded that teachers who began to differentiate fairly quickly and willingly were those she described as “inquiners about students” and who “saw…disequilibrium or ‘disturbance’” as a “catalyst for growth” (p. 85).

In their two-year “Mustard Seed” project, Johnsen et al. (2002) trained teachers to differentiate for the gifted in their classrooms through staff development supplemented with mentor teachers and other support. The researchers analyzed the changes made by the teachers in their classroom practices. Among the critical factors resulting in successful differentiation were positive attitudes, mentoring, colleague and administrative support, and active staff development. Inhibiting factors included departmentalization of subjects in addition to weak colleague or administrative support.

Interviews and Observations

In seeking to determine what teachers know about differentiation, I interviewed and observed teachers and graduate students. The original questions asked of the interviewees follow:

1. What do you do to differentiate instruction, however you define it?
2. Why do you differentiate?
3. How did you learn to differentiate?
Additional interviews were conducted with teachers in other school districts, including teachers of the gifted, and with teachers enrolled in a course titled Practicum in Gifted Education. Teacher-created units that incorporated differentiation were analyzed. Pre- and post-assessments were given to teachers who participated in differentiation classes. These assessments were then analyzed also.

Interviews revealed that many teachers misunderstand differentiation. Middle and high school teachers are more likely than elementary teachers to not agree that differentiation should take place within each class. Middle school teachers who were interviewed and who were most favorable toward differentiation were those who were originally certified as elementary teachers.

Teachers who have not been exposed to much professional development about differentiation are more likely to provide for individual needs of struggling students than for high-achieving and gifted students. Some teachers are comfortable with planning differentiated assignments but express reservations about dealing with the logistics (student behavior, tactfulness, available space).

Teachers, especially those without appropriate training, develop differentiation techniques situation by situation, rather than by systematic planning. The exception to this is planning for reading groups.

The various ways teachers differentiate include the following:

- In subjects that are sequential, like math and reading, higher-achieving students are provided ways to work ahead in the material (vertical extension), in separate groups or in individually-paced work.
- After teaching and discussing content with the whole class, the teacher assigns different students alternate ways to assemble the information in some sort of project presentation or follow-up activity. In some cases he may provide students with choices of how to do this. Most often, the teacher assigns different activities based on the child’s reading level.
- Center-like activities are set up where activities are based on a certain concept or task, but there are several task choices within that concept. Students do these activities individually, in pairs, or in small groups. A variation of this is where different activities are not set up in center fashion but are offered by the teacher.

- Students are divided into heterogeneous groups and are all expected to perform the same basic task. They are assigned roles within those groups that are appropriate for their strengths.
- Students are grouped homogeneously according to general ability or achievement with each group being assigned the same basic task. The teacher either assists each group to differing degrees or requires different levels of products from different groups.
- Students choose tasks most interesting to them. Although these may vary in difficulty, the emphasis is on providing projects that appeal to different kinds of interest areas (writing, drawing, performing, constructing, etc.) rather than different degrees of difficulty.
- Teachers match various learning modalities in their students. In some cases the teacher may present all material in various ways so as to “catch” students of different learning styles.
- Classes are ability grouped. The teacher moves faster or more in-depth in classes with stronger students.

“...teachers who began to differentiate fairly quickly and willingly were those...who “saw...disequilibrium or ‘disturbance’” as a “catalyst for growth.””

Teachers differentiate curriculum for a variety of reasons. Some teachers differentiate because it’s required by the principal and/or district, and the school culture encourages it. In some cases, differentiation may be required to serve students with IEPs. A teacher may decide to differentiate because she sees it as the best way to meet all students’ needs. It can also prevent some behavior problems by keeping students actively involved and encouraging them to learn on their own. Some teachers feel that differentiating stimulates their teaching.

Teachers report that they learned differentiation techniques in undergrad methods classes, through professional development programs in their districts, through mentoring, during student teaching or internships, or from colleagues. Some teachers feel that they were self-taught by trial and error and through professional reading.

Significant is the fact that none of the interviewees mentioned that they had learned to differentiate from the G/T teacher acting as a consultant.
Successful Differentiation
There are a number of helpful generalizations that were revealed through interviews and questionnaires.

Some teachers feel that differentiating stimulates their teaching.

• Several differentiating teachers saw themselves as reflective practitioners who try not to get too “comfortable” with their teaching methods. Although these qualities are in large measure personality components, they should be recognized and encouraged by administrators.
• Some commented that it is easier to differentiate when the teacher is very familiar and comfortable with the subject content and if the teacher has taught that subject and grade level for at least a year or two. Schools should encourage teachers to develop expertise in content areas that they have been assigned to teach, and teachers should not be reassigned to different grade levels too frequently.
• Differentiation should not be expected for just gifted students but for all students. For states which require a tenure or internship portfolio, or other list of required competencies, differentiation for gifted and high-achieving students should be required.
• There should be an increase in consulting by gifted specialty teachers.
• Professional development related to differentiating instruction and curriculum should be increased.
• Teachers need to be provided the time and opportunity to develop ongoing differentiated activities.
• Many teachers feel confident in their ability to plan more complex tasks or alternate versions of activities to match student interests and learning styles. However, they express concern about managing large numbers of students within short class periods and having to respond to student or parent questioning of the different requirements within one class. Recommended methods of differentiation for teachers should, therefore, acknowledge the practical difficulties inherent in this kind of teaching—that is, the needs for adequate planning time, behavior management, and working within short class periods at some levels.
• Middle and secondary teaching methods courses must emphasize the importance of differentiating within the classroom. Although most secondary and middle school teacher candidates know the subject matter, method theory is lacking.
• Differentiation should be included in both undergrad and graduate level courses. This could include virtual courses (online).
• Middle and high schools (and some 4th and 5th grade arrangements) should strive to adjust the daily schedule of classes to allow enough time for students to participate in both independent and group work. The concept of middle school “family groups” of classes can help teachers get to know individual students better.

Where to Go from Here?
The informal research into this field needs to go in at least three directions. First, we need to find and document school arrangements which make differentiation more palatable for reluctant teachers.

Second, we need to understand teacher attitudes. There are some professionals who like the challenge of differentiation and get excited about meeting such challenge. Perhaps this trait is something that can be developed in more reluctant teachers.

Third, we need to interview students themselves. How do they respond to teachers’ attempts to nurture them through differentiating, and what can we learn from this?

References
Professional Development in Texas for Gifted and Talented Teachers

Judy O’Neal

What are some of the elements of this plan?

The Region IV Education Service Center (ESC) in Texas has been delivering G/T professional development for almost two decades, and it has a great plan.

Texas is one of 27 states that mandate full or partial gifted education (Shaunessy, 2003). Accountability is provided through standards for professional development, which are outlined in the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students. The plan states that Texas teachers who are going to provide services to identified gifted students in the four core areas of instruction (math, science, social studies, and language arts) are required to take 30 hours of gifted and talented professional development. Teachers who provide instruction and services that are part of the program for gifted students must earn a minimum of six hours of professional development annually in gifted education. In addition, the plan indicates that the 30 hours must include nature and needs of gifted students, assessment of gifted students, and curriculum and instruction of gifted students.

Having a plan in place does help educational specialists organize topics to present to teachers; however, it still is a challenge to present this information to a “captive audience” in an effective manner. The information must be both valid and presented in a format that models good teaching strategies.

Over the past few years, specialists in Texas have worked hard to develop professional development that is successful in giving teachers a good foundation in gifted education. Using research-based studies that list positive and negative characteristics of gifted students helps teachers recognize these students in their classrooms and differentiate the regular curriculum to respond to both intellectual and social/emotional traits. Effective professional development models good teaching strategies. When participants are actively involved with the information, they retain it for longer periods of time. Using cooperative discussion groups, brainstorming activities, and creating mind maps of G/T characteristics help participants visualize the many faces of the gifted and talented child. Modeling teaching methods like concept attainment, Socratic questioning, jurisprudence, simulations, inquiry-based instruction, problem-based learning, and independent study introduces teachers to examples of effective pedagogy for gifted students.

Fortunately, Texas has a strong advocacy group, the Texas Association of Gifted and Talented (TAGT). This group not only supports the Texas State Plan, it added another list of core knowledge areas and teacher competencies—nature and needs, assessment, social and emotional needs, creativity and instructional strategies,
and differentiated curriculum. To assist districts in identifying quality gifted and talented professional development, TAGT developed a system that ensures effective presentation of well organized content. For gifted and talented professional development to be approved by TAGT, a presenter must send a detailed description of the proposed professional development and a resume. If the association does not feel the presenter is qualified, and if the content is not related to one of the core knowledge areas in gifted education, the training will not be approved. This procedure helps large districts better control the quality of training teachers receive.

To assist districts in identifying quality gifted and talented professional development, TAGT developed a system that ensures effective presentation of well organized content.

Even though Texas has a well-defined plan and a strong supportive advocacy group, there are still concerns surrounding G/T professional development.

- Local districts do not always select quality professional development.
- Teachers don’t always put into practice what they learn.
- Professional development is usually generalized for K-12 audiences and does not always meet the individual needs of teachers or their students.
- More topics need to be available for G/T 6-hour updates so that teachers do not repeat classes.

Distance education is gaining popularity. Districts can be more efficient if they offer their teachers online professional development, and teachers can complete the state requirements on their own time. Districts do not have to pay for substitutes, and teachers do not have to drive to a class location. Region IV ESC has been successful in providing two important sessions online: Nature and Needs of the Gifted and Assessing Student Needs for G/T Programs. The online sessions feature video clips, on-screen and hands-on activities, video lectures, and even guest speakers. Participants work independently through three modules, passing an interactive, automatically graded quiz to go from one module to the next. Upon successful completion, a certificate is issued.

Starting with the 2005-2006 school year, all new teachers of the gifted will be required to pass a G/T certification test. Teachers who have previously received a G/T endorsement from a university and teachers who are currently providing services to the gifted and have their 30 hours of G/T training, as well as the six-hour required annual updates, will be “grandfathered” in.

School districts will still be looking for ways to help prepare teachers to work with the gifted, and educational specialists will look for new ways to prepare teachers to pass the G/T certification test. Focused quality professional development will continue to help prepare teachers of the gifted.

Reference

Lark stated that “her eyes were opened” to the characteristics of the intellectually gifted when she listened to a multi-age panel of students. The students were presenting as part of a two-week Academy for Teachers of the Gifted. Each summer Middle Tennessee State University captures the enthusiasm of teachers and students in this cost-free academy, which offers quality professional development for teachers and a week of stimulating learning experiences for approximately 200 students in grades K-12.

Teachers are recruited through online announcements distributed by the university and the state department of education. First priority for enrollment is reserved for teachers who already are teaching classes for the intellectually gifted and who have no training in the field. General education teachers who desire a better understanding of the needs of gifted students are then accepted to fill the remaining spaces. Admission is competitive with approximately one in three applicants being accepted. Teacher enrollment ranges in size, depending on funding. Teacher participants represent diverse school systems that span the state. Teachers have the option of earning six hours of graduate credit, the state requirement for meeting employment standards in gifted education.

As part of orientation to the academy, participants on a multi-age panel speak about personal experiences as intellectually gifted students. Teachers hear the students describe their ongoing struggles with perfectionism, their dislike for cooperative learning experiences in which they are expected to teach other students, and their need for flexible teachers who understand gifted individuals.

During the first week of the academy, teachers receive intensive instruction in the characteristics and needs of gifted students and teaching strategies for addressing those needs. These sessions create the foundation of understanding and prepare the teachers to hear keynote presenters who are national leaders in the field of gifted education.

For the first time, many teachers in the academy become aware of the importance of addressing social and emotional needs of their gifted students, characteristics such as intensity, and why these students respond in unique ways in their classrooms.

By midweek preeminent teachers such as James Parsons, a NASA intern, and Lisa Hubbard, an Einstein Fellow, model effective teaching strategies in the content areas with emphasis on mathematics and science. Dawn Mercer, a NASA educator trainer, shows teachers how to construct rockets from two-liter soft drink bottles, water bottles, electrical tape, and cardboard, with water filling the large bottles as a propellant. Mercer then takes teachers to an open soccer field on campus where she assists them in launching their rockets using an air compressor and portable rocket launcher. As teachers
watch their rockets soar skyward, they exhibit the enthusiasm of school children, and they compete with colleagues to outdistance each other. At the completion of the activity, all realize that sometimes the simplest materials may provide a unique and exciting learning opportunity.

Experienced teachers from the field of gifted education complete the week teaching strategies that incorporate critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity. Teachers learn methods of differentiating instruction by varying depth, complexity, process, and products in curriculum development for gifted learners.

At the end of the first week of the academy, one teacher admitted that she had always felt that motivation is difficult to instill in someone else; instead, one must find it for oneself. She felt, however, that the academy had successfully motivated her.

The second week of the academy consists of action labs where intellectually gifted students provide teachers a venue to implement the learning they acquired during week one. Teachers are divided into four cohorts: primary, intermediate, middle, and high school. A facilitator—a distinguished mentor-teacher who guides the participating teachers in curriculum development for the action labs—leads each cohort.

Students are eligible to attend action labs if they are currently identified and participate in the intellectually gifted programs in either of the two local school systems. Students also are divided into cohorts by grade level clusters. Each cohort of students and teachers is then divided into small groups of two to four teachers and six to eight students for instruction. Students and teachers have full access to university resources. Action lab participants may experience demonstrations in the aerospace lab with flight simulators and wind tunnels, in a recording studio where they record original CDs, and in the television studio where they do a full production from writing a script to telecasting.

Middle school and intermediate cohorts of teachers and students researched and completed units on the history of the Olympics with one group choosing *Athens to Athens* as a theme in preparation for the upcoming competition. An Olympic qualifier in track visited a middle school class and shared with the students his journey from Ghana to the United States and the rigor required to be a world class competitor in his field.

Primary students visited the university’s horticulture department and created musical instruments from a variety of plant parts. Another primary group studied light and the phases of the moon through demonstrations the teachers had learned the previous week.

Funding for the academy varies and is largely dependent upon the creative problem solving strategies of Director Bella Higdon. The state department of education funded the initial academy through a competitive grant. Subsequent academies were funded through a private contribution from the Jennings and Rebecca Jones Foundation. Currently, the academy is funded through an Improving Teacher Quality Grant, also competitively awarded through the Tennessee Higher Education Commission with continuing support from the Jones Foundation.

Teachers credit the gifted academy with being the best staff development they have ever experienced. One teacher described the immersion experience as being the high point of her career. Many teachers commented on their levels of anxiety at the outset of the academy as they were informed that they would be team teaching with a group of strangers. By the end of the academy, teachers marveled at how much they enjoyed the close working relationships and how they had come to understand that student relationships are built when teachers act as “guides on the side,” facilitating learning. Teachers value most highly the interaction with gifted students and the opportunity to network with professionals across the state while learning from eminent leaders in the field.

Students value most highly the opportunity to spend time with clusters of intellectual peers who come from rural, inner city, and suburban schools. Hands-on learning with highly motivated teachers in the action labs results in students returning summer after summer to the academy. A high school student stated in the closing ceremonies that the academy is the only place that she feels it is “cool to be smart.”

Professional development for teachers of the gifted should be comprehensive and ongoing, but until states and local school systems recognize and address that need, a gifted academy for teachers and students provides an effective model of professional development for teachers and a time for gifted students to learn alongside their intellectual peers.
Can Gifted Education Fit in the World of the Pre-service Teacher?

Nancy J. Bangel
Eric C. Calvert

Some gifted students are fortunate to receive nearly full-time instruction in classrooms with gifted peers, led by teachers specially trained to meet their needs; however, the overwhelming majority of gifted students spend most of the school day in classrooms with students of all levels of ability led by teachers with little or no training in gifted education. This creates a great need for colleges of education to help all teachers entering the classroom to understand and meet the needs of gifted students. Few teachers advance their knowledge of gifted education through the endorsement, licensure, and/or graduate programs. This leaves our gifted students with well-intentioned but untrained teachers. The Gifted Education Resource Institute at Purdue University (GERI) considers it essential to offer programs that advance the knowledge of pre-service teachers, in addition to those at the graduate level, in the characteristics and needs of gifted learners.

Research consistently shows that most gifted students who receive instruction that is appropriately challenging and stimulating are highly successful in school. However, those who do not receive appropriate instruction often underachieve or create classroom management challenges. This is unfair, not only to the gifted students, but also to beginning teachers who may have enthusiasm and commitment to serve all their students but lack the skills and experience to be successful. Unfortunately, there is little room in most pre-service teacher preparation programs to learn about gifted education.

GERI provides direct instructional opportunities with gifted students through participation in the Purdue Super Saturday Program. As an enrichment program for preschool through grade 8, the Purdue Super Saturday Program offers an advanced learning environment for both the students and their instructors. The goals of the program include accelerated, challenging curriculum for gifted students while providing exposure to teachers, both pre-service and certified, interested in increasing their knowledge of appropriate pedagogical practices.

What Is Super Saturday?
The Super Saturday Program began over 25 years ago. An average of 400 students enroll each fall and spring in courses that meet on nine Saturday mornings on the West Lafayette campus of Purdue University. The program attracts students from a 100-mile radius, which covers primarily suburban and rural communities. Special recruitment efforts and scholarship programs have increased urban and minority enrollments in recent years to create a more diverse population of gifted students. Student eligibility is generally determined by standardized test and intelligence test scores; however,
students at grade 3 and below are provisionally admitted based on recommendations from parents and teachers until test scores are available or the student establishes a record of successful participation in the program.

Classes are intended to allow students to explore topics not generally covered in the regular school curriculum. Approximately half of the courses offered focus on topics in science and technology. This emphasis is primarily driven by student request, though Purdue’s strengths and resources in areas like the biosciences and engineering have created special opportunities for many Super Saturday courses. A variety of courses in mathematics, foreign languages, language arts, social studies, and the visual and performing arts are also offered each session.

**Why Use Pre-service Teachers?**

For gifted students to receive an appropriate education, it is important that all their teachers have some training in gifted education. At a minimum, all teachers should be aware of the characteristics of gifted students and the special instructional needs these characteristics create.

*It is important for teachers to understand that the term “gifted” is very broad.*

Both pre-service and experienced teachers who are new to the Super Saturday Program are often surprised when they discover how quickly a classroom full of gifted students can master material or complete activities. The Super Saturday experience also helps teachers understand that merely giving gifted students a few extra problems to solve or some time for free reading to keep them occupied is not appropriate to meet their needs. Without the Super Saturday experience, these teachers might create differentiated lessons and activities that would still seem repetitious and unchallenging.

It is important for teachers to understand that the term “gifted” is very broad. Gifted students come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. Gifted students are not always well-behaved “teacher pleasers,” nor are they always motivated to do the school work set before them. There is a tremendous range of ability within the gifted population. It is important for teachers to recognize this diversity so they can refer potentially gifted students for assessment and differentiate appropriately in their own classrooms. The diversity of students in Super Saturday classes has been a surprise to many teachers who begin with a stereotypical view of “gifted” students.

It is important that teachers be able to differentiate curriculum and activities for all students, not just the gifted. Differentiating for ability and interest is a fundamental skill needed by all teachers in increasingly diverse classrooms. Although in-service training and pre-service lectures on differentiation have become more common in recent years, too often they ignore the practical issues that cause teachers to abandon differentiation efforts. For example, teachers need different classroom management strategies when many small groups are doing different activities, and planning activities and organizing materials are more demanding when every student is not doing the same thing at the same time. Teachers also need different and flexible ways to monitor and document student progress in a differentiated classroom. These facets of differentiation may directly impact whether teachers will succeed or fail in their first attempts.

It should be emphasized that the goal of the Super Saturday Program is not to create gifted education experts. There is simply not enough time in the program to cover all that would be addressed in a high quality licensure, endorsement, or graduate program. Rather, the goal of the program is to sensitize pre-service teachers to the existence and needs of gifted students, to motivate them to strive to serve gifted students in their classrooms, and to know when and how to access resources and people who can assist them.

**How Are the Goals for Teachers in the Super Saturday Program Met?**

Teachers in the Super Saturday Program have their own classrooms and teach content they select and/or design. Often, pre-service teachers have field experiences that give them little responsibility and few real opportunities to develop lessons and lead classrooms. Even in their capstone student-teaching experiences, many pre-service teachers are required to follow other teachers’ curriculum and are not perceived as the “real teachers” by the students. Therefore, some beginning teachers may not have had classes of their own before they face their first year as professional teachers. In the Super Saturday Program, pre-serv-
ice teachers have primary responsibility for everything that happens in their classrooms, including curriculum design, managing supply budgets, communicating with parents, and evaluating students. Many pre-service teachers in Super Saturday have been pleasantly surprised to find that they are not perceived by students and parents as college students or interns, but simply as the teachers.

At the same time, the structure of the program allows beginning Super Saturday teachers a safer and more supportive entry into teaching because
- class sizes are very small, averaging about 12 students per class.
- course assistants are available.
- instructors have seven days between classes to prepare for two hours of instruction.
- topics of most classes are self-selected, so teachers are able to begin with subjects in which they are knowledgeable, comfortable, and enthusiastic.
- students are able to choose classes based on their interests; therefore, most students come to Super Saturday motivated to learn.
- the courses utilize the Purdue Three-Stage Model (PTSM) of curriculum design. The PTSM helps instructors create curriculum based on creative and critical thinking skills which transitions from teacher-led activities to student-directed independent projects. The PTSM provides an easy-to-understand framework for curriculum design, and helps teachers gradually transfer more responsibility and independence to students.

The Super Saturday Program creates an environment where training, support, and coaching are possible and the quality of instruction for students is ensured. This is made possible through
- curriculum conferences between the instructors and the GERI staff prior to and during the Super Saturday sessions.
- introduction to resources (e.g., the Shared Information Services Library for Gifted Education sponsored by the Indiana Department of Education).
- training workshops covering the program’s nuts and bolts (e.g., “How do I reserve a computer lab?” and “How do I send notes home?”). The workshops provide opportunities for new teachers to interact and ask questions of experienced teachers who can give them specific strategies and relate specific examples. It also puts new teachers at ease to hear about the enthusiasm of the kids, the support available from other staff, and to know that even the best and most experienced teachers sometimes plan a lesson or activity that fails miserably.
- ongoing evaluations at least twice in nine sessions, plus reviews by parents and students. Beginning teachers often report feeling intimidated by the amount of evaluation built into the program. However, at the end of the program, they often report that they found the feedback extremely helpful.
- self-evaluation and evaluation reviews with GERI staff.

Most great teachers are the ones who invest time in planning and preparation before a class and then take the time after class to review their lesson plans and note what succeeded and what could be improved. This philosophy is modeled and reinforced by the fact that even the teachers who have been involved with Super Saturday for 20 years or more still participate in the evaluation process.
- a focus of the program on thinking skills and learning processes versus mastery of any particular academic content.
- ongoing mentorships.

Super Saturday employs a mixture of pre-service teachers and master teachers. Veteran teachers are often able to share ideas about how to engage a disinterested student, make successful transitions from topic to topic, handle (or prevent) classroom management problems, etc.

“Although unrealistic, several expressed the belief that all education majors should participate in the program.”

Is It Enough?

Although the quality of the courses remains high and the staff, students, and parents have been happy with the resulting curriculum, we still felt that more could be done. As Reis and Westberg (1994) found in a study on effective staff development strategies, it takes more than a single in-service session to change the practices teachers use in the classroom. They found that it was important to provide ongoing training through the use of mentors or coaches. Informal coaching relationships have existed for a long time between GERI instructors and between instructors and administrative staff. However, as the programs have grown, the one-on-one structure of the coaching relationships...
has become less manageable. A more structured approach was required to more efficiently provide the same level of support.

To address this concern, over the past year we implemented a Web-based course for pre-service teachers who are instructors in the Purdue Super Saturday Program. The Introduction to Gifted Education for Pre-service Teachers course covers such topics as the Purdue Three-Stage Model, the characteristics and needs of gifted students, differentiating curriculum, twice-exceptional learners, social/emotional issues concerning gifted students, and alternative assessment methods.

How Does This Course Fit with the Super Saturday Practicum?
The introductory course begins five weeks prior to the first week of Super Saturday which allows time for student instructors to analyze and revise curriculum as they increase their knowledge of gifted learners. Relevant, application-focused readings on general and current topics in gifted education are assigned each week along with reflections on these readings.

As the weeks of Super Saturday progress, videotapes of each student instructor are viewed and evaluated. The instructor shown in the video provides background information as to the objectives of the lesson being viewed and what the lesson entailed prior to and immediately after the segment shown. Although initially apprehensive about being videotaped, by the second video session all students express excitement about the opportunity to analyze their own teaching. Many ask to use the video equipment during their next teaching opportunity to further analyze their own teaching methods.

Is It Working?
In follow-up interviews, student instructors strongly endorsed the value of studying gifted education while having the opportunity to teach in Super Saturday. Although unrealistic, several expressed the belief that all education majors should participate in the program.

The following are signs of success:

- In post-program evaluations, students and parents give the quality of the Super Saturday program high marks
- The student instructors report that the program is valuable and makes them feel more prepared for teaching in general. Not only do they feel more able to teach gifted students, but they also report having more confidence about classroom management, dealing with parents, managing time, etc.
- Participation of children and pre-service teachers is growing, primarily through word of mouth.
- Teachers report that administrators have focused on their Super Saturday experience in interviews, and many principals and superintendents have contacted GERI directly requesting referrals for job openings in their districts.

By using the Super Saturday classrooms as a unique practicum experience, we allow education students the means to acquire a more complete educational experience. As the primary instructor in the classroom, each participant has the opportunity to further his understanding of gifted learners; differentiate curriculum; improve time and classroom management; and interact with parents, other educators, and administrators.

Our focus is not to develop teachers who are qualified as full-time gifted teachers and coordinators. Virtually all of the pre-service teachers who participate in Super Saturday graduate and teach in regular classrooms. The goal is to sensitize teachers to the needs of gifted students, equip them with basic differentiation skills, and help them to become aware of resources that can benefit gifted students while providing an exciting, challenging academic environment for gifted students.

References

I greeted the group of teachers as they came into the room. Since we had worked together before, we were all comfortable with one another. Several stopped to share tidbits of success, and one asked where she could put several student projects she wanted to show to the group. As the workshop participants sat down, they chatted with one another, informally discussing their experiences with differentiation even before the workshop officially began.

I couldn’t help but contrast this scene with the experience I had the previous week. That particular workshop was a half-day required inservice session for all teachers, scheduled the afternoon before spring break. Those teachers were not happy to be attending a workshop and, upon entering the room, asked if I could finish in two hours instead of three so that they could get a head start on the holiday traffic!

In both cases the topic was the same: “Differentiating Curriculum for Gifted and Talented Students.” The difference was the approach to professional development itself. In the successful workshop, the day was part of an ongoing, focused, and well-developed professional development plan. In the not-so-successful workshop, my presentation was merely a way to fill the required three hours of teacher training on an afternoon set aside by the school district for that purpose. In one case, the teachers were excited about learning and incorporating what they were doing in the workshop into their classrooms. In the other case, the teachers came to the workshop resentful and frustrated, and I suspect most had already decided there was nothing to be gained, no matter what the speaker said or did.

What made the difference in these two scenarios? It was not the quality of the teachers themselves. Instead, it was the way in which professional development opportunities were planned and implemented. It is most effective to focus on a long-term approach in teaching educators how to differentiate curriculum for gifted and talented students. While there are a few variations among districts, the following four elements should always be present:

- Ongoing training sessions led by a qualified person
- Time to write appropriate lessons and units
- Practice and implementation in the classroom
- Sharing in follow-up sessions led by a person with expertise in the area

Differentiated instruction allows each student to learn at the depth, complexity, and pace that is most beneficial to him. Differentiating curriculum and instruction is a rich and effective strategy to use when providing for the needs of gifted and talented students—especially when those students spend most of their time in regular classrooms.

A first step is to help teachers who have had little or no training in
gifted education understand that these students do have special and unique needs. The next step is to show teachers practical and doable ways to meet these needs when they also must focus on the needs of many other students in their classrooms. This challenge is one that can be met by using the strategies inherent in differentiation.

Differentiation may encompass any or all of these concepts.

1. Ways to take in and work with information
2. Amounts of time to complete the work
3. Approaches due to culture or language acquisition
4. Levels of learning
5. Assignments
6. Means to assess what has been learned

Differentiation gets us away from the “one size fits all” approach to curriculum and instruction that really doesn’t fit anyone.

While most educators acknowledge that they have not been issued “standardized students” and therefore agree that differentiation is a great idea in principle, the pressing question usually is: “How do you actually implement this concept in a school or school district?” Such an undertaking is a challenge! While one workshop about meeting the needs of gifted students or differentiation for all may spark the initial interest of a few teacher-leaders, this at best is merely the spark to get the fire going. Long-term results take time, effort, planning, practice, ongoing teacher training, and a wealth of practical strategies that teachers can implement effectively. These are the elements that turn the concept of differentiation into a reality.

Prairie Heights Community School Corporation in LaGrange, Indiana has been making differentiation a reality in classrooms throughout the district for nearly six years. Three Prairie Heights teachers attended a session on differentiation at a statewide conference. They came away excited about what they had learned and wanted to know more.

Later, during the same school year, nine teachers from Prairie Heights joined teachers from other schools at a regional three-day workshop series on differentiating instruction. Sponsored by the Indiana Department of Education Gifted and Talented Office, this was a more in-depth approach. These teachers, who represented grades 2-8, returned from the sessions very enthused about what they had learned. They definitely were ready to begin putting this concept into practice but also wanted the opportunity to learn more and deepen their understanding of how to apply differentiated instruction in their classrooms. They also felt that other teachers in their school should be exposed to these ideas. They didn’t want differentiated instruction to be put on the shelf as just another good idea that never got put into action.

After discussing the issues among themselves, these teachers decided to meet with the superintendent and express both their enthusiasm for differentiation and their concerns about ongoing training. As a result, the teachers, the superintendent, and the building principals devised a plan to continue the differentiation training during the next school year. A consultant worked in the district on three days interspersed throughout the school year. The nine teachers who were involved in the initial training combined with nine new teachers for those three days. The objective was for the veteran teachers to learn more about differentiation while, at the same time, they acted as mentors for the new teachers.

In between the three visits, these nine teacher pairs discussed ideas, tried strategies in their classroom and met for scheduled after-school sessions for sharing and continued learning. They organized book study sessions where anyone could attend.

The periodic visits of the consultant allowed for new strategies to be introduced and gave the teachers an opportunity to share successes, problems, and challenges. Teachers were also given release time during the school day to work on new strategies and write units. All this helped keep the focus on differentiation, while at the same time enabled the district to build a group of in-house resident experts.

Eventually, teachers from Prairie Heights invited teachers from other school districts to join their training. These visiting teachers observed veteran Prairie Heights teachers implement differentiation strategies in their classrooms. Some of the original nine Prairie Heights teachers are becoming well known as state and national presenters in differentiation strategies.

General Guidelines for Schools
The following general guidelines are helpful in developing and implementing teacher training and professional development:

1. Begin with the most eager and motivated teachers. This works particularly well if these are also the classroom teachers with clusters of gifted students.
2. Start small and build from there. A small group of enthusiastic teachers who are focused on implementing a concept and armed with several practical classroom strategies will set the stage for more
encompassing change throughout your school or school district.
3. Have a plan for continually incorporating more teachers into professional development activities.
4. Make use of conference sessions or short introductory workshops as beginning motivators, starting points, or interest builders for teachers. However, don’t expect that a great deal of ongoing change will come as a result of these alone.
5. Remember that effective professional development for teachers is high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused (U.S. Congress, 2002).
6. Have a comprehensive plan that includes several training sessions plus time for writing new units and strategies, sharing with one another, and follow-up after new strategies have been tried in the classroom.
7. Whenever possible, supply teachers with books or other resources that can be used in the workshop. These resources can be referred to later.
8. Make certain principals and other administrators support and are actively involved in the professional development of teachers. Even if they cannot attend the training, their interest and backing are crucial.
9. Make certain that the training facilitator understands the practical needs and concerns of teachers. While theory may be relevant and worthwhile, teachers need to come away from the training with practical strategies showing them how to actually implement and use the concepts in their classrooms.
10. Develop in-house resident experts who are willing to organize and facilitate regularly scheduled follow-up sessions.
11. Showcase classrooms where new strategies are well used. Build in time for workshop participants to see these classrooms in action.
12. Become self-sustaining and able to incorporate and train new teachers as they come into the school or school district.

The PreK-Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards document developed by the National Association for Gifted Children (1998) lists guiding principles and standards for the professional development of teachers of gifted children. Among its recommendations are:

- A comprehensive staff development program for all school staff involved in the education of gifted learners
- Time, resources and other support for teachers who prepare and develop differentiated education plans, materials, and curriculum
- Release time to participate in professional development related to gifted education

How Can Parents Help?
In some school districts, the initial impetus for teacher training comes from parents of gifted students. Usually parents are the first to know that their child is bored in school, that the work is too easy, or that their child is assigned classroom activities that focus on lower level rather than higher-level thinking. For many parents, this feeling of dissatisfaction points to a problem, yet they do not know what to do about it.

Parents need to have the ear of the principal (or other administrator) and know how to ask the right questions. For example, parents may want to ask the principal if students are allowed to test out of what they already know and work on other activities. If parents know that the process they are describing is called curriculum compacting, they can ask if teachers have been trained to use this strategy and find out if it is generally implemented throughout the school.

Parents must be knowledgeable advocates for their children. They should know how to articulate reasonable and feasible requests and be able to offer suggestions regarding strategies and approaches they would like teachers to use. If the parents of gifted students do not speak up about the needs of their children, the children may be ignored as schools concentrate on other priorities.

Is ongoing staff development necessary for teachers of gifted and talented students? Most assuredly it is! Is training about the gifted and how to work with them essential for both gifted resource and regular classroom teachers? Absolutely! Can it be done easily and quickly with a one-shot workshop? Very unlikely!

In a culture of instant everything, it is tempting to look for the quick fix as we try to show teachers how to meet the needs of gifted learners. A more successful and longer-lasting approach, however, is one that requires sustained and ongoing training, gives time for practice, implementation, and reflection and allows teachers to share both successes and failures with one another.

References

- 9-1 Perfectionism
- 9-2 Gifted Ed. & the Law
- 9-3 Inside Giftedness
- 9-4 Learning Differences
  - Vol. 9 All 4 Issues $40 -Save $16 (U.S. only)
- 10-1 Educational Options
- 10-2 Intelligence Revisited
- 10-3 Parenting & Advocacy
- 10-4 Curriculum
  - Vol.10 All 4 Issues $40 -Save $16 (U.S. only)
- 11-1 The Total Child
- 11-2 Gifted Girls
- 11-3 Asynchrony
- 11-4 Teaching Teachers
  - Vol.11 All 4 Issues $40 -Save $16 (U.S. only)
- 12-1 Millennium: Look Forward, Back
- 12-2 Levels of Giftedness
- 12-3 Technology
- 12-4 Nature vs. Nurture
  - Vol.12 All 4 Issues $40 -Save $16 (U.S. only)
- 13-1 Definitions of Giftedness
- 13-2 Addressing Giftedness
- 13-3 The “G” Word
- 13-4 Creativity
  - Vol.13 All 4 Issues $40 -Save $16 (U.S. only)

- 14-1 Options in Education
- 14-2 Twice Exceptional
- 14-3 Social Emotional
- 14-4 Critical Thinking
- 15-1 Differentiation
- 15-2 Dumbing Down of Giftedness
- 15-3 Identification
- 15-4 Parenting
- 16-1 Early Childhood & Elementary School
- 16-2 Middle & High School
- 16-3 Alternative Schools
- 16-4 Closing the Gap

See Listing - Order Volume 4-8 at: www.openspacecomm.com
$8 ea. US - $15 International+S/H

Call for Out-of-Print Pricing - Vol. 1-3 / 800-494-6178
All Orders - Add Ship/Handling
(10% / $5 Min. See Order Form for International Shipping Rate)
dorothy@openspacecomm.com
Back Issues Online!

Easy & Quick:
Order & Read Online Back Issues on the Same Day

Available Online Back Issues:

Summer 2004: Closing the Gap
Spring 2004: Alternative Schools
Winter 2004: Middle & High School
Fall 2003: Early Childhood & Elementary
  Summer 2003: Parenting
  Spring 2003: Identification
Winter 2003: Dumbing Down Giftedness
Fall 2002: Differentiation
  Summer 2002: Critical Thinking
  Spring 2002: Social/Emotional
  Winter 2002: Twice Exceptional
Fall 2001: Options in Education
  Summer 2001: The G Word
  Spring 2001: Creativity
Winter 2001: Addressing Giftedness

Online Subscriptions:
Schools/School Districts
Parent Groups or State Societies
SAVE when you subscribe Online
with a Group Rate License

$47 Plus $11 Each Additional User

USE ORDER FORM IN THIS ISSUE
1-800-494-6178
Order Online: www.our-gifted.com

pen Space Communications LLC
Listen to Keynote Speakers from Beyond Giftedness Conferences

Now on CD

New from Beyond Giftedness XI
Judy Galbraith
Growing Up Gifted
Each CD only $12

Also...

CD from Beyond Giftedness X
Jim Delisle
Neither Freak nor Geek
Social & Emotional Needs of Gifted Children
$12 each

Audio Tapes ($10 each)
1) Social/Emotional-Betts/ADD-Dorry
2) Perfectionism-Fertig
3) Underserved Gifted-Smutny
4) Giftedness & the Visual Learner-Freed
5) Learning Styles/ADD-Freed
6) G/T & CSAP: Succeeding at Both-Scott
   Plus side 2: Underserved Gifted-Smutny

Special Both Freed Tapes $15

Add Shipping / Handling to all orders
10% - $5 Minimum
(see order form for International rate)

Open Space Communications LLC
USE ORDER FORM IN THIS ISSUE
1-800-494-6178 / www.openspacecomm.com
It’s a sobering thought that most teachers start their careers without having had even a single lecture on how to recognize and respond to gifted and talented students.

My own research with young Australian teachers entering the profession shows that the following beliefs are common:

• Gifted students have success “built in” as part of the package, and their achievement in school is assured.
• The majority of gifted students come from middle and professional class families.
• Gifted children are rarely, if ever, found among cultural or ethnic minorities.
• Children cannot be both gifted and learning disabled. In fact, if children have learning difficulties, then by definition they can’t be gifted.
• Gifted children go to elite universities, earn prestigious degrees, and enter high-paying professions.

I find this cluster of beliefs quite frightening because if you listen to the subtext, it whispers a disturbing message to many young teachers.

“Gifted children are born with advantages you don’t have. They are born with abilities you don’t have, into families which are probably better off than yours. They come from the majority culture which is already advantaged. Learning comes easily and with no barriers. They’ll go to colleges you couldn’t afford (and probably couldn’t get into) and enter professions which are much more prestigious and highly paid than teaching.”

Columns
Musings

The Five Key Questions in Teacher Professional Development

Miraca U.M. Gross

Elitism vs. Egalitarianism

In both our countries, the education of gifted and talented children is sometimes seen as a social or political issue rather than an educational concern. Fostering the abilities of gifted and talented children is often viewed as “elitist”—helping a fortunate few to rise above the rest. Indeed, the Australian Federal Minister for Education, in his keynote address at a national gifted education conference, found it necessary to remind his audience that “‘elitism’ [is] a word properly applied to aristocratic and economic privilege, not to the recognition of special abilities, or the respect due to a child in school” (Beazley, 1984, p 12). Perhaps the “egalitarianism” that militates against the full development of high intellectual potential in America and Australia is an inevitable result of this confusion of issues.

Assessing Teachers’ Attitudes

Two years ago, in Understanding Our Gifted, I reported on a study which examined shifts in teachers’ attitudes towards gifted and talented children during an 80-contact-hour postgraduate Certificate of Gifted Education (COGE) course (Gross, 2002). The improvement in teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about gifted students—as well as their eagerness to use their new knowledge to find and assist these students—was amazing. However, it is not always possible for teachers to take a course that involves so much time.

A second study investigated changes in attitude in 78 Australian teachers undertaking a single day professional development course. These teachers came from schools in a socially and economically deprived area of Sydney where large numbers of students are from minority and disadvantaged groups. The teachers were released from school to take the six-hour course. Some had voluntarily enrolled, while others were there at the instigation of their building principals. Some commented quite frankly at the beginning of the inservice that they felt the day was going to be a waste of time.
Musings continued

because they didn’t have any gifted students in their schools. These teachers certainly weren’t in the choir. Some of them weren’t even in the pews!

This was one of a series of professional inservice days which I had been teaching for the state education department for several months. I had noticed definite improvements in attitude among teachers in previous inservices. I thought it might be worthwhile to actually measure attitudinal shifts to see what issues in the inservice seemed to have the most powerful impact.

To evaluate attitudinal shifts in the COGE program, I used a survey instrument called Opinions about the Gifted and Their Education (Gagné & Nadeau, 1985). This is a 34-item questionnaire on which subjects indicate their agreement or disagreement with each item on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale measures attitudes towards gifted students and their education across six factors:

1. Needs of gifted children and support for special services
2. Objections based on ideology and priorities
3. Social usefulness of gifted persons in society
4. Rejection of gifted persons by others in the immediate environment
5. Attitudes towards ability grouping
6. Attitudes towards acceleration

Teachers completed the survey instrument twice, at the beginning and the end of the 80-hour COGE program. The instrument thus functioned as both a pre-test and post-test. I did exactly the same with teachers attending the six-hour inservice.

Facts Rather Than Myths
The following are the issues we covered during the day and the five key questions underpinning these issues:

(1) You say you have no gifted students in your school. What do you mean by 'gifted'?

I felt it was important to start by counteracting some of the mythologies about gifted and talented students which were clearly influencing some teachers. I’ve found that models and definitions of giftedness which focus on successful, task-committed achievers don’t strike much of a chord with teachers in disadvantaged schools. These models merely reinforce what they see as the elitist image of gifted education. I prefer to introduce them to the Gagné model of giftedness and talent (1995) which acknowledges that high ability by itself doesn’t guarantee success and that, without the support of their teachers, many gifted students simply won’t make it in school.

Gagné defines giftedness as the capacity to perform at a level significantly beyond what might be expected at one’s age, in any domain of human ability. He defines gifted students as at least 10 percent of the population. But simply possessing high ability doesn’t mean that one has had the opportunity to use it. The key to Gagné’s view of giftedness is that it defines outstanding potential rather than outstanding performance.

“ I’ve found that models and definitions of giftedness which focus on successful, task-committed achievers don’t strike much of a chord with teachers in disadvantaged schools.”

By contrast, Gagné defines talent as achievement at a level significantly beyond what might be expected at one’s age. A child may be talented in one or many fields of performance.

Within this model a child can be gifted (having unusually high potential) without being talented (displaying unusually high performance). The Gagné model explicitly recognizes the existence and dilemma of the gifted underachiever.

Gagné shows that the key to talent development is the quality of the child’s learning, or training in the case of young athletes, or practicing in the case of young musicians. Gifted students, who receive an education commensurate with their needs and designed specifically to respond to their gifts, have more chance of becoming talented.

Gagné points out, however, that factors in the child’s personality can either facilitate or hamper talent development. A child who has confidence in her abilities and has learned to value her gifts will be more likely to work on developing these gifts...
than a child who has learned that she will be mocked or ostracized for displaying high ability. If they are to develop as talented, gifted children must first learn to feel good about being gifted.

Also impacting the learning process are a number of environmental variables, such as the quality of parenting and teaching the child receives and the provisions the family and school make, or fail to make, to develop his gifts into talents. A supportive and facilitative environment can enhance not only the child’s likelihood of academic success, but also the development of a strong and healthy personality.

Within the Gagné model, the school’s responsibility is to seek out children who are gifted but not yet talented and assist them to bring their gifts to fruition, as well as recognizing and further assisting those talented students who are already performing at high levels. This model puts the teacher firmly in the driver’s seat.

Many teachers find the Gagné model thought-provoking. Most teachers are sincerely dedicated to helping kids, and the idea that there may be “invisible” gifted students in their classes disturbs them.

So I then pose my second question:

(2) If Gagné is right that we should be looking at gifted kids as at least 10 percent of the school population, then we should find at least a small cluster of gifted students in most classes. If we are not seeing them, is it because we are looking only for the achievers—the talented kids—rather than the gifted kids?

And my third question leads on from this:

(3) “If we aren’t seeing the gifted kids, WHY aren’t we seeing them?”

Recognizing and Responding to Gifted Students
By this stage—approximately a quarter of the way through the six-hour inservice—they are excited by the idea that they can help recognize and respond to unidentified talent. Their former wariness of gifted education has arisen not from a lack of willingness to identify gifted students in their classrooms but from a genuine lack of awareness that giftedness cuts across culture, gender, and ethnic, social, and economic backgrounds. They have believed the middle-class myth of giftedness.

However, they are less aware of the internal pressures on gifted students to underachieve for peer acceptance, so I talk about the “forced choice dilemma” of gifted students (Gross, 1989). Should they camouflage their abilities, conceal interests that are different from those of their classmates, and generally “dumb down” for social acceptance? Or should they excel academically even if this might mean peer rejection? In the United States the problem of deliberate underachievement is particularly severe for gifted students within minority cultures who may feel compelled to modify their behavior, not only to have friends but also to avoid being seen as abandoning their ethnic backgrounds (Baldwin, 1991). This problem also exists in Australia, in particular for gifted children from groups which have a strong cultural affiliation, such as our indigenous peoples.

The idea that a child may have both high intellectual ability and a learning disability such as dyslexia is also new to the majority of teachers. Case studies of gifted learning disabled students which illustrate how these children’s intense frustration, feelings of learned helplessness, and low self-esteem can result in disruptive or withdrawn behavior (Olenchak & Reis, 2002) help teachers to reassess some of the problem behaviors they have seen in their own classrooms. At this stage someone often says, thoughtfully, “I had a kid last year who was just like that...”
The rest of the day covers practical issues of identification (including the identification of gifted underachievers), curriculum differentiation, and programming. I won’t pretend that we are able to cover a great deal in depth in this short time, but the teachers leave with identification skills they did not have before and identification materials of which they were unaware. They have also acquired skills to develop their own differentiated curriculum.

In addition, we visit some of the key issues in ability grouping and acceleration. The course helps teachers understand that, because gifted students are, in general, more emotionally mature than their age-peers as well as more academically advanced, acceleration can provide them with a more developmentally appropriate grade placement. Ability grouping can provide a more extended and enriched curriculum and the companionship of students of similar abilities and interests, so that the pressure to “dumb down” for peer acceptance is significantly reduced.

Musings continued

References


Miraca U.M. Gross is Professor of Gifted Education and Director of the Gifted Education Research, Resource and Information Centre (GERRIC) at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia.
Differentiating for adults is a tall order, because all of us who have tried to differentiate know that it takes a tremendous amount of upfront planning as well as knowledge of our learner group. All of this takes time, and time is at a premium in education. However, adult learners possess the same learning differences as do students: cognitive abilities, needs for structure, support in learning new concepts, needs for practice and repetitive learning, abilities to use social skills to access support, and styles for offering and receiving constructive feedback.

Rationale for Differentiation in Staff Development

Though differentiating staff development for adult learners has its unique challenges, the positives far outweigh the extra time and resources it takes to provide the necessary options. Districts and schools have the opportunity to lay the groundwork for more effective staff development that pays attention to the learning needs of adults through differentiation.

Choices in timing, topic, and approach with adult learners show respect for individual differences. Individuals who feel respected are more likely to be engaged, responsive, and motivated; they are also more willing and able to grow.

If adult learners experience differentiation in their own staff development, they are more likely to see the value of that approach from the student perspective, instead of the extra work that it involves from the teacher perspective. Seeing this value increases the likelihood that differentiation will occur in their classrooms.

Likewise, when adult learners see differentiation modeled for them, they are more likely to have an increased level of trust and comfort in attempting the strategies themselves. Secondary teachers, who often meet with 140+ students in a day, see that there are strategies that can be utilized even in very content-loaded courses or in situations where the instructor does not have the opportunity for deep knowledge of individual learners.

Many educators feel that it is condescending and insulting when inservices, classes, and workshops are presenter-centered and planned primarily by administration. However, when adults are given the opportunity to self-assess needs and choose
learning experiences, they feel trusted and respected. Individuals who are treated with trust and respect are more likely to treat their students in the same manner.

Considerations
The following factors should be considered if the goal is to better meet the needs of teachers:

1. Devise strategies to build staff morale and connectedness in the school and/or district. Happy employees are more likely to be optimistic and willing to work toward the goals of the organization. Optimistic and self-satisfied individuals are also more likely to take positive risks such as learning and employing new strategies to improve student achievement.

2. Build trust by allowing teachers to acquire knowledge through their preferred learning modes, as follows:

   - Allow those who learn abstractly to earn credit for reading and completion of projects independently or in small groups rather than “putting in a certain number of seat hours in class.”
   - Provide in-school mentoring as well as observation opportunities for more concrete learners to see how to differentiate in the classroom.
   - For those teachers who have high levels of interest in a subject area, teach differentiation strategies through the study of content topics.
   - Offer classes for educators where differentiation of content, product, and process are demonstrated.
   - Acknowledge the time commitment needed for planning differentiated lessons and provide paid curriculum time during the school day, throughout the school year, and during summers.
   - Allow for independent learning even when employing such philosophies as building learning communities. Too often, the topics are dictated, and study group/discussion group learning is the main mode utilized to achieve this end.

3. Agree on learning outcomes, and then allow educators to self-select the strategies/learning situations they will use to assist students in achieving those outcomes.

4. Continue to allow personal growth goals in the educator evaluation process, since these personal goals are often the most meaningful to the individual.

All too often, the affective components of comfort, respect, trust, and choice are eliminated in adult education options, simply because most adults are expected to develop strong adaptive skills and style flex. We need to respect these components both with staff development and with gifted learners.

Jean Strop is Coordinator of Gifted/Talented at Cherry Creek High School, Colorado. She is a consultant and presenter on affective and academic programming for gifted and talented students.

Affective Side continued
Technology has changed the way teachers provide curriculum. Juxtaposed with this is a change in the way students absorb material. In fact, technology has changed almost everything related to the classroom experience. DVD players have replaced filmstrip projectors, PowerPoint presentations bring lessons to life, and tools like voice mail and email create direct connections between parents and schools. Parents can log on to their school’s website for weekly or daily lunch menus, school calendars, teacher websites, curriculum plans, and links to extend learning. Some teachers are even available during the evening to help with homework by email. It’s now common to find teachers who document children’s progress using digital cameras or bolster lesson plans with information gleaned from specific websites. Parents monitor students’ use of search engines by using Google, which offers filtered searching.

There appears to be no limit to what technology has to offer education. But appearances can be deceiving; it takes time and creativity to weave quality websites into a lesson plan or integrate technology in innovative ways. Thus, it’s no wonder that some research indicates that teachers continue to use computers only to maintain their current teaching methods rather than for more innovative practices (Cuban, 2001).

Among teachers who do use computers, the most common applications seem to be math games and drill-and-practice activities. Tasks that promote higher-order thinking skills usually occur much less frequently. Some experts believe that the critical thinking skills students are taught will transfer to academic subjects; however, it is difficult to measure the direct outcomes of critical thinking. A meta-analysis that focused specifically on reading and math educational software, revealed a somewhat strong association between the use of the software and student achievement in these subjects (Murphy et al., 2002). Another meta-analysis of 42 studies found that teaching and learning with technology had a small, but positive, effect on student outcomes (Waxman, Connell, & Gray, 2002).

Even though we are not certain of its effects, we still have a responsibility to model the integration of technology into most of what we do. It’s important to use the computer as a tool—a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. We should keep in mind that technology by itself does not increase achievement scores. How computers are used makes the difference in producing high-quality student outcomes.

One of the benefits of the Internet is the proliferation of Web-based lesson plans, particularly since teachers never have enough time to create their own. The following websites are particularly interesting and helpful:

- **Schools, Skills, and Scaffolding on the Web**
  edweb.sdsu.edu/people/bdodge/scaffolding.html
  Scaffolding is an apprenticeship approach to instruction which places the teacher in a collaborative, interactive role with students by providing carefully structured and sequenced support. Emphasis is on teacher modeling, extension, rephrasing, questioning, praise, and correction, rather than on the teacher as evaluator. You will find even more information on scaffolding at fno.org/dec99/scaffold.html

- **Writing Lesson Plans**
  www.huntington.edu/education/lessonplanning/Bruner.html
  This website provides an anatomy of a lesson plan using instructional scaffolding. It also includes perspectives from a number of nationally recognized authorities in the field of lesson planning, as well as information on the effects of teacher behaviors, classroom arrangements, and methods for delivery of information.

- **Why the Net? An Interactive Tool for the Classroom**
  www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/
  Before you dive into a sea of information and resources, explore this online workshop from...
Disney Learning Partnership and wNetSchool. It will help make the Internet an effective classroom tool.

Telus Learning Connection
www.2learn.ca/
2Learn.ca currently supports teachers and students worldwide with its thousands of pages of educational resources—and links to countless more—created by teachers, for teachers, and with teachers.

Filamentality
www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/fil/
Filamentality is a fill-in-the-blank interactive website that guides you through picking a topic, searching the Internet, gathering good sites, and turning these technology resources into learning activities. You can create NetSteps, Scavenger Hunts, WebQuests, and other activities. Filamentality will post your student-ready activities and provide a URL for accessing.

TeacherWeb
www.teacherweb.com/
TeacherWeb lets teachers build a hot list of links that students can use in class, at home, or at the library. This site also allows teachers to fill in announcements, homework, and a short bio so that students and parents can access information. Register and build by filling in the blanks; the teacher-created website will be hosted on TeacherWeb.

Net Tools for Teachers
k12science.ati.stevens-tech.edu/nettools.html
This resource page offers links to help teachers use the Internet for communicating, organizing, learning, and publishing activities.

www4teachers
www.4teachers.org/
This is a place where one can encounter new ideas about technology’s role in education and share experiences. This site includes Premier Tracks, a collection of Web-based activities created by teachers.

GEM—The Gateway to Educational Materials
www.thegateway.org/
This site provides one-stop, high quality, Internet lesson plans, curriculum units, and other education resources. Conduct full-text, subject, keyword, or title searches along with desired grade or educational level. Retrieved records will link directly to the Internet resources they describe.

EDSITEment Lesson Plans
edsitement.neh.gov/lesson_index.asp
Includes lesson plans and activities, plus links to additional learning activities. Topics covered include: literature and language arts, foreign language, art and culture, history and social studies.

PBS TeacherSource
www.pbs.org/teachersource/
A large collection of lesson plans, teacher guides, and online student activities correlated to 90 sets of state and national curriculum standards.

DiscoverySchool Lesson Plans
school.discovery.com/lessonplans/index.html
DiscoverySchool gives access to 400+ free lesson plans and activities for K-12 education, organized by grade level and subject for science, social studies, and literature.

Teachers.Net Lesson Plan Exchange
teachers.net/lessons/
At this site, teachers can share great ideas or concepts for teaching. Either the complete lesson plan or just the URL where others can locate the lesson plan can be submitted.

Education World—Lesson Planning Center
www.education-world.com/a_lesson/index.shtml
This site includes a collection of lesson plans and links to related articles from Education World.

New York Times Learning Network on the Web
www.nytimes.com/learning/
The New York Times Learning Network on the Web can be searched by keyword or subject.

CEC Lesson Plans
www.col-ed.org/cur/
This site contains a large collection of lesson plans organized by grade level in language arts, social studies, math, and science.

ENSiWeb
www.indiana.edu/~ensieweb/
This is a collection of classroom lessons to help
biology teachers more effectively teach basic concepts in the areas of evolution and the nature of science. The lessons were developed and tested during nine years of summer institutes by biology teachers from across the nation.

References


*Sandra Berger* is an educational consultant in Virginia. She is the author of *College Planning for Gifted Students*. 
Book Bag

Patriotic Books for Gifted Readers

Jerry Flack

This list of books for students of all ages explores unique perspectives of America, its people, institutions, history, heroics, and tragedies. Gifted students will benefit from the inspiration and models of excellence that are offered here.


*America the Beautiful* was penned by Katharine Lee Bates following a day trip to the top of Pikes Peak in 1893. When illustrator Gall was a boy, he grew up in a home with a rare, one-of-a-kind copy of his great-great Aunt Katharine’s poem, written in her own hand. This family heirloom inspired Gall to fashion this beautiful, original, and brilliantly illustrated book. Sixteen exquisite paintings capture the beauty, diversity, and history of our country. Pictures range from amber waves of grain to Sacagawea leading Lewis and Clark to the blastoff of Apollo II.


September 11, 2001 was a moment in American history that may be too difficult for children to comprehend. This new picture book provides a unique approach that speaks not so much of the World Trade Center tragedy as to how one man made the twin towers very special many years ago.

In 1974, French aerialist Philippe Petit walked, danced, and performed on a cable five-eighths of an inch thick between the two nearly finished towers. The high wire performer secretly worked through the night to stretch a cable a quarter mile high between the tops of the twin towers. When morning came, people first stared and then pointed aloft, not believing what they saw. After police arrested him, a wise judge sentenced Petit to give free performances in the park for the children of the city.

On one page readers bear witness to the spectacle thousands of spectators on the ground saw looking skyward; on another page they see the world as Petit viewed it from his perch, way up, up in the sky. Near the end of this book, a plain white page devoid of art simply states in black letters, “Now the towers are gone.” The language is lyrical, the art is beautiful, and the story is thrilling.


Gürth teams with his writer wife in an exuberant abecedary designed especially for the youngest set of readers. A lively cast of animal cartoon characters introduces the United States, its rich history, and its natural treasures. Illustrations highlight volcanoes in Hawaii, dog sled races in Alaska, and trolley cars in San Francisco. It is an all-American celebration in primary colors and bold art.


The range of topics covered in this book is staggering. DK editors utilize timelines, archival photographs, fine art, personal profiles, and popular culture. Young readers will be spellbound.


According to Delta Airlines’ Sky Magazine, these are described as “the best travel guides ever.” The series serves as a perfect tool for planning family vacation routes or simply enjoying armchair travel and geography. In addition to maps of city greats such as San Antonio and New Orleans, this book provides cutaway drawings of celebrated buildings such as the White House and California’s Hearst Castle.


The authors of this book pay homage to their own ancestors, who sailed to the United States from Poland and Sweden, with a colorful opening tribute to Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty, and New York City. They use a bold folk style and brilliant
hues to capture Washington, D.C. on the 4th of July and the Outer Banks of North Carolina. They move on to describe other areas of the country, including Chicago, Route 66, and America’s Heartland. In one of the first books written by Nelson and Nelson, Alfie, an Old English sheepdog served as the tour guide. Between books Alfie passed on, but the authors kept him in each painting and lovingly graced his presence with a small white halo.

This book includes short but informative profiles of Americans. There are profiles of generals, performers, cartoonists, puppeteers, authors, explorers, painters, architects, scientists, presidents, athletes, civil rights leaders, and inventors. A photograph, painting, or drawing accompanies each profile.

“One nation, and a vegetable.” “I led a pigeon to the flag.” Since October 12, 1892, American children have been reciting the *Pledge of Allegiance*, but many—especially the youngest children—scarcely understand the adult words and concepts. Now, Martin, Sampson, and Raschka use words and pictures to bring understanding to this patriotic declaration. “Pledge” is described as a promise while “allegiance” is explained as loyalty. The final word—“all”—stands alone in a two-page spread portraying a sea of American faces. Raschka’s torn-paper collages are appropriately childlike, mostly in red, white, and blue.

There are many occasions in children’s lives when they are expected to memorize and recite or sing hallmarks of faith and patriotism, from prayers in places of worship to the *Star-Spangled Banner* at the ballpark, but in their innocence they do not always comprehend (“Jose, can you see?” rather than “Oh! Say, can you see...?””). Books such as *I Pledge Allegiance* not only introduce such documents to children but make them understandable as well.

The United States shares many holidays with other nations of the world, but the 4th of July is uniquely American. Three generations of an American family, plus their lovable dog “Bud” celebrate a nostalgic July 4th in small town America. There is a pet parade, popcorn and pizza, a bandstand and dancing, the reading of the Declaration of Independence, the singing of the *Star-Spangled Banner*, and all is capped off with fireworks. The author provides an endnote that explains how such celebrations began in America.

Even our brightest children may be baffled by the meaning of the *Preamble*. Catrow states plainly that the “rooty-tooty” language mystified him when he was in elementary school. In *We the Kids*, three precocious children and their faithful springer spaniel go on a camping trip that turns out to be both a rollicking good adventure and a great civics lesson. Using colorful watercolor cartoon illustrations, Catrow explains the introduction of the *Constitution of the United States* to children, phrase by phrase.

In *Defense of Liberty* is scholarly and intended for older readers. Freedman grabs the attention of his audience with provocative questions (which he then answers in the text): Can a rap group be prosecuted for using “obscene” lyrics? Do school officials need a search warrant to search students? Does the Constitution allow the execution of a mentally retarded person? Do minors accused of a crime have the same constitutional rights as adults? Freedman provides an articulate introduction to the history of the creation of the *Bill of Rights*. He examines each of the amendments and describes how legislators, the courts, individual citizens, and advocacy groups have interpreted them in the past 200 years.

Freedman’s research is flawless, and his writing style is riveting. Book lovers may think they are in the middle of a thriller as opposed to reading a book about American constitutional law.

The author pays homage to the presidential mansion not only with text, but with more than 200 photographs and illustrations. A bonus of this book is the insider views provided via a feature entitled “Faces and Voices.” Profiles are included of the President’s photographer, the First Lady’s press secretary, and the mansion’s curator, pastry chef, and grounds superintendent. The most fun job of all must be that of the White House pet handler.

Children and teens of first families used the White House to entertain, play, or even set up a business. Tad Lincoln was an entrepreneur who took advantage of a super location for a lemonade stand, while Amy Carter played in a special tree house. Susan Ford held her high school prom in the White House.

All-American Activities
The following are possible activities that students might engage in after reading some of the books listed in this article:

- Create a book of profiles highlighting the lives of favorite great Americans.
- Write an essay on one of the following topics:
  The greatest place in America is...
  The greatest American ever is/was...
  America’s greatest gift to the world is...
  The most beautiful place in America is...
  The American I most admire is/was...
- Create a collage that portrays at least 8-10 great American moments (e.g., Wright Brothers inaugural flight, integration of public schools, etc.).
- Fashion an original birthday, thank you, congratulations, or other appropriate greeting card for a past or present great American.
- Draw a cartoon that represents a major event in the life of a great American.
- Consider family pride. Think about a person in your family who you admire and who best represents the values of being a great American. Write and illustrate a short picture book about this person. Give the finished book to your family member as a present.
- Use a camera or download photographs from the Internet to create a photo essay that shares something great about America.
- Create a picture book autobiography of yourself as a great American citizen. What American values do you possess? What makes you proud about your life? How are you a great American? Use any style (cartoons, collage) and media (felt pens, crayons, computer graphics) you desire.

- Describe and/or illustrate your greatest 4th of July.
- Create a map of your own American travels. How many states have you visited? What National Parks or great American cities have you seen? Use symbols to make your All-American map special. For example, draw a space shuttle to represent a visit to the Kennedy Space Center.
- Create a timeline of significant events in the life of a truly great American, such as Cesar Chavez or Abigail Adams.
- Write an imaginary email message to a great American from the past describing America today. What could you tell Helen Keller or Abraham Lincoln about current events in the United States?
- Which one of the rights in the Bill of Rights would your favorite American hero most value? Why?

Jerry Flack is Professor Emeritus of Education and President’s Teaching Scholar at the University of Colorado. He is a reviewer of children’s literature and the author of 10 books and numerous articles on creativity and curriculum development.
Beyond Giftedness XII
12th Annual Conference for Parents, Educators, Counselors

February 25, 2005
Renaissance Hotel - Denver/Broomfield, CO
(New Larger Location)

Keynote Presentation
Instructional Decisions that Make a Difference
In a humorous yet thoughtful presentation, this session responds to current practices that promote instructional effectiveness for advanced and gifted students.

Mark Your Calendar

Register Early. . . Avoid Late Fee!
Register Online: www.openspacecomm.com
or call:
(800) 494-6178 or (303) 444-7020

Presented by: Open Space Communications LLC

Bertie Kingore
Author, National Consultant, Mother of 3 Gifted Sons

Open Space Communications
P.O. Box 18268
Boulder, CO 80308