Educational Services for High Achievers, Gifted Learners, and Creative Thinkers

By

In this era of standards-driven education, legislators and educators continue to misinterpret high achievement as giftedness and misinterpret creativity as a fluffy extra. Educators who work with gifted learners and creative thinkers experience frustration trying to help other educators and legislators understand that while high achievers are valuable participants whose high-level modeling is desired in the classroom, they still learn differently from gifted learners and creative thinkers. In environments where learners are respectful, valued, and encouraged, gifted students' thinking is more complex with abstract inferences and diverse perceptions than is typical of high achievers. Creative thinkers, working in respectful learning environments, question the known, inject new possibilities, and make mental leaps that surpass the correct-answer-driven responses of high achievers. Articulating the instructional implications of these learning differences is vital when we strive to differentiate instruction.

Janice Szabos (1989) published a comparison of the bright child and the gifted learner that challenged me to re-examine the nature and needs of advanced students working at different levels of readiness. Pondering several of the items in her dichotomy, a three-way comparison of a high achiever, a gifted learner, and a creative thinker emerged. This analysis evolved over several years while working with students presenting each of these groups co-existing in many classrooms. I have invited hundreds of teachers and students to review and discuss the items. The resulting three-column comparison is proposed for your reflection. Stimulating discussion rather than fostering agreement is the goal.

(see KINGORE, page 22)
"COLLEGE WAS A BLAST,
NOW I'M READY FOR HIGH SCHOOL."

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SMU | GIFTED STUDENTS INSTITUTE
FROM THE PRESIDENT

Tillie Hickman

Gifted Children: America’s Treasure. It’s a great slogan for a conference, but what does it mean for America’s children and for those of us who advocate for them?

Five hundred years ago the Spanish Conquistadors came to the New World seeking treasure to fill the royal coffers as well as their own. But while they amassed untold wealth for Spain and claimed thousands of miles of land for their European lords, the cities of gold eluded them, and they often fell to fighting among themselves. Greed for the rumored wealth of Aztec chief Montezuma lured Cortez to destroy his ships and force his men to march to the jungles of the interior of Mexico. Whether the invaders were searching for the lost Seven Cities of Cibola or the legendary El Dorado, their expeditions were doomed to failure.

Are our expeditions, likewise, doomed to failure as we seek to discover, refine, and deliver to our country that treasure, which is the promise of gifted children. After this year’s legislative session, feeling failure is easy to do. However, services for gifted children fared better than many other programs. We still have funding for school programs and for the standards project. We still have representation at the agency even though that presence has shrunk from seven to two. We still have in law a state mandate that we identify and serve gifted children from kindergarten through twelfth grade. And we still have TAGT, stronger than ever, ready to work with the Texas Education Agency to help preserve the best possible services for gifted children.

In Poe’s poem “Eldorado,” a gallant knight searched “in sunshine and in shadow” for the elusive treasure. We, too, must search in the shadow of budget cuts, changing demographics, schools driven by the raucous cries of No Child Left Behind, and the continuing popular belief that “they’ll get it anyway.” We teach our students creative problem solving, now we must employ those skills to develop our treasure with shrinking resources and

(see HICKMAN, page 20)
Next Stop: Houston!

You've registered for the upcoming TAGT conference in Houston. Good. You've made your travel plans, including booking a hotel with the knowledge that Texas law does not limit you to $80/night reimbursement from your district. Good. Now what?

What can you expect in Houston this November?

Downtown looks a bit different. Gone is the big “E” on the former Enron building. There is a new basketball stadium and huge hotel (not yet open) right next to the convention center. Don’t forget to pack your tickets for the November 19 Rockets game against the Golden State Warriors! The convention center itself is much larger and may already be served by the new light rail system. There is a restaurant near the Hyatt that is disguised as a 500,000-gallon aquarium. Most importantly, the construction that closed streets and made getting around a nightmare is all but complete. Welcome to the new Houston!

Rick Olenchak, our Thursday keynote speaker, has taken his gloves off and promises to tell us what really matters in gifted education. Rick’s passion is at a boiling point and what he has to say takes aim at decades of dogma in gifted education. Leonard Pitts, our Friday keynote, doesn’t shy away from controversial topics, either. His recent columns have given straight talk on such subjects as New York’s new high school for gay/lesbian/transgender students and Mike Tyson’s bankruptcy. Wouldn’t you like to try to run out of $400 million? You may disagree with some or all of what these two have to say, but you’ll be talking and thinking about their speeches.

Remember those feedback forms we asked you to fill out last year? We read them. It’s due to your feedback that group discounts and preconference workshops are back. Many districts are now serving their high school gifted students through advanced placement courses, so make sure whomever oversees AP in your district attends the preconference workshop “Differentiation for Gifted Students in AP Courses.” The state requires differentiated instruction in these classes. This is where it’s taught. Most of us continue to struggle with meeting the needs of diverse gifted learners. If anybody knows more about that than George Betts and Patty Rendon, they should start their own conference!

The Gifted Students’ Showcase this year will be during the day on Friday, starting during the lunch break, so more people get to see the type and quality of work being done by gifted students in the Houston area. There’s more food variety this year, too, so you should find several options you like.

Speaking of food, the meat and potatoes of any great conference are its presenters. This year we have many returning favorites bringing new ideas, as well as newcomers with different perspectives and areas of expertise. This will be the largest conference in gifted education in the country this year, so if Houston is within 200 miles of you, you can’t afford to miss it!

As always, the TAGT staff and Executive Board will be there to assist you and we’ll have nearly 200 booths to cater to your professional and personal needs. Next year we’re off to Dallas, so now’s the time to catch TAGT in Space City, USA!
A Legacy of S-P-U-N-K
A Student Profile of Independence and Leadership in Middle School

Mary Nied Phillips

When Molly was in second grade, she wanted to be a pediatrician, and her favorite things included the megabar at Ryan's Steakhouse, reading about animals, and playing softball. Now attending the Academy of Engineering at Waco ISD's A. J. Moore Magnet High School as a freshman, she dreams about becoming an "engineering missionary" or architect, going into countries like Bosnia or Iraq that have been hit by disasters or war.

I first profiled Molly, whose real name is Morgan Ballantine, as a second grade gifted and talented student in this journal (Nied Phillips, 1997), reflecting upon her elementary skills and academic and social development within the context of a public Montessori school. Until her recent graduation from the eighth grade at Lake Waco Montessori Magnet School for Environmental Studies in Waco, I have been her gifted and talented teacher since she was first identified for the program in kindergarten. It has been my privilege to work with Morgan and my campus colleagues over an eight year span as we watched and nurtured her development into a campus and community leader.

Since her elementary grades (1-3), Morgan has grown two feet in height and changed from a child into a confident and service-oriented adolescent who is, in her own words, "ready for life". She views herself as a young woman now, prepared for "all the perks and pitfalls" that lie ahead in high school, although she's very willing to acknowledge that she will miss the friends and teachers that made up her Lake Waco family for a long period of time. As Morgan wrote in her reflections journal in early May, she wants "to be remembered for being someone who is kind and loving but not afraid to speak my mind".

Morgan has been able to speak her mind on campus and develop her talents thanks, in part, to a Montessori middle school program. This was founded during the summer of 2000 on the Lake Waco Montessori Magnet campus at the request of parents, teachers, and administrators who wanted to continue to meet the needs of growing adolescents with a Montessori curriculum through grade 8. According to the North American Teachers' Association (McKenzie, 2001), there are over 122 Montessori private or public middle school/secondary programs in existence, most of them located in mid- to large-sized cities like Cincinnati or Houston.

My vision of the future is no longer of people taking exams and proceeding on that certification from the secondary school to the university, but of individuals passing from one state of independence to a higher, by means of their own activity, through their own effort of will, which constitutes the inner evolution of the individual. —Maria Montessori

Design to meet the developmental needs of adolescents, these secondary programs focus not only on their cognitive needs but also recognize that if the broader needs of adolescents in both the social and emotional arenas are ignored, their academic achievement will suffer. In establishing a developmentally responsive curriculum for adolescents, Loeffler
(1992) stresses the stages of biological growth, cognitive growth, and psychosocial development.

Focusing on the middle school curriculum is not new nor unique to Montessori schools. In 1990 James Beane referred to efforts begun in the 1960's to improve education at the middle school level and the progress made to better understand early adolescents and modify the organizational format of middle schools to suit them. Part of this on-going discussion and debate has centered on the role of teachers and whether they are narrowly defined by their subject matter or more broadly expected to work within interdisciplinary teams.

The Montessori middle school program at Lake Waco Montessori Magnet began very modestly as a one-room, one-teacher program within the broader context of a Montessori primary through intermediate campus with students ranging in age from three through 12. The single teacher had a classroom of 16 students and addressed all areas of the curriculum except for physical education, music, environmental science and gifted education, all of which were taught in pullout classes by specialists. Based on the secondary model researched and developed by Dr. Elisabeth Johnson Coe at School of the Woods in Houston, Texas, in the mid 1980's, the overall Montessori curriculum included many activities designed to assist the middle school student in his psychosocial development.

These activities (McKenzie, 2001) included cooperative learning for interpersonal interaction, discussion of high level concepts such as tolerance, high expectations in regard to social development, off campus immersion activities, daily community meetings and personal reflection, and weekly problem solving sessions. According to Coe (1992), each morning’s community meeting sets the tone that students are responsible for their own work and that they will strive to balance individual and group work as they “really learn how to work within a group with depth and to accomplish a variety of tasks”.

When the new middle school began, Morgan was a sixth grader in an intermediate Montessori classroom where she had worked with her teacher, Pam Kent, since fourth grade.

“When she first entered my classroom,” Mrs. Kent recalled, “Morgan was rather shy and reserved. She preferred to read (rather) than interact with her peers. She regularly sought out the adults (teacher and aide) in the room for interaction as she was more on their intellectual level than her peers...As the three years progressed, Morgan became much more than an academic leader in my room; she also became the 6th grader that could run the classroom if I had to step out for a moment and the others respected her in that role.”

Morgan remembers her intermediate class with affection for Mrs. Kent had also been her primary Spanish teacher. The structured intermediate classroom with its weekly work plans helped Molly focus not only on her strengths in math and science but also develop her least favorite subjects: spelling, grammar, and handwriting. She began to develop an interest in writing and research which was reinforced by a second place national award for a water cycle poster contest sponsored by the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies in Washington, DC, and later, statewide recognition for an essay on water quality, both projects initiated in her GT class.

“She proved to herself that she was indeed a good writer when she put her mind to it”, said Kent.

Outside of campus, Morgan continued to develop friends through her activities at church and Friday night roller skating parties. “My hobbies are rollerblading, horseback riding, and music,” she emailed her penpal in Wales as part of another 5th grade GT communications project.

In sixth grade Kim Olmstead, the music specialist, encouraged Morgan to use her aptitude for music by successfully applying for the Waco Symphony Youth Choir. Morgan surprised her mother by calling Jo Sparks, the choir director, with a list of prepared questions about the program. According to Sparks, she had never been interviewed by a prospective choir member before; usually the tables were reversed.

Morgan’s 7th grade progress into the middle school component of Lake Waco Montessori coincided with the growth of the program into a two-classroom, two-teacher format serving 32 students. Both teachers were new to the Montessori middle school curriculum, and after beginning an intensive course of study with Dr. Coe during the summer, their training with her continued throughout the academic year. One teacher, Robyn McDurham, developed an expertise in social studies and language arts, while the other, Dora DeAubrey, built on her past years of teaching experience to become the middle team specialist in math and science.

Both worked to schedule and structure the interdisciplinary units for each year; for example, the life science curriculum, taught alternatively with physical science, included the themes of “Connections” (cells and living things), “Exploration”, “Identity” (comparative anatomy and genetics). The social studies curriculum was built around similar themes designed by Coe, who cites the need for big and meaningful work for this age group.

In addition to this academic emphasis, Coe (1992) stresses that the middle school student wants to be a productive member of the greater community, whether on or off campus. At Lake Waco Montessori, middle school students are given opportunities to serve in two major ways. The first is through a weekly community service slot each Friday morning during which, at the invitation of a teacher, they work as assistants in primary through intermediate classrooms as well as in special

(see PHILLIPS, page 18)
Fusing Fact and Fiction: A Dynamic Research Reporting Method for Gifted and Talented Students

Keith Polette

A wonderful harmony is created when we join together the seemingly unconnected.

—Heraclitus

Traditional research assignments in the language arts classroom have generally been teacher-centered and expository in nature; that is, the teacher chooses the topic that the students will research and then directs the students to report their findings in an expository form that focuses almost exclusively on facts—a paragraph, an essay, or a research paper. While such assignments can be effective, the exclusive use of them can lead students to the point where they experience research as a disengaging activity freighted with dolor and tedium.

To short-shift the assignment and relieve their tedium, many students bypass the necessary, metacognitive steps needed to create an authentic and effective report; instead, they move swiftly to copy directly from reference works (or download from the internet!) and hand in the pirated material as their “reports.” The problem, as many of us who teach know, is that when students copy or download they are not engaging in genuine research. Moreover, they have no real ownership of the work they have done, and they are operating well below the “knowledge level” of Bloom’s Taxonomy.

Ellen Langer, in The Power of Mindful Learning, suggests that if students are to learn “mindfully,” they need to be fully engaged in a topic and think about that topic in new and novel ways. When students learn mindfully, they also come to develop a level of mastery over the topics they have researched and the manner in which they report their findings. Howard Gardner, in Extraordinary Minds, reminds us that achieving mastery over a topic or a skill is predicated on the ability to reflect upon and reframe experience in new and meaningful ways.

One technique that will guide G/T students towards participating in a more mindful mastery over their research is the “Who Tale Is True?” assignment. This assignment enables students to purposefully and pointedly engage in research; it allows them to report their findings in a novel and entertaining way; it helps them understand and use the writing process (and to write for a real-world audience); and it encourages them to learn mindfully and to gain mastery over their topics.

Procedure: Critical Reading

Distribute copies of the script, “Whose Tale Is True?” to your students. The script, which is based on the TV show, “To Tell the Truth,” presents three people each claiming to be Leonardo da Vinci. Ask four of your students to volunteer to read aloud the parts of the host and the three guests (the rest of the class serves as the panel who will decide which of the three guests is most likely telling the truth). Direct the class (the panel) to read along silently as the host and guests read the script aloud. After the script has been completed, invite the class to cluster together in small groups and discuss which of the three guests they thought was telling the truth. Direct the groups to cite evidence from the script and then to share their findings with the rest of the class (each group should choose recorded to writer down their thoughts and a spokesperson to share them). Because students will probably have little prior
knowledge about the particulars of da Vinci's life, they will have to rely upon their abilities to think critically; that is, they will have to weigh, make inferences about, and evaluate data in order to reach a well-reasoned conclusion (the real Leonardo da Vinci is # 3.)

Procedure: From Reading to Writing
The script that the students have read and evaluated serves as a model for their own research. The objective is for the students to research the life of a person and report their findings in the form of a script. To get students started, invite them to select a person they want to investigate (you may want to furnish a list of persons from which students can choose). As the students read about the person they have chosen they should create a data-base of facts; the data-base should have the following categorical headings: birth date and place, early life activities (such as schooling, family involvement or lack of, formative experiences), personality traits, accomplishments, failures, friends, enemies, family, fears, desires, travels, discoveries, and place and time of death. The data-base is crucial for effective research. It guides the students in their reading and enables them to focus on particulars that are not only important about the person they are researching but are also important for the creation of the script. Because the categories of the data-base provide students with a scaffold of what they need to look for as they are reading, they students will move more rapidly towards achieving mastery of their subject.

Once students have completed their data-bases, they should begin to construct their scripts. They do so by choosing 10 facts from different categories in their data-bases and creating questions about them. For instance, in the da Vinci script the following questions appear:

- When were you born? And where did you spend your childhood?
- Is it true that you were very outgoing and that you liked being around lots of people?
- What were some of your discoveries?

Once students have created questions and answers for the actual person they have researched, they must also do the same for the two guests who are not telling the truth. As students create fictitious answers, they must do so in such a way that the answers should sound true; in other words, the answers the two false guests give should not be too outrageous. As students work to fashion false answers, they must necessarily use both analytical and flexible thinking: analytical thinking to create answers that have the "ring" of truth; flexible thinking to create answers that are clever enough to possibly fool the audience. By creating the script, the students will be working more mindfully because they will know the purpose of their research (to inform, to entertain, and to "fool") and they will be reporting their findings in a new and novel way. Moreover, by selecting and synthesizing fact and fiction, students will have moved up the scale of Bloom's Taxonomy by using higher level thinking (analysis, synthesis, evaluation).

Once the students (possibly working in groups) have constructed their scripts, they should perform them. The creators of the scripts will delight in trying to both inform and befuddle the rest of the class who must select the person who they think is telling the truth. And by bringing together to things that are "seemingly unconnected"—fact and fiction—students will have created a research product that sings with harmony.

WHOSE TALE IS TRUE?

Directions: Listen carefully to the each guest's answers to discover the true Leonardo da Vinci. Think of specific reasons why you conclude that one guest is telling the truth and why the other two are not. Be sure to cite specific information to support your conclusions.

Host: Welcome to "Whose Tale is True?" the show where you decide which of the three guest's is telling the truth. My name is J. J. Canard; now let's meet our guests. Would you each state your name please?
1: My name is Leonardo da Vinci.
2: My name is Leonardo da Vinci.
3: My name is Leonardo da Vinci.

Host: When were you born? And where did you spend your childhood?
1: I was born on July 7, 1677. I grew up just outside of Rome, Italy. My father was a great artist, and he taught me how to paint.
2: I came into the world on December 11, 1294. I grew up in Venice, Italy. My father was a great scientist. Even though he didn't have time to teach me anything, I watched him work and I learned.
3: I burst onto the scene on April 15, 1452. I grew up just outside of Florence, Italy. My father was a stern businessman. He had little time for me.

Host: Where did you go to school?
1: I went to the art academy in Rome and was taught by

(see POLETTE, page 20)
GIFTED CHILDREN: AMERICA'S TREASURE

Student Perspectives on Education: What Works and What Hurts —

Colleen Higgins Elam

(This concludes the three-part series begun in the Spring 2003 issue of Tempo.)

"In high school, I really liked the smaller, more challenging GT classes that I took. They prepared me for college more than anything else, but I think they prepared me a little too well. My workload in high school was ridiculously heavy. It wasn't the difficulty of the work, but the sheer amount of assignments that overwhelmed me. Combine 3-4 hours of homework with 2 hours of band practice in the fall and color guard in the spring, and you get one very sleep deprived person. I say my classes prepared me for college too well because I actually found college to be easier than high school. I was amazed when I suddenly had so much free time my freshman year. All I had to do was read the chapters and take ~3-4 tests a semester in each class. No worksheets, no journals, no "questions from the end of the section", no extraneous junk to worry about. All through college, I have been able to get enough sleep, have free time to relax, and plenty of time to study; none of which I had in high school. My health has improved greatly, I no longer have persistent migraines, and I am not constantly worrying that I have forgotten to do something."

"Encourage reading for fun."

Individual Pacing

"The elementary school that I went to challenged us to the point that everyone had to study in order to do well. I believe all children should be challenged this way. The workload does not need to be tremendous, but it should be just enough so that the message of work=success gets learned at a young age. One important thing regarding this is that the child must succeed...this requires effort from both the teacher and the parents...mainly the parents since they know the children best."

"I guess the most important thing is that students should be challenged."

"Students were evaluated at the beginning of each year in all subject areas and were expected to work at their own pace to learn as much as they were capable of."

"If one thinks about it, much of the material covered in elementary school is repetitive. Spelling and reading levels are improved, but in a 3rd grade classroom, one still has a wide range of reading levels, from kindergarten to 8th grade. Math doesn't go further than fractions. I didn't learn about +/- numbers until 6th grade – and then only at the end of the year. My point is that some students might be functioning at grade level for one subject and way above grade level for another subject. Or maybe way above grade level at multiple subjects. There is no reason for such students to stagnate just because, through hard work, encouragement, and/or innate intelligence they operating above grade level in one or more..."
Gifted Identification

Of the 93 respondents, 80 were identified gifted.
Identified gifted in both English and math – 56
Identified gifted in English – 5
Identified gifted in math – 3
Identified gifted in schools/districts with general programs – 16
No gifted program* or not identified – 12
No answer – 1

*The Texas mandate for gifted education in K-8 was effective in 1989. The mandate for gifted education in grades 9-12 was effective in __. Some of these students graduated in the early 1990’s but some graduated as late as 1998 from Texas public schools where no gifted program was available.

subjects. Kobe Bryant was not required to spend 4 years at college playing basketball just because that was next in sequence. He was allowed to skip right to the NBA, which other things not withstanding, was definitely where his skill and knowledge level belonged. The same should be true in the school system. It should be much easier to skip grades – this is something never offered or even considered in many school districts. Also, it should be easier to skip ahead in certain subjects. A second grade student in a third grade classroom only for math is not a thing to be afraid of. I am not advocating 10 year olds in college, but there is no reason not to allow acceleration. There are too many years of schooling, and skipping in the earlier years is much easier than skipping in the later years. One cannot skip a year of medical school or a year of residency.

"I always felt like I was being held back in my K-12 years, especially in High School. My college years were wonderful, I hope that everyone can have a department like I did. As for graduate school, this is a very different experience."

"Allow easier acceleration, either by subject or grade level."

"One should also be able to move down in difficulty level without shame. One friend who had been in honors classes all of her life was having a lot of trouble in Pre-Calculus and in the higher sciences. She had decided she wanted to be a translator. So she was taking 3 language classes and moved her math and science classes down to advanced. Languages were certainly never my strong point – I had a hard enough time with just Spanish, and here she was learning French and Japanese as well. Students should be allowed to find the level at which they are the most comfortable – challenging but not overly stressful."

"The (Texas) school district ___ I went to before [state residential mathematics high school/college] was as accommodating of me as I think would have been possible. I cannot speak more highly of them. They allowed me to take honors classes in English with students in my year, but to take mathematics classes at the high school while still in junior high, in keeping with my capability and thirst to learn. (It would have been even better if Texas could have offered me the opportunity to work at my own pace with an intelligent tutor curriculum, such as Carnegie Learning’s, but that wasn’t available back then — I still found those classes a little slow-paced for my taste). In general, I was allowed to take on extra work as I was interested, and to pursue extended and more sophisticated projects as I cared to. The math departments in ___ were particularly excellent, with very creative and thoughtful teaching."

"Having challenging classes available to me kept me interested in school."

"Allow a student to find out what they enjoy and what they want to do in their lives, but require them to complete all core and basic classes. Make them take music and art classes, and to learn a language. Require "shadowing professionals" and internships; give them responsibility and make them work on group projects and on individual projects. Let them read books they enjoy reading, not just academic books."

"Finally, the thing that I think is most missing in schools now, and the thing I would most recommend is to promote significant recognition for superior achievement by students at all levels. Competition works in the real world, and it should work in education too if implemented correctly, and one way to implement it is to reward the outstanding achievements at each level."

"Every student works at their own pace. I think in order for a student to be great at something they need to find their pace early on and if it’s slow than it needs to be improved upon so that they can get the best education for themselves."

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### University Majors

At the university level, the respondents majored in the following. Twenty-six earned degrees in two or more majors.

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### Sometimes it works...

"Coming from a very small, predominantly working-class town, the faculty of the school quickly realized there was a clear-cut dichotomy in the students: those who simply wanted to graduate high school and begin working, and those who wanted to pursue higher education."

I joined public schools in the third grade. I found that I was already about two grade levels above because of the fast pace set by my previous private school (where we had already studied geography, learned cursive, multiplication, etc.). There was a lot of freedom in the classroom, and I spent most of my time at the back of the room with the educational materials (books, multiplication tables, etc.) because I was bored with classroom activities, as were several other students. They gave us a test at the beginning of that year (1984), and after that test, about 15 students were selected for a "gifted" program. At that time, due to time and staff constraints, it was an "after-school" activity where we joined with middle-school age kids in UIL-type activities such as story-telling and creative writing. The 15 of us were excited about school again and went to competitions around the city.

In middle school, we had our first G&T classes. These classes were geared toward creativity and independence. We selected from lists of projects, like "make a soap carving about a famous event in American history, learn about the event, and give a presentation in class." We also had "gourmet cooking day," "classical music day," and "write a children’s book day." We learned to solve complex puzzles, played word-games, and solved word problems; they took a lot of their problems from old MENSA exams, so they were pretty tough, but we got to take them home and work on them. We didn’t realize how much these types of questions were preparing us for exams we would take throughout high school and college! Everyone in these classes had a GREAT time and expanded their horizons. We also took plenty of field trips to local museums. It just makes me sad for the other students at the school, because THEY would have been as excited about a class like this as we were, but they were not given the option. They periodically re-tested the students, and a few students were added each year; our max class size was 25 or so.

In high school, our AP/honors classes began. G&T took
on a different face and was no longer a class, but a “concurrent activity”. We began to learn more about “world issues”, like recognizing bias in media, learning about politics and forming our own opinions about politicians’ platforms. We learned to think abstractly and think for ourselves for the first time. They occasionally took us out of classes for scheduled outings/field trips or lectures. Once we were taken out of class to watch the movie “Rebel Without a Cause” and were expected to write a paper about themes in the movie, even though there was no real class or grade. We all happily wrote the paper. This system worked REALLY well.

Although it was G&T, other kids could join us if they wanted to, and some previously G&T kids could opt not to attend since it wasn’t a “class” and essentially created extra schoolwork. This allowed interested but previously excluded students to learn more, as it really should have been from the start. Two of the kids who joined us and had not previously been included both went on to medical school, and one now has his masters in English.

My graduating class had 143 people. Our class sizes, even G&T, AP, and honors classes, were consistently about 25 students. Our facilities were deplorable. I had half of my classes in portables, with most of us sitting on the ground for class. The ceiling tiles were broken in many of the rooms, with insulation and wires hanging through. But this school, in awful condition (shut down the year after we graduated), sent over 90% of its students on to college, and over 20% on to graduate studies. I graduated high school with six future doctors, four future lawyers, over six future teachers, two future college professors, a physicist, a marine biologist, and lots of other professionals—these are only the ones I have heard from. And almost every single one of these kids came from low-income houses, with only two exceptions. We had exceptional teachers. A LOT was expected of us in our courses. We had a LOT of homework. They did not pass you unless you DESERVED to pass. Every teacher knew every student very well. If you needed extra attention, they stayed after school to help you and you had extra assignments. There were extensive remedial classes available for students that needed help preparing for the TAAS or SAT. It was this kind of individual attention and EXCELLENT teachers that truly cared about every aspect of our lives that helped us succeed. I know this is truly impossible for large schools, and I feel EXTREMELY lucky to have had the opportunity to go to school in .

I was also thankful for the G&T program that taught me to think for myself. This was invaluable—learning to identify bias in media as a teenager, for example, just makes you live your life a little “smarter.” I am also glad that all the students had a chance to experience these G&T classes. “Real-life classes” should be a part of any high school curriculum.

What didn’t work? Classes where there weren’t scheduled

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**Colleges and Universities**

The respondents graduated, or will graduate in 2003, from the following schools.

**Public Universities**
- Armstrong Atlantic State University
- College of New Jersey
- Eastern Illinois University
- Florida Institute of Technology
- Louisiana State University
- Oklahoma State University
- Sam Houston State University
- Southwest Texas State University
- Stephen F. Austin State University
- Texas A&M University, College Station
- Texas A&M University, Galveston
- Texas A&M University, Kingsville
- Texas Tech University
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of Georgia
- University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
- University of Oklahoma
- University of Houston
- University of North Texas
- University of Tennessee
- University of Texas, Austin
- University of Texas, Dallas
- University of Texas, San Antonio
- West Texas A&M University

**Private Universities**
- Austin College
- Baylor University
- Brown University
- Carnegie Mellon University
- Claremont McKenna College
- College of William and Mary
- Columbia University
- Cornell University
- Duke University
- Loyola University, New Orleans
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Northwestern University
- Princeton University
- Rice University
- Southern Methodist University
- Stanford University
- Texas Lutheran University
- Texas Wesleyan University
- Trinity University
- University of Notre Dame
- Vanderbilt University
- Yale University
activities, and you were expected to sit and self-study. Kids don’t sit and self-study—they sit and write notes and think about where they are going to go shopping after school. The most successful classes were those where you went to class, and the teacher was at the front of the room commanding your attention to the chalkboard with a well-planned lesson. English is a fabulous high-school course, because you have so much creative autonomy. A great English teacher can really change a student’s life, more than any other. I was unfortunate to have our football coaches as history teachers throughout high school. These were all “self-study” classes with no teaching, just reading in class. This did NOT work, and we are all deficient in history. And what an interesting subject!!! You could do so much with it to make the students WANT to learn about it.

To sum it up, I think that “engaging” teachers were the most successful. Classes where there was participation—like reading plays in English or having problem-solving races on the board in Calculus—got the students’ attention. If they are taking part in what is going on, they are definitely going to pay attention and learn. Not letting people get away with not turning in homework or being very strict on the grading also worked. Too many teachers “let one slide” when somebody doesn’t turn something in, and too many students are graduating high school these days with a fifth-grade education. Teachers who take the time on the FIRST DAY to try to learn about their students make a huge difference. Our teachers had us stand up, say our names, and tell about our favorite hobby, our job, and our favorite sport. A lot of our teachers wrote this information down and used it to “get to know us.”

The whole first day was generally spent with the teacher trying to get to know us and our situation. By asking about jobs, they quickly identified students that might have time constraints outside the classroom and let them know that they were sensitive to that issue. I had a job in high school, and it meant a lot to me that my teachers wanted to know who was working.”

Sometimes It hurts...

“In elementary school, [GT] was a blessing. It provided a safe haven for all of us weird kids, and helped to expand our world. [GT] was a separate class that we would attend a few times a week. We were taught that “the gifted” were no better or worse than everyone else; we just liked different things, or liked things differently than others. Distinct directions were given to us not to belittle others or be arrogant - the penalty for this would be our exclusion from [GT]. I cherished my time there. I still can remember some of the lessons clearly; living in a low-income neighborhood I had no idea some of those ideas, objects, concepts were even possible until then.

Of special note: the Independent Projects. The student was to find something of interest to him/her, research it and present (by any means imaginable) to the class his/ her findings. This exercise not only promoted communication and scholarly thought, but also allowed the student to acknowledge the importance of having an interest.

By middle school [GT] was just another class to attend, day in and day out, with the burden of teaching English, History or both. The difference between the regular class and us: the label and the level of work. We were the geeks who read high school or college texts. Creativity was present only in artsy projects we had to complete for homework. And there were so many projects. Some did open my mind to different modes of thinking/opinions, but most were just nonsensical exercises to see what radical ideas we could muster. The more shockingly strange our presentation, the more abstract the connection to the subject at hand, the higher the grade. Be creative for creativity’s sake, the results are irrelevant - kind of reminds me of the dot-com era ads during the 1999 super bowl. The actual meaning of so much good literature and the poignancy of historical events were lost. There remains a definite gap in my knowledge of the classics; we skipped the Huck Finns and Outsiders.

This trend continued into high school... The label crystallized into an identity. Being gifted became a crutch; I didn’t have to get along because I was special. I interacted with Honors Kids in math, history..., but I was a [GT] kid. A common sentiment was that the Honors English students were the future lawyers, CEOs, PhDs; we were the weirdos with mental problems (2 of my classmates attempted suicide - of course, this may happen in Honors English too). The focus was on acceptance to college, not on our future career. We were busy discussing philosophy and the world’s injustices. The literature selections matched, Kafka, Camus and some very depressing post-modern works. As a whole I enjoyed the class discussions, but they sometimes digressed into a free-for-all flood of negativity with no mediator to reintroduce balance.
My sister is currently in [GT] under the same teacher. The more distressing works have been removed from the curriculum, but she also seems to be bogged down with the weight of the world versus eager to find her niche and succeed. As a gifted child, I often felt that I was expected to already know and understand everything, including how to cope with such a burden. Make no mistake, a gifted child does not know everything, often she understands things differently, and thus her version of reality could be skewed. Adaptation to external expectations does not automatically translate to acceptance by her internally. She’s so consumed by who she should be in the present, that she forgets who she is and who she wants to be in the future. And if she’s not something great, something [GT]-worthy, she might as well be nothing at all.

Gifted denotes potential not a guarantee. The failure to live up to that potential can be worse than never having that potential at all. Honors is an achievement, Gifted is an onus to suffer.”

The reason we keep trying...

“What is your date of birth? ___ 1980 Gregorian Calendar
What year did you graduate from high school? 1996
How old were you at high school graduation? 16, though I was young and foolish then and it felt like I was much younger.
Did you attend public or private school in elementary years? Public
Did you attend public or private school in middle school years? Public
Did you attend public or private school in high school years? Public, urban inner-city war zone
In the K-12 years, were you identified for a gifted program in English? Yes, especially in Kindergarten where I was identified for my “gifted” inability to speak any English.
In the K-12 years, were you identified for a gifted program in math? Yes
Did your high school offer honors/gt/AP/IB classes? Yes, but only every other Tuesday when the alignment of the stars was correct, and the principal was able to sacrifice two chickens on the front lawn of the school, or there were more than 20 students interested in such a class. As both of those conditions were outside the realm of possibility, I suppose my answer should really be no.
If yes, please list the honors/gt/AP/IB classes you took. None
Did you go to college directly from high school? Yes
If not, what did you do before college? Where did you attend college? [a large Texas public university]
What was your major? Computer Engineering
Did your K-12 education prepare you to succeed in your college program? Yes, except for the sleep deprivation training — a key ingredient in college success which is overlooked and under appreciated until at such time as you need to endure it while cramming for a test.
How many years were you in college from matriculation to graduation? 3 years
During your college years, did you work? Full time? Part time? Yes, part time.
What year did you graduate from college? 1999
Did you (or do you) attend a graduate school or program? What and where?
Did you enroll directly after college? Yes, [a large public university in Texas]
How many total years of graduate/post graduate work will you need (or did you need) to complete your educational goal? An eternity! (In other words, I have no plans at the moment to finish my graduate work as I found that I was scaring even myself with some of the strange things you can do with neural nets in building advanced artificial intelligence). Just because a machine can be smarter than me, does not mean that I want to prove it!
Are you currently employed full time?
Yes (so if my answer were no would this make my answer less relevant?)
Did your education prepare you to succeed in your current job? Not particularly

MAIN QUESTION:
Please comment on your education. What worked for you and what didn’t? What would you like educators and parents to know? We’re interested in anything and everything, positive and negative, kindergarten through post graduate work: subjects offered, difficulty levels, work load, hours, class makeup, class size, teaching styles, scope, sequence, what worked, what didn’t work, what we should recommend, what we should not recommend, etc.

My schooling was an eclectic blend of classes that would bore me into a dull stupor combined with those uniquely suited for my particular interests and sensibilities. I found that it was the boring ones that taught me the patience which would serve me well later in life. I cannot however blame the school system in Texas for the range of my educational
experiences; rather I must attribute it to my parents’ love of traveling combined with my own restlessness whenever I found myself in a school for more than a few years. As a result, I was never able to really establish a rapport with my classmates during those important formative years of elementary and middle school, and even throughout most of my secondary education. Whether it was through skipping grades (4th and 6th) or just moving to different schools (such as the Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science during high school), I never had a consistent set of classmates.

As a result, I did not feel compelled to blend with the scenery, and was able to take the classes that afforded me the best opportunities to advance my education. One thing I really noticed in going to different schools is that most public schools, and classes are geared towards the lowest common denominator. The teaching styles in almost every “required” class were quite pedantic, and rather droll. Had I remained in only those required classes, I would have soon been bored out of my mind and likely quit school. Rarely did any school offer classes for the gifted and talented, yet I feel that those classes were the ones that were most effective in motivating me to explore and broaden my horizons. Rather than forced assignments out of one textbook, most gifted and talented programs offered a variety of materials to study from, and, most importantly gave the students input on what they wanted to learn next, to a certain degree, as long as it would fit within the curriculum. This democratic process was not only a great motivational tool, it also gave the students in the class a foreshadowing of how life would work in the real world... it taught us that not everything we learn will be tidily handed to us in parcel sized study plans and books, and encouraged us to take our own initiative to learn about those mysteries that fascinated us.

To this day, I believe that had all classes emphasized this approach, not just the gifted and talented classes, many more students would be happy to go to school and learn. The only other comment I would make is that my education was what I chose to make of it, and ultimately responsibility falls squarely on my shoulders. A teacher cannot force you to learn what you do not wish to know. I believe that schools should provide everyone, whether gifted or not, a plethora of choices as to their educational goals, and let the students decide for themselves where to go with them.

In the end, I can only say that as a product of the Texas education system, I am neither overwhelmingly wealthy, nor profoundly erudite, yet I am quite satisfied with my experience there. The education system shaped me into the person I am today, and made me realize that my goals and ambitions are utterly attainable if I choose to reach for them. Education opens the door to a world of limitless opportunities; each student must find it within herself to walk through it.

**Schools Differ, Districts Differ, Universities Differ**

“As part of the first generation of home schoolers to graduate from high school, I do feel that my pre-college education was unique. For myself, homeschooling offered a flexibility that allowed me to have opportunities and take advantage of them in ways that would have been impossible in a traditional school setting. I feel that homeschooling has a positive affect as well on social skills as the students interact more closely with adults. The single area in which I feel that homeschooling has a disadvantage is in the areas of receiving recognition for work as being at the AP level. On entering college it is hard to compare for scholarships and special programs home schooled kids against their peers who have been able to participate in the special programs available through their schools.”

“Magnet schools are a great idea!”

“When I first got to the US, my parents and I moved quite frequently during my elementary school years and so I can comment on the numerous elementary schools in __. Texas. I remember for math class in 3rd grade, playing jacks for an hour because my teacher either did not know math or how to teach it... finally as soon as my parents had any money, we moved out of... it took me months to try to catch up in the _ (suburb) school system... It didn’t take me long, but I’m sure there are some students who would have a difficult time... and it just tells you how different the school systems are between each city.”

I first got to the _ state residential mathematics high school/college— it was the first time I didn’t have to worry about being “smart”... everyone else was too, so you develop other sides of yourself.”

“I moved in the middle of my 3rd grade year from _ schools to Texas schools. One difference I will never forget is the fact that in _ I was doing multiplication and division then when I moved to Texas and started classes they were still on addition and subtraction.”

“I attended a public college,(under duress) and was
impressed by the strength of the programs I was interested in (biology and philosophy) I think that they're underappreciated because they don't have the reputation of many private colleges...."

"Overall, I have really enjoyed my college education, but there are a few things that could be improved. The major thing would be the size of the classes and the availability of the courses. This is my last semester at [large public Texas university], and it is my first semester that I have not had a class with over 100 students. This is also the first semester that I have been able to get into all of the courses I wanted or needed. Every semester prior to this one, I have had to settle for whatever classes were not already full when my registration time rolled around. I have sat in front of my computer trying to add/drop to get into full classes until I finally gave up and settled for whatever I could get. ___ either needs to hire more professors, or stop accepting so many darn people. The only other gripe I have about ___ is their reliance on graduate student TA's (teaching assistants) to grade all the papers and even teach entire courses. Many of my TA's haven't had a clue what they were teaching, and were even worse at grading. I had one TA in a class that gave 50% of the class F's on an essay test. I was one of those unfortunate people, and since I had never failed a test in my life, I scrutinized every one of my answers and found the sections in the book and notes that said exactly what I had written. I was very confident that I had not deserved the grade I had been given, so I went to see talk to the professor about it. I argued every answer that I had gotten wrong, and the professor regraded it, gave me a B, and said she would reprimand the TA. My grade was raised 30 points. That's a little too large of a discrepancy for my peace of mind."

"Differences between [public Texas university] and [private Texas university]: Because I attended [state residential mathematics high school/college]and then [private Texas university], I had the opportunity to compare the universities. There is a big difference. [public Texas university] — almost all multiple choice tests (Biology, Organic chemistry, history). At [private Texas university], I didn't take one multiple choice test. Some of this was due to being in higher level classes, but I know that even in the above listed classes, there were not multiple choice tests. This allows for a lot more application of knowledge rather than regurgitation of facts. In organic chemistry, how do you synthesize this, in cell biology, how would you design an experiment to prove this. The curves are different. The expectations are different. The Intro biology lab at [public Texas university] was what you would expect from an intro biology lab. At [private Texas university], I was upset when they did not give me credit for the lab. But after talking with the instructor, I understood. At the [private Texas university] Intro Biology Lab, one does 3 experiments with a full experimental write up and discussion. There was a huge difference.

"Differences between [private Texas university] and Medical School: I expected medical school to involve a lot of hard work. I was right. What was interesting was that the classes that were repeats of what I had taken as an undergrad at [private Texas university]. Biochemistry was easier at medical school than at [private Texas university]. I don't think this would have been true if I had attended a state university."

"I think going to [state residential mathematics high school/college]from such a small school, I realized that it was seriously lacking gifted and talented programs. They did not have the funds to hire gifted and talented teachers and many times, the gifted program consisted of just doing more work than the other students. I did not feel that it was necessarily challenging nor much of a gt program. It seemed the [state residential mathematics high school/college]students who went to larger schools had far more gifted and talented opportunities. Nonetheless...I think I got the most out of my education."

"Although I benefited from a quality education, I do not think this is the case for many of my peers here at [large public Texas university]. I believe that because I lived in a community that had a better tax base (read - wealthy) the schools I attended were better. I have met many students here who have barely seen enough math to take Precalculus in a program where most students are expected to take Calculus I their first semester. I'm sure this is a complicated issue, but I hope that someone, somewhere is taking the necessary measures to close the knowledge gap. As much as I hear about equal opportunity (and I don't mean strictly race) for all students, I have yet to see it. I also hope that in the future our state and national leaders will learn that educational funding should be the last area to be cut, not the first."

"Having gone through education systems in three different countries (Hong Kong from grades 1 to 6, U.S. from middle school to college, and Singapore for one semester of college), I feel that the U.S. education system is definitely one to be commended. It emphasizes independent learning
and thinking while fostering creativity on the side. This balance of emphasis should be continued.

One particular concern I have though is the amount of respect that our K-12 teachers get in this country. While even elementary school teachers in Asia receive more praise than middle managers of big corporations, people in the U.S. often look down at the teaching profession in general all the way up through the high school level. It is particularly frustrating to hear about the salary differential between an experienced school teacher and an entry level IT personnel these days. I feel that the government can do much more in promoting the education profession in this country, including raising teachers’ salaries and advertising the profession as a respectable career to students at the universities. Finally, the government should extend more legal protection to our teachers in the system. These days, it seems like there are way too many proud parents suing teachers for all the wrong reasons. This could be very difficult, given that the American justice system is abused in general. However, reform of the justice system must start somewhere - Why not begin at the educational institutions first.”

“In summation, I believe that current popular opinion is focused way too much on education. While I am aware that this is clearly not the majority view, but I am concerned that current political opinion sees education as a savoir of the American economy and society. I obviously do not question the need for education in civilized society, but I believe it can only do so much. Real productivity, social progress and economic stability arise from the attitude we take toward our knowledge, not how much knowledge we have. Unless we can truly change the attitudes of both parents and students, the quality of education will never really be improved.”

Colleen Elam is a past president of the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented

“Unlike many public school students, I believe my public education which I received from the ___ Independent School District in ___, Texas was first-rate. My teachers were, for the most part, genuinely interested in their students’ progress and seemed to enjoy their profession. My work in high school was not overly difficult, but it was enough to keep me challenged. I believe it thoroughly prepared me for my higher education experience. My college experience was also exceptional. However, I believe I learned more in college from my experiences rather than the academic classroom. I attended a liberal arts college, and loved that experience, but I also saw several pitfalls that many liberal arts students easily fall into. The foremost of these pitfalls is the earning potential of liberal arts graduates. Most liberal arts schools are private, and therefore require a significant financial commitment. At the same time, unless a student is well-motivated individually, I do not believe that the current state of liberal arts education adequately prepares students for a rewarding career. I understand the value of education in and of itself, but when it comes to higher education, I know many people who question this value when faced with large student loan payments upon graduation. Liberal arts colleges, in my view, need to refocus their efforts on making their graduates employable. There is no reason, in my opinion, for a student to undertake loan obligations of more than $100,000 if that investment will take several decades to show a return. In many instances, this fact makes graduates more dependent on their parents, thereby lessening the independence that a liberal arts education is supposed to create.”

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education settings.

In middle school, therefore, Morgan returned to the elementary classroom taught by Cherie Noel where she had been a first through third grader, a room where her younger sister was also a student and her grandmother, a longtime reading volunteer. In her new role as community helper, Morgan assisted the younger students with their individual work plans or joined in on a special project. For example, as an eighth grader she worked on binding books for geometry nomenclature, shaded and labeled control maps of the continents, organized work portfolios, and put up bulletin boards.

"My first through third graders love(d) working with Morgan because she has a calm manner when she tutors them. She is wonderful at leading them to find their own answers, rather than just giving them the answers to their questions. Morgan continually encourages the children to do their own, best work", commented Ms. Noel.

Morgan's second opportunity for service involved a middle school Learn and Serve project that began in her seventh grade. Lake Waco Montessori had been previously involved in service learning through Region XII's Education Service (ESC) starting with the 1998-99 school year. Originally initiated and facilitated by myself as the lead Gifted and Talented teacher over a period of two years, these projects focused on environmental science as well as geography and history, all of which are part of the cultural studies Montessori curriculum. They impacted students from Gr. 1-6 with special student projects conducted by the intermediate gifted classes. Therefore Morgan had already been part of the service learning process through a two year oral history program conducted with retired teachers at the Stilwell Retirement Residence in Waco. During the grant sequence Morgan had also participated in JASON XI, a technology based multidisciplinary science curriculum. She also contributed artwork and writing to Going Global, the yearly campus journal begun with service learning monies which continues to showcase student work and activities (Nied Phillips, 2000).

With an middle school program ready for its second full year, Lake Waco Montessori was poised in the fall of 2001 to continue its involvement in service learning, allowing seventh and eighth graders to be more involved in both project planning and implementation. Although other ideas for service were brainstormed in late August, the tragedy of September 11, 2001, in New York City triggered an idea for a project that would serve the school's students, families, and overall community in a powerful and needed way: a Center for Peace Education. After much discussion, the students, under the direction of their middle school teachers, decided to create a place on campus dedicated to learning about peace and conflict resolution.

An initial grant of $1,700 from Region XII Education Service Center was awarded to the middle school, and Morgan worked on the fundraising committee during her seventh grade year, assisting in the raising of $3,400 of matching funds through bake sales, campus lunches, and an auction/talent show she helped organize. Choosing a 4,000 square foot grassy courtyard separating two campus wings for the site of the Center, also known as the Peace Garden, the students conducted a needs analysis. They also contacted possible partners, worked with contractors, scheduled and attended planning sessions, put together a grounds survey, and participated in drawing up general architectural plans.

Depending on their roles and committee assignments, all students assisted in the construction of a deck with covered picnic tables to be used for outdoor lessons and meetings as well as a tiered amphitheater and areas for art displays. Pathways were constructed of memorial stepping stones that also functioned as part of the fundraising process, and Phase I of the Center for Peace Education was dedicated on the first anniversary of the Twin Tower tragedy.

In eighth grade, Morgan's role shifted to membership on the Peace Garden committee, and she kept busy writing a curriculum and grant proposals as the students decided to expand their project with the development of Peace camps called S.P.U.N.K. (Spreading Peace and Understanding by Nation's Kids). Although national funding has not be received at this time, the middle school held its first series of elementary and intermediate (Grades 1-6) peace camps in May, with activities that included group building games, conflict resolution, and dramatic skits. Students attended not only from Lake Waco Montessori but other Waco ISD elementary schools, and future plans involve inviting campuses that make up the Lighted Schools program in the school district.

Morgan's volunteer work has not been limited to campus projects. When asked to describe her background in a grant application in 2002, she wrote:

"I have been volunteering for about two years. My volunteer work has included...going through Peer Mediation training, and various things with Girl Scouts (neighborhood cleanup, planting flowers and trees). experiences have improved my life by teaching me to love and respect my surroundings. These acts have helped improve my community by giving the children...a place to hang out and stay out of trouble. It also gives them a clean and beautiful place to play and learn."

Morgan has also become known in the Waco area for her stand against smoking in public places and businesses. Encouraged by Mrs. McDurham, seventh grade Morgan supported a Waco-McLennan County Health District proposal to ban smoking in enclosed public spaces (Smith, 2002). Empathizing with other individuals who suffer from asthma like
she does or are sensitive to secondhand smoke, Morgan became one of the youngest members of an antismoking coalition (SAFE, Safe Air for Everyone) that voiced its concerns against smoking in front of the Waco City Council. Their presence was successful in influencing a positive City Council vote supporting a ban.

Because her family also modeled a tradition of service for her, Morgan has helped her grandparents and other family members in delivering Meals on Wheels and spoken out as a civil rights activist in the local community. She is a regular participant in the Episcopal Youth program at her church and completed her first two week-long mission trips during the past spring and summer breaks from school.

In a recent study (Celeste et al., 2003), five categories for achieving success in the Montessori middle school classroom were defined and ranked according to importance and degree of exhibition: achievement, personal integrity, responsible citizenship, and employment of work. The survey instrument was sent to students, parents, and teachers in public, private and charter schools. While the overall conclusions revealed that different groups had different perceptions of success, 75% of the parents surveyed reported observing the trait of responsible citizenship in their middle school child. 71% of parents in both public and private school also believed that it was important for adolescents to have a moral code.

As Morgan begins her high school education, she brings with her the invaluable characteristics of leadership and independence that were fostered in a school atmosphere that valued both the traits of citizenship and a moral code. In return, she left behind her a legacy of service to the Lake Waco Montessori Magnet campus along with her high academic record. Her nine years as a Montessori student have supported and fostered her growth in these areas by providing successive guided opportunities where she could take a leadership position, express an opinion, participate in service learning projects, and develop as a communicator.

Morgan herself reflects that her leadership style has changed; that she is now “less bossy” and more accepting of others’ ideas and the intricacies of group dynamics. Pam Thomason, principal of Lake Waco Montessori, concurs: "I have admired Morgan through all her years at Lake Waco. She has shown great leadership qualities, compassion, and a real love for her community throughout her elementary and middle school years...She cares deeply about humanity and loves to volunteer in community projects...that is commendable for a young person this day and time.

I expect to hear great things about Morgan. She is going (to) all the right places in this world."

Morgan is just a freshman who wants to be an engineering missionary someday. She has already earned her Algebra I credits, is challenging herself by electing to take all Athens courses at her high school’s Academy of Engineering, has found a new group of campus friends to hang out with, and is even considering trying out for the tennis team and becoming a jock. She may join the debate club and is continuing to sing in her church’s adult choir and remain involved in its youth group activities.

Right now Morgan’s only fifteen, but she looks forward to a future that will continue to provide her with opportunities to develop her gifts and talents, thanks in part to her experiences in a school community that has guided her growth not only academically, but also socially and emotionally. She has become a young woman...full of spunk!

References


Dr. Mary Nied Phillips is the lead gifted and talented teacher at Lake Waco Montessori Magnet School for Environmental Studies in Waco. She is also the specialist in environmental science for primary through intermediate students. She teaches summer classes for the gifted in anthropology, paleontology and physical science at the University for Young People at Baylor University.
GIFTED CHILDREN: AMERICA'S TREASURE

(from HICKMAN, page 3)

administrators whose focus is on "adequate yearly progress" for their weakest students.

Perhaps now is the time for teachers of the gifted to reach beyond their students. TAKS is now forcing all students to work at the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Higher order thinking skills have become main-stream curriculum. These techniques are old stand-bys for us. By helping others in our buildings to become proficient in skills that we often take for granted, can we help our gifted students, build good will for our programs, and improve test scores across our buildings and districts? By reaching beyond our gifted classrooms, can we do a better job of identifying those students who are traditionally under-identified and under-served? Can we rally our parents to fill the void that DEC will leave? Can we SCAMPER to new solutions without additional funds or personnel? And while many of us cringe at the thought, can we learn to be advocates in the political arena where policy is determined and the fates of our children are often sealed. (Did you know that Texas had no Congressman at the national level who served as co-sponsors of bills that serve gifted children?)

All these things we can do and we must. The gifts of the children of Texas today have the potential for remaking our world tomorrow. How we serve the children that face us each day in our homes and in our classrooms will determine the future of our state and our country. Will we, like Poe's knight "Ride, boldly ride" wherever the trail takes us as we seek to assure that the treasure of our children is real and not merely a mythical city of gold, dreamed about but never found?

Host: Is it true that you were very outgoing and that you liked being around lots of people?
1: Absolutely! As soon as my paintings began selling, I was the talk of Rome. I attended a different event each night: a gala or a party. And let me tell you, partying is hard work!
2: I was too busy with my work to spend time going to parties.
3: I preferred being alone. When alone, I belong to myself and could find the time to dream and imagine.

Host: What were some of your discoveries?
1: I discovered that by mixing tar and paint the paint lasts for 100 years.
2: I discovered that when you are sleeping and your eyes are fluttering behind your eyelids, you are dreaming. I called this movement: Rapid Eye Movement, or REM.
3: I discovered that sound and light move in waves, just like the rings in a pond after a stone has been thrown in. I also discovered that light moves faster than sound.

Host: What were some of your inventions?
1: I created the first map of the moon. I also invented the first crank motor for ships, invisible ink, and the magnifying glass.
2: I invented the hang-glider, false teeth, the fork, the lenses for lighthouse lamps, the wind-up clock, the life-vest, and painted glass.
3: I invented the submarine, pliers, a monkey wrench, a post-hole digger, and a spring-powered car.

Host: Who were your friends?
1. Michelangelo was my best friend.
2. One of my good friends was Napoleon.
3. One of my pals was Niccolo Machiavelli.

Host: What were you trying to achieve with your many paintings?
1. I wanted to create photo-realism, something no one had done in my time.
2. I wanted to break away from painting religious pictures;

(from POLETTE, page 8)

the great artist Andrea del Sarto.
2. I first joined the army. After that I studied science in Venice; my teachers included Galileo and Nicholas da Cusa.
3. I studied under the great artist Andrea del Verocchio in Florence.

Host: Did anything unusual happen during your studies?
1: Yes, after only one year of study, I painted my first picture, a portrait of Alexander the Great, and sold it for a ten ounces of gold (a great price!) to the Duchess of Rome.
2: I surprised my teachers and fellow students by making the startling discovery that the brain has two parts to it and that each part controls a different side of the body. My teachers didn't believe me, but my experiments with dogs convinced them that I was right.
3. I finished a picture of John the Baptist, which my teacher had started. After I had painted an angel in the background, my teacher told me it was the finest angel he'd ever seen. And because my work was so good, he never picked up a paintbrush again.
everyone in my time was obsessed with those.
3. I wanted to create pictures that showed the interplay of light and dark; the technique was called chiaroscuro.

Host: I hate to ask this, but can you describe the moment of your death?
1. I died surrounded by my beloved wife and children. It was most peaceful.
2. I died alone in my studio in Milan. I was putting the last touches on my masterpiece, the Mona Lisa.
3. I died in the arms of the King of France.

Host: Audience, can you tell who is the real Leonardo da Vinci?

[To find out more about the subject, read Leonardo Da Vinci by Diane Stanley.]

WORKS CITED

Keith Pollette is an Associate Professor of English and the Director of the English Education Program at the University of Texas at El Paso. His up-coming publications include Read and Write It Out Loud (Allyn & Bacon) and Isabel and the Hungry Coyote (Raven Tree Press).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Bertie Kingore, Ph.D</strong></th>
<th><strong>Sees exceptions.</strong></th>
<th><strong>Wonders.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remembers the answers.</td>
<td>Poses unforeseen questions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generates advanced ideas.</td>
<td>Is selectively mentally engaged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works hard to achieve.</td>
<td>Generates complex, abstract ideas.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answers the questions in detail.</td>
<td>Knows without working hard.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performs at the top of the group.</td>
<td>Ponders with depth and multiple perspectives.</td>
<td>Is beyond the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responds with interest and opinions.</td>
<td>Exhibits feelings and opinions from multiple perspectives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learns with ease.</td>
<td>Already knows.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs 6 to 8 repetitions to master.</td>
<td>Needs 1 to 3 repetitions to master.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehends at a high level.</td>
<td>Comprehends in-depth, complex ideas.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys the company of age peers but can work alone.</td>
<td>Prefers the company of intellectual peers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understands complex, abstract humor.</td>
<td>Creates complex, abstract humor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grasps the meaning.</td>
<td>Infers and connects concepts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completes assignments on time.</td>
<td>Initiates projects and extensions of assignments.</td>
<td>Is receptive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is accurate and complete.</td>
<td>Is intense.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys school often.</td>
<td>Is original and continually developing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a technician with expertise in a field.</td>
<td>Manipulates information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorizes well. Is highly alert and observant.</td>
<td>Is an expert who abstracts beyond the field.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is pleased with own learning.</td>
<td>Guesse and infers well.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gets As.</td>
<td>Anticipates and relates observations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is able.</td>
<td>Is self-critical.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May not be motivated by grades.</td>
<td>Is intellectual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No column is mutually exclusive. A high achiever might also be a creative thinker; a gifted learner might also be a high achiever; a creative thinker might also be a gifted learner; or a student might be all three. The characteristics are not intended to imply that the value of any column is greater than another. The intent is to articulate the differences among the three groups so we can constructively address appropriate educational services for each. In this brief context, five factors affecting educational services are addressed.

1. Knowing Versus Understanding
Shepard (1997) provides a classic illustration of the differences between knowing and understanding. When presented with the following problem, 86 percent of students completed it correctly:

\[
4 \times 3 = \quad \begin{array}{llll}
A. 9 & B. 12 & C. 15 & D. 18
\end{array}
\]

Then, students were confronted with the problem in a concept-based form.

Which goes with:

\[
\begin{array}{lll}
\text{XXX} & A. 3 \times 4 = \\
\text{XXX} & B. 3 + 4 = \\
\text{XXX} & C. 3 \times 12 = \\
\end{array}
\]

With the second problem, only 55 percent of those same students answered correctly. For many, rote learning (the first problem) did not transfer to conceptual understanding of the mathematics involved (second problem). Students can know things but not understand them. Ultimately, life-long learning resides in understanding.

The current skills-intensive emphasis in many classrooms increases the danger of fostering knowledge more than understanding. Gifted learners and creative thinkers are left with few opportunities to satisfy their needs for in-depth development of complex, abstract concepts.

2. Mastery and Two Ways of Knowing
Mastery—a buzzword associated with high-stakes testing—is an extension of the dilemma of knowledge versus understanding. Concerned educators question mastery as the ultimate educational goal for many students: Is mastery a goal or merely a path? Creative thinkers learn more when they use basic knowledge as a springboard to expand possibilities rather than as an end in itself. Gifted learners typically require fewer repetitions to reach mastery; hence, they should spend minimal time on these exercises and be challenged instead with essential questions that embellish mastery and lead to enduring understandings (Wiggins & McTighe, 1999).

There are two ways of knowing (Stiggins, 2001). To be a master of knowledge, students can memorize it or know where to find it when needed. Since it is obvious that the library and internet hold more than our brains, both ways of knowing can provide an excellent basis for successful problem solving, particularly when the problems involve essential questions instead of simple correct answers. If the goal of education is more than passing standardized tests, then both ways of knowing must be acknowledged and valued. We know, and students understand, that the world does not operate solely on memorized information. (Of course, to enable our students to escalate beyond mastery, we ourselves must be masters of the disciplines we teach. Stiggins cautions that we must be prepared to share with students the concepts, generalizations, and theories that hold facts together (2001).)

3. Evaluation
Inasmuch as evaluation drives instruction in this era of high-stakes testing, the rubrics used in many classrooms need overhauling to increase their emphasis on content. Gifted learners need a high level of content and a faster pace of instruction to continue learning. Use rubrics that honor diverse learning profiles and challenge advanced learners to escalate their understanding of concepts and skills. Avoid rubrics that stress procedures over depth or focus on grade-level content instead of acceleration. Creative thinkers flow outside the box and approach problems in a diverse fashion. It is integral to advanced achievement that rubrics incorporate criteria descriptions inviting creative adaptations and extensions of content rather than only simple correct answers and behaviors. Criteria for abstract thinking, content depth, and complexity that invite the integration of creativity in beyond grade-level responses are shared as examples.

4. Flexible Grouping
While whole-class instruction dominates many classrooms, it is clear that employing only one grouping option for the majority of instruction is a flawed practice. Flexible grouping is a necessity in a differentiated learning environment. Without flexible grouping practices, students’ needs for appropriate pace, level, and compacting are not addressed; and assessment, rather than substantially affecting instruction, only serves to determine grades.

Gifted and creative students need to work by themselves, in small groups with others, and with the whole class. Decisions about grouping options must be based upon content goals, the needs of students, and classroom management procedures. Realize that ultimately the effectiveness of any grouping decision depends upon the quality of the learning opportunities presented to students. Gifted and creative students must at times work:

- **Independently** to avoid compromising what they can accomplish. Working independently also enables them to pursue individual interests and investigate essential, un-
answered question using beyond-grade-level materials and technology.

*In small, similar-readiness groups* to honor their needs for idea mates and creativity mates rather than only age mates. Working in similar-readiness groups can engage more abstract, complex thinking, encourage use of sophisticated vocabulary specific to a field of advanced understanding, and provide continuous learning opportunities that are not limited to grade-level concepts or materials.

*In small-mixed-readiness groups* when a teacher’s objectives are either group-building or having high-ability students assist students with fewer skills to complete a group learning task or product. This option is inappropriate if overused or applied in place of other learning opportunities for gifted learners.

*In whole class settings.* This option is most viable when everyone in the class has about the same schema for the content and needs the same or nearly the same level of information. The litmus test of whole-class grouping is the degree of active, on-task engagement exhibited by each member of the group.

Research studies support the positive effects of flexible grouping with gifted students within a classroom, among grade-level classrooms, across grade levels, throughout an entire school, or even between schools (Gentry, 1999; Loveless, 1998; Rogers, 1998). Furthermore, the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students specifically addresses requirements for grouping options with advanced and gifted learners. A summary of three statements from that plan reminds us of the necessity of flexible grouping.

2.2A; 19TAC_89.3(1) Program options enable gifted/talented students to work together as a group, work with other students, and work independently...

2.2R; 3.3R Flexible grouping patterns and independent investigation are employed...

2.4.1R Flexible practice is employed, allowing student to learn at the pace and level appropriate for their abilities and skills.

5. Attentive Behavior Versus Learning

Many years ago, Paul Torrance (1970) mused that teachers are more concerned with what students appear to be than who they are. Typically, high achievers are attentive learners. They acclimate well to class procedures and are appreciated for the school-appropriate behaviors they model. Conversely, some creative thinkers and gifted learners are criticized for their off-task behaviors. Instead of focusing on what they are doing, ponder why they are doing it. Creative thinkers are attentive when learning opportunities invite original thinking. Gifted learners are attentive when concepts and skills are at their advanced readiness levels. Inattentive, off-task behav-

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**FIGURE 2: Rubric Criteria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract Thinking</th>
<th>Grade-Level Expectations</th>
<th>Advanced Response</th>
<th>Gifted Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concrete ideas; appropriate but literal; event based</td>
<td>Concludes appropriate relationships; discusses concepts and principles based upon events</td>
<td>Symbolic or metaphorical; abstract thinking is evident; concludes beyond concrete realities or specific objects; idea based</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Content Depth | Valid content; accurate facts and details but little depth or elaboration; conveys a general idea or understanding | Covers topic effectively; well developed; explores the topic beyond basic facts and details | Precise data; in-depth; well supported; develops more complex concepts and relationships; evaluates the issues of the topic |

| Complexity | Simple and basic information; limited critical thinking | Critical thinking is evident; compares and contrasts; integrates topics, time, or disciplines | Analyzes, synthesizes, and evaluates across time and disciplines; interprets and integrates multiple perspectives and issues; uses beyond grade-level resources |

iors are more likely when classes stress the same learning standards as the ultimate goal for all students regardless of readiness or learning profile. Students' attentive, on-task behaviors are not the learning goal; they are the result of respectful tasks designed for students at an appropriate pace and level of instruction.

Schools' planned curricula and learning environments have fostered and perhaps suggest a preference for responding to the instructional needs of high achievers. High-achieving students are noticed for their on-time, neat, well-developed, and correct learning products. Adults comment on these students' consistent high grades and sometimes assume these students are gifted because their achievements surface above the typical responses of grade-level students. Hence, the first step is to clarify and extend among administrators, teachers, parents, and students an understanding of the marvelous similarities and differences among high achievers, gifted learners, and creative thinkers. This understanding then challenges educators to provide services that potentially match the paces, levels, and learning profiles of these students. We truly can educate rather than give lip-service to serving gifted learners and creative thinkers. Perhaps the ultimate goal of education is not to teach students what we know but to teach them to understand conceptually and pose essential questions that escalate continuous growth and understanding. In addition to accurate and complete, it is time to envision original and continually developing as desired education outcomes for students. All children deserve the right to learn at their highest level or readiness—even the gifted.

REFERENCES

Bertie Kingore, Ph.D. is a national consultant and author with Professional Associates Publishing in Austin. She is a past president of the Texas Association for Gifted and Talented and the author of 20 books.

Ann G. Klein has written a biography of the woman who did the first study of highly gifted children, Leta Stetter Hollingworth. Klein traveled all across America, seeking the facts and gaining a sense of Leta Hollingworth.

Hollingworth was born in 1886 and died of cancer in 1939 when she was only 53 years old. Leta’s mother died in childbirth when she was three years old, at which time her father, Johnny Stetter, deserted the family. Her maternal grandparents took Leta and her two younger sisters and raised them with love for the next ten years.

When Leta was thirteen, the father found someone to remarry, and he “wrenched away” these little girls from the loving home with their grandparents and handed them over to the care of a wicked stepmother. Reports of the stepmother’s cruelty and sadistic behavior toward the children were terrifying. “Leta never forgave her father for abandoning his children to such a stepmother and for failing to intervene” when the woman terrorized and abused them. Again and again Johnny Stetter disappeared for long periods of time, and ironically outlived his daughter, Leta, by many years.

Leta always wanted to be a writer and wrote a newspaper column in high school. She went to the University of Nebraska, where she encountered Edward L. Thorndike, who firmly believed women were intellectually inferior to men. Thorndike wasn’t the only one. “Some opponents of women attending college argued that higher education was so intense that it was likely to damage women’s reproductive health and would ultimately create ‘race suicide.’” And... “[educated] women could only have a destructive effect on American society.” A prominent physician wrote, “Why should we spoil a good mother by making an ordinary grammarian?”

In spite of these well-wishers, Leta earned a Baccalaureate degree at Nebraska, met and married Harry “Holly” Hollingworth, both got jobs at Columbia; she earned a Master of Arts at Columbia. Both she and her husband eventually received Ph.D.’s, and both became Distinguished Professors. Not surprisingly, Leta Hollingworth spent much of her early professional career focused on sexual discrimination. Her dissertation was based on research in which she determined that women’s’ temperament and personality were not adversely affected by menstruation. (Possibly Prozac had been invented by then.)

She came to support eugenics, the attempt to improve humanity by encouraging the ablest and healthiest people to have more children; and she supported involuntary sterilization for those who were mentally deficient, an idea upheld by the Supreme Court in 1927.

In 1916, Hollingworth joined the faculty of Teachers’ College to become the principal of a new school for exceptional children; and, in addition, she continued to work as an educational psychologist at Bellevue Hospital. As the Head of School, she began collecting data on her “subnormal” children. She published The Psychology of Subnormal Children, which became the standard text in the new field of special education. By 1919 she was presenting work on “the importance of mental testing to help identify children who functioned poorly in school but who were not retarded due to lack of intelligence,” the children we now call learning disabled.

In the late 1800’s at least 4 major cities (Louisville; Urbana; Columbus; Appleton, Wisconsin; and New York City) had begun some kind of a program for students that they had found to be at least two grade levels above their age peers. By 1920 two-thirds of American cities had some type of programs for gifted students, identified by teachers and their grades.

A school for boys, PS 64, where there were special classes for students above 120 IQ’s grew out of the reasoning that there were homogenous classes for “defective children with a course of study adapted to their needs....” In 1922 Dr. Hollingworth became interested in a program for gifted children in PS 165. For three years she conducted a comparison between gifted children (IQ, median 146) and “highly” gifted children (median IQ was 165). The difference in this program was that enrichment, rather than acceleration was at the heart of the “rapid learner curriculum.” Hollingworth taught some units in the enrichment class. She believed that highly gifted children should be taught in homogeneous classes and given an enriched curriculum. Leta Hollingworth continued to follow these children for the rest of her professional life. A forty year follow-up of these students was made long after her death. This study recorded that all students believed that their experience at PS 165 was instrumental in providing them with peer interaction for the first time, exposing them to competition for the first time, causing them to learn and like school for the first time, giving them a strong desire to excel, providing new exposures that would not have been otherwise possible. Their views of themselves changed and their options were expanded.

Dr. Leta Stetter Hollingworth would have been pleased.

This is not a recent book, but it has incredible implication for parents. It was first published in the year 1964 by Random House, and it has been reprinted 20 times because of the importance of this research.

The author, Glenn Doman, dedicated this book to his wife whom he mentions has taught hundreds and hundreds of brain injured one-two-and three year olds to enjoy reading by her teaching their mothers how to teach the tiny children to read. You learn this much on page ii, which gives you a not-very-subtle idea of what you’re getting into in this book.

The work we learn about in this book was carried on at a group of Institutes for the Achievement of Human Potential, in Chestnut Hill, part of Philadelphia. It began as a clinical research project by a brain surgeon, a physical therapist, a speech therapist, a psychologist, an educator and a nurse. As time went by over a hundred more professionals joined the project. This little group of people came together because each of them individually had been charged with some aspect of the treatment of severely brain-injured children. And, individually, each of them was failing with brain-injured. They never got “well.”

Sometimes the injuries happen to a great brain before the baby is born. As the research moved forward, a hundred other scientists over the twenty years eventually joined the search for a way to make the injured brains well.

First came a nonsurgical effort. They would have to find ways to reproduce in some manner the neurological growth patterns of a well child. This meant understanding the neurological growth patterns of a well child.

The neurological part of the team had proved conclusively that the answer to these children’s problems lay within the brain itself. They were developing successful surgical approaches.

There were certain types of brain injured children whose problems were of a progressive nature, and they consistently died early. Among these were the hydrocephalics, children with “water on the brain.” This team included the pediatric neurosurgeon, who, working with an engineer developed the shunt which solved this dilemma.

By 1955 the neurosurgical members of the group were performing what was then an unbelievable surgery on children. Hemispherectomy; the surgical removal of half of the human brain. Now they saw children with half a brain in their heads and the other half, billions of brain cells, in a jar at the hospital. That half of the brain was dead, but the children were not dead. They were walking and talking and going to school just like other children. Many such children were above average, and at least one of them had an IQ at the genius level.

Now it was obvious that if one half of a child’s brain was seriously hurt, it mattered little how good the other half was as long as the hurt half remained. For example if a child was suffering convulsions caused by the hurt left brain, he would be unable to demonstrate his function or intelligence until that half was removed and the intact brain could take over the entire function without interference.

Now the author presents us with a conundrum. If Johnny, with half his brain gone, is performing as well as Billy, who has all his brain intact, what is wrong with Billy? Why doesn’t Billy perform twice as well (or at least better) than Johnny with only half his brain cells? Having seen this over and over again, the team began to look questioningly at the “well” children. This all has led to the knowledge that children can perform infinitely better than they are doing at present. They began to see severely brain injured children whose performance rivaled that of children who had not suffered a brain injury, eventually who could not be distinguished or were becoming superior to the “well” children.

The team was excited and frightened. It was clear that everyone underestimates every child’s potential. What was wrong with well children? It had always been assumed that neurological growth and its end product, ability, was a static and irrevocable fact: This child is capable and that child was not. This child was bright and that child was not.

These scientists found that nothing could be further from the truth. The fact is that neurological growth, which we had always considered to be static, is really a dynamic and ever changing process. Now it was clear that this process of neurological growth could be speeded up as well as delayed. Having repeatedly brought brain-injured children from neurological dysoorganization to neurological organization of an average or even superior level by employing nonsurgical techniques which had been developed, there was every reason to believe that these same techniques could be used to increase the amount of neurological organization of average children.

And one of these techniques was to teach very small brain injured children to read.

It is astonishing that it has taken us so many years to
realize that the younger a child is when he learns to read, the easier it will be for him to read and the better he will read.

All normal children *can* read words when they are twelve months old, sentences when they are two, and whole books when they are three years old, and they fall in love with reading.

Once the team had seen 3 year old and younger brain injured children read, and read well, it was clear that something was going to have to be done for “well” children.

From this book we learn that the reason babies learn to talk is that we talk louder to them. And, if we made print as big as we make our voices, the baby could process the words. It makes no difference to the brain whether it “sees” a sight or “hears” a sound. It can understand both equally well. So, now that we know this, we have to do something about it. And what will happen when we teach all little children to read will be very very important to the world of education and the world beyond that.

Chapter Seven in this book is a recipe for teaching babies to read. The key: Make the words big enough, and Baby will recognize them just as they recognize their spoon. They have had success with babies from 3 months to 3 years, depending, I guess, on how gifted the Baby is to start with.

I can only urge you to find this book. If it is not available at your bookstore try half.com or the other used book outlets and websites. Read it and pass it along, and pass along the information. We need to make this gentle revolution happen.


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**from the TAGT Coordinator’s Division**

Dear Gifted Advocate,

One of our struggles as coordinators throughout the state is providing quality training in Gifted Education. Many coordinators are responsible for providing or procuring presenters capable of offering an exceptional 30-hour training or updates to their district or campus staff. Texas is full of extremely qualified professionals in the field of gifted and talented education however, many of these qualified professionals are only known in a limited geographic area due the vast expanse of our state.

It has been suggested that the TAGT Coordinators’ Division secure a list of qualified trainers and/or presenters to share with all coordinators throughout the state. We would like for coordinators to send in names of quality people that may be called upon throughout the state for training in the field of gifted education.

This list will be disseminated via the TAGT Coordinators’ Division Website in the near future. If you wish to be placed on this list, please complete the following form and return it to:

Lynne DeLeon
3344 Freeport
El Paso, TX 79935

Name: ________________________________
Address: ________________________________
Phone number: __________________ Fax number: __________________
E-mail address: __________________
Customary fee: __________________
Areas of Expertise in Gifted Training (30 Core Hours/Update- Be Specific): __________________

Comments: ________________________________

District/Affiliation: ________________________________

References: (Please attach at least 3)
Running in the Dark

Michael W. Cannon

In spite of having to get up at 5:00 a.m., there are unexpected pleasures to be found in running before dawn. The streets are empty; the only sounds are distant traffic, an occasional barking dog, and my shoes hitting the asphalt. Often the only company I have are the cats chasing each other up a light pole, or a lonely drunk singing his way home, or an isolated car. Now and then there are disturbing encounters. Few things get a runner's attention more quickly than the sound of a dog coming up rapidly from behind. When I heard the clicking of toenails, I considered my options: jump up on the nearest car, stop and confront the beast (from the sound it had to be the size of a small horse), look around for something to use to protect myself. While I was trying to make a choice, the dog jumped up - not to attack, but to lick my hand. He ran alongside me the rest of the way home.

A real attraction at that time of day is the sky. Mars was the showpiece during the summer, its warm orange glow filling the southern sky. And as the summer fades into fall, Orion appears, a winter constellation that rises just before the dawn in the eastern sky. It is like seeing an old friend up there in the sky, the giant with his club always raised to Taurus the Bull, his sword at his belt, and his faithful dog Sirius following close behind. Sirius was something of a shock when I first saw it late in the summer. One forgets just how bright and how spectacular it is — sparkling, almost flashing, white and blue.

Running in the dark gives a person time to think (and plan the day's lessons!) and the other morning I found myself thinking about the similarities of early morning running and teaching gifted students.

First, as teachers of the gifted, we may often feel that we are running as fast as we can, alone in a dark and friendless universe. But there are wonderful surprises along the way and the exhilaration of setting, pursuing, and achieving goals in our quest to provide the best possible services for our gifted students. And we usually are not completely alone - there are others in the same race with us.

Like Orion the Hunter, we have our foes that seem eternally before us — decision makers who don't understand the needs of gifted students, a lack of resources, and misunderstanding from parents, teachers, and other students. But like Orion's faithful Sirius, we have our own brilliant companions, the students who need our guidance but shine more brightly than we ourselves.

Sometimes the students are also in the dark because they aren't identified or lack of appropriate services. Others isolate themselves and their darkness has few cats, or dogs, or stars. They may want to stay in their self-imposed isolation, but they need to know that there are other runners out there ready to help or just run silently with them. As teachers, we have the enviable task of pointing out the wonders of the stars to our students and, at times, learning from them as well.

Finally, we have to search the darkness for the right path, for the best approaches and services for the individual student. Some routes are rough and uneven, others have too much traffic. Sometimes (and this is my favorite) the way is a new one that we haven't seen before either, but holds great promise. One size doesn't fit all, even among the identified gifted population. No matter how wonderful a particular gifted and talented program may be, we have to make it valuable and worthwhile for the individual student.

So, when you hear the sound of something coming up from behind you in the dark, it may not be as intimidating as it first appears, but a companion for the journey.
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